

## The Gippsland Lakes Annual Report

The Victorian Government has provided \$12.5 million over 4 years as a priority in Water for Victoria – A Blueprint for the Future, designed to encourage Government agencies, groups and individual landowners to get involved in activities to help improve the health of the Gippsland Lakes. This report presents the range of activities undertaken across the Gippsland Lakes and catchment during the 2016/17 financial year; including the government investment above, other government complimentary programs and the volunteer efforts of many people.

The map in this report describes the combined actions completed across seven priority areas, four in and around the lakes themselves, and another three across the catchments surrounding the lakes system.

Across these areas, the report describes the activities completed, the partners participating in these activities, and the total level of investment for each area.

We would like to commend all the people involved for this outstanding effort.

Working together has turned the Gippsland Lakes direct investment this year of \$3.62 million into a combined total investment of \$10.66 million, plus many hours of volunteer efforts over a large landscape involving 23 formal partners. New jobs have been created for our traditional owners and community groups; with all that energy they create being supported.

More detailed information on all projects can be found on the 'Love our Lakes' website ([www.loveourlakes.net.au](http://www.loveourlakes.net.au)).

Joint Chairs of the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee  
**Dr Peter Veenker**  
**Angus Hume**

## Implementing a Plan for the Lakes Together

The Gippsland Lakes have a clear direction for management set out in the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan. It is supported by the Gippsland Lakes Priorities Plan that identifies the highest priority management actions for the next five years (2016 – 2021).

The Minister for Water, the Hon Lisa Neville, established the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee (GLCC) with a specific focus on coordinating the efforts to improve the environmental condition of the Gippsland Lakes. The committee includes community representatives and leaders of several Victorian government agencies with management responsibilities in and around the Lakes.

The successful delivery of priorities is being achieved by fostering cooperation between Traditional Owners, land and waterway managers, community groups, individual landowners and other regional partners. The involvement of this wide range of people; guided by clear priorities, helps to maximise the benefits to the lakes.

## Case Studies

### 1 | Caring for Gippsland Lakes Country



The involvement of the Traditional Owners; the Gunaikurnai people, in the planning and implementation of works on country is critical to improve the health of the lakes, and achieve the objectives of the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan.

Individual delivery partners discussed the objectives of each project with GLaWAC to identify opportunities for their involvement.

Working in partnership with GLaWAC in an ongoing capacity has provided the opportunity for many project managers to strengthen environmental outcomes, share knowledge, and enhance working relationships with GLaWAC.

Over the 2016/17 year, GLaWAC has been contributing to important projects across the lakes including: monitoring fox populations prior to control works; undertaking revegetation and weed control in wetlands; contributing to, and learning more about, rainforest management; surveying sites for cultural heritage values; completing fox bating to protect migratory and resident shorebirds; and planting along waterways to help prevent erosion.

GLaWAC also has employed 3 new full time crew members as a result of this program.

### 2 | Collaboration helping to better manage our wetlands



Greening Australia is coordinating a major wetland project involving many organisations, groups and individuals. The Gippsland Lakes has over 30,000 ha of fringing wetlands. These wetlands provide critical habitat for wildlife, including feeding grounds for internationally significant migratory shorebirds.

During the 2016/17 year work sites have been established across 100ha of wetlands fringing the lakes. Priority actions include observations of our important bird populations by Birdlife East Gippsland; onground water management activities informed by East and West CMA's; the long term conservation commitments on private land facilitated by Trust for Nature; and the Gunaikurnai NRM team completing revegetation, pest and weed control.

With Greening Australia managing the project, bringing innovative wetland prioritisation techniques developed by the Arthur Rylah Institute, so private landholders and community are being supported to ensure the wildlife of the Gippsland Lakes fringing wetlands, may continue to adapt and thrive into the future.

## The Gippsland Lakes

The Gippsland Lakes are a series of coastal lagoons and fringing wetlands that cover approximately 60,000 hectares; fed by five major rivers spread over a catchment of over 20,000 square kilometres connected to the ocean at Lakes Entrance.

The lakes and catchments support a diversity of landscapes with high conservation value. The Lakes themselves are listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. The lakes are central to tourism for the region, supporting commercial and

recreational fisheries, boating, camping and visitation with important Aboriginal and European cultural values.

The main lakes and the fringing wetlands are constantly changing; caused by seasonal variations and longer term weather effects like droughts and floods. Climate change is also predicted to alter the system further in the future. The Gippsland Lakes will continue to adapt to the changing conditions and, through management effort, key values can be maintained and new values are likely to emerge.



### Improving the condition and connectivity of Lake Wellington and its wetlands

**Partners** GA, WGCMA, PV, TFN, DELWP, ARI, GLaWAC

**Investment** \$1.3 million

**Activities**

- 1 Managing environmental water to enhance the lower Latrobe Wetlands and estuarine reaches
- 2 Reducing the input of nutrients and sediment to Lake Wellington
- 3 Protecting and enhancing wetland habitats around Lake Wellington
- 4 Improving our understanding of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage around the Gippsland Lakes



### Improving the wetlands of Jones Bay

**Partners** GA, PV, TFN, EGCMA, EGSC, GPCMN, EGRCMN, GLaWAC, Birdlife, DELWP, Landcare

**Investment** \$1.4 million

**Activities**

- 1 Building constructed wetlands to reduce sediments and nutrient delivered to Jones bay
- 2 Controlling foxes to protect important water bird populations
- 3 Protecting and enhancing fringing wetland habitats around Jones Bay
- 4 Protecting and maintaining the Mitchell River Silt Jetties
- 5 Management to protect threatened species
- 6 Introduction of fish habitat in the lower Mitchell River



### Protecting and enhancing alpine ecosystems

**Partners** PV, EGCMA, WGCMA, DELWP, NECMA

**Investment** \$810,000

**Activities**

- 1 Managing the impacts of priority pest animals species through monitoring and control activities
- 2 Protecting critical alpine habitats through weed control and monitoring, revegetation, and management of access
- 3 Monitoring alpine peatlands to improve protection and management



### Understanding and Improving Aquatic Habitats and Ecosystems

**Partners** DELWP, Federation University, AMMCF, RMIT

**Investment** \$430,000

**Activities**

- 1 Improving our knowledge of potential mobility of metals within the Gippsland Lakes
- 2 Monitoring populations of the threatened Burruran Dolphin and their interactions with vessels
- 3 Increasing community awareness and participation in Burruran Dolphin management and monitoring
- 4 Monitoring for presence of invasive marine pests in the Gippsland Lakes



### Improving the condition of the East Gippsland catchments

**Partners** DEDJTR, EGLN, EGCMA, GPCMN, EGRCMN, SFS, EGLN, TFN, DELWP, PV

**Investment** \$2.5 million

**Activities**

- 1 Working with landholders to improve management practice for production and environmental benefits
- 2 Improving riparian and woodland habitats through revegetation, weed control, and vegetation management
- 3 Fencing to exclude stock from along waterways
- 4 Controlling foxes to limit impacts on agricultural and environmental values
- 5 Controlling willows to improve the condition of waterways
- 6 Investigating barrier to fish migration and passage
- 7 Management to protect threatened species
- 8 Monitoring invasive pest plants to improve management



### Protecting the Traditional Owner country of the Gippsland Lakes Outer Barrier

**Partners** PV, DELWP, GP, GLaWAC

**Investment** \$320,000

**Activities**

- 1 Controlling predators to protect migratory and resident waterbird populations
- 2 Management and monitoring of threatened Little and Fairy Terns
- 3 Control of priority pest plant species to improve fringing habitats
- 4 Managing the impacts of priority pest animals species through monitoring and control activities



### Improving the condition of the West Gippsland catchments

**Partners** WGCMA, GLaWAC, DEDJTR, Gipps Dairy, SFS, Dairy Australia, Murray Goulburn, Fonterra, Burra Foods, EPA, MLN, DELWP, PV, WSC, Gippsland Water, BBSC, GCB, Vic Forests, GA, TFN

**Investment** \$3.9 million

**Activities**

- 1 Working with landholders and industry partners to improve production and provide environmental benefits
- 2 Improving riparian and wetland habitats through revegetation, weed control, and vegetation management
- 3 Fencing to exclude stock from along waterways
- 4 Control pest animals to protect important flora and fauna species
- 5 Monitoring invasive pest plants to improve management

