



Supporting sustainable land management

The Port Phillip & Westernport CMA is leading two five-year projects supporting Landcare and farmer groups to improve sustainable agriculture and land management. These projects are funded with a total of \$1.75 million through the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme. 2015/16 was the third year of the five-year project.

Working with Landcare groups

The first project assists Landcare groups in developing high quality conservation plans and landholders in adopting biodiversity conservation practices. It aims to work towards an improved contribution of local community natural resource management action towards national, state and regional goals.

In 2015/16, the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA ran two key engagement activities across the region. These included Conservation Action Planning (CAP) workshops and Catchment Action Round Tables (CARTs). The primary purpose of CAP's is to provide knowledge and skills for leaders in Landcare in order to design and deliver biodiversity projects.

In partnership with Trust for Nature, the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA delivered CAP workshops to four Landcare networks. These CAP workshops were the finalisation of five workshops that were hosted between April and August 2015 and were attended by 54 people from the Middle Yarra, Moorabool, Nature West and Yarra Ranges Landcare Networks.

In addition, five CARTs were conducted during 2015/16 in the Werribee, Maribyrnong, Yarra, Western Port and Mornington Peninsula areas. The CARTs were attended by over 110 people from 37 Landcare groups (from 11 Landcare networks) and 29 other Natural Resource Management organisations.

The CARTs enhanced the relationships and collaboration between Landcare groups and local agencies.



Landcare groups and partners sharing their project plans at the Western Port CART - September 2015

Engaging farmers

The second project assists farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices by enabling knowledge sharing and undertaking trials and demonstrations.

During 2015/16, six new trials and demonstration projects were developed, showcasing alternative land management practices, pasture cropping, analog forestry, use of remnant vegetation for shade and shelter for stock and protection of paddock trees.

In 2015/16, the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA worked with a range of partners to run a number of capacity-building events for farmers and landholders which attracted over 124 attendees. These events included:

- An 'Analog Forestry' workshop held in partnership with Pentland Hills Landcare Group, attracting six participants. Analog forestry uses a polyculture system of farming alongside conventional agriculture. The workshop resulted in the development of a new demonstration trial and three new Landcare members;
- A 'Farm Chemical Users Certificate' training course in partnership with the Moorabool Landcare Network, attended by 19 participants;
- Two 'Preparing for Dry Conditions' workshops held in partnership with Agriculture Victoria and the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA's Regional Landcare Facilitator attracted over 50 participants. Stock containment, pasture protection and shade and shelter for livestock were showcased at a demonstration property on the Mornington Peninsula;
- A 'Native Pasture Management' workshop featuring the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Training and Resources' native pasture expert, Meredith Mitchell, attracted over 25 participants. The workshop was held on a demonstration property that investigates the use of spray topping and rotational grazing to improve productive pasture.

Farmer Discussion Groups

In 2015/16, approximately 26 farmers were engaged in discussions about sustainable practices through three farmer discussion groups in Arthurs Creek, Romsey and Myrning. These farmer discussion groups provided a forum for landholders to share their knowledge and experiences with others, and gain support and advice on sustainable land management practices.

In addition, five local farmers were financially supported to develop their leadership capacity by attending workshops and field days to share their knowledge with other group members and attendees.

Looking ahead

Numerous activities with local Landcare groups and farmers will continue in 2016/17 and 2017/18 with the funding allocated to this work from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

The Conservation Action Planning process and Catchment Action Round Tables will remain a focus for engaging Landcare groups. Promoting the adoption of sustainable agriculture techniques by farmers will focus on establishing trials and demonstration projects and sharing their findings, along with working with farmer discussion groups to share ideas that promote sustainable agriculture.



Landholder Paul Mayer with his worm farm during a Farmer Discussion Group meeting

Case study - Shade and Shelter for Livestock Production

Designing and managing shade and shelter for livestock production ensures a productive farming system. Shelter belts, paddock trees and native vegetation provide enormous benefits in extreme hot and cold weather events to livestock productivity, as well as being valuable assets for biodiversity and carbon on-farm.

Native vegetation assists farmers for preparing their properties for dry conditions and drought. Establishing stock containment areas and protecting pastures during dry conditions is very important for animal health and welfare and productivity. Property planning and water budgeting are important tools used for a sustainable production system.

The Sustainable Agriculture project has been working with farmers around the catchment to establish shade and shelter trials and demonstration projects to demonstrate how native vegetation on a property can be managed for both production and conservation goals.

The results of the one of the demonstrations looking at stock containment areas and pasture management were presented on a demonstration farm in Moorooduc in February 2016 along with several other Shade and Shelter and Dry Conditions workshops held throughout the region in partnership with the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, and various Landcare Networks.



Landholders observing fencing to protect remnant vegetation during 'Dry Conditions Workshop' held in Tyabb



Australian Government

National
Landcare
Programme



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