

Statewide 2007/08



Monitoring Information

612 groups, 2,329 participants, 1,918 sites

Education Participation

90,793 participants

Coordinators (FTE) 42

Program Budget \$3,848,716

Partners and Sponsors of the Statewide

Waterwatch Program Department of Sustainability and Environment, Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre, Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, Marine Discovery Centre - Department of Primary Industries.

State Waterwatch Team



Yvette Bettini

Sara Johnson

Sherridan Rosewarne



Waterwatch Coordinators brushing up on macroinvertebrate sampling techniques on the Kiewa River as part of the annual training program provided by Waterwatch Victoria.



Making connections



Waterwatch is built on a strong foundation of relationships with community groups and regional natural resource management organisations. However, having 'friends in high places' and connecting to the other end of the stakeholder spectrum is just as important for success and sustainability!

The support State and Federal Governments offer is more than just a source of funding. Having key government stakeholders actively involved in Waterwatch provides connections to policy, strategic thinking and the machinations of bureaucracy which maintain the program's relevancy and offer recognition, direction and ultimately continuity.

The biennial National Waterwatch Conference, held in Canberra in November 2007, gave Waterwatch coordinators and regional, state and federal stakeholders the opportunity to discuss the contribution Waterwatch makes to community participation in natural resource management now and into the future. The conference organising committee of State and National Waterwatch Facilitators and Australian Government staff ensured these ideas were captured and informed plans for developing Waterwatch in coming years through workshops

and an interactive closing plenary session. Conversations helped to consolidate the role partners at national, state, regional and local levels have to play in supporting community engagement in water management through Waterwatch.

At a time when water is a hot topic, this assembly helped to keep Waterwatch part of the water management picture as policy shifts, different approaches to funding are explored and new governments are voted in and Ministers appointed!

As Jane Doolan, the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Executive Director responsible for river health in Victoria explained at the conference, "Waterwatch needs to position itself with the right links – to policy, science, research, sustainable schools, community development, the natural resource delivery model – to make sure it can continue to fulfil its critical role is sustainable water management.

The gathering of stakeholders and participants the conference produced also gave all an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the job well done so far!



Participants at the 2007 National Waterwatch Conference.

Safe keeping for an information treasure trove



Waterwatch Coordinators are custodians of a significant data record. However, simply having data doesn't make our record useful or useable!

With Waterwatch monitors busy collecting and testing water samples for over a decade, there is now a substantial data record which spans not only a long time scale, but provides spatial coverage in areas where data may not exist. It can also supplement other information, capturing events such as fire, flood and drought, thanks to the flexibility, responsiveness and enthusiasm of volunteer monitors!

Unfortunately this valuable knowledge bank could easily be lost or unusable if it is not stored and managed properly.

Data Confidence Guidelines and Plans inform and document quality assurance/quality control measures to ensure monitoring produces data which is of a known quality. However, in order to determine the quality of this data in the future,

'metadata,' or information about the quality of data collected, needs to be attached to the data record, not just recorded in stand-alone plans and guidelines!

In 2008, Waterwatch Victoria completed an upgrade of the database which Waterwatch Coordinators use to store their water quality data. This upgrade ensured the database could incorporate both the data and its important metadata. In this way, all the work done to implement quality assurance/quality control practices in the field can be continued in the storage, management and retrieval of data.

"A lot of hard work and thinking went into developing good quality assurance and quality control measures so that monitors know the data they collect will be valuable in the long run," explained Yvette Bettini, Statewide Waterwatch Coordinator.

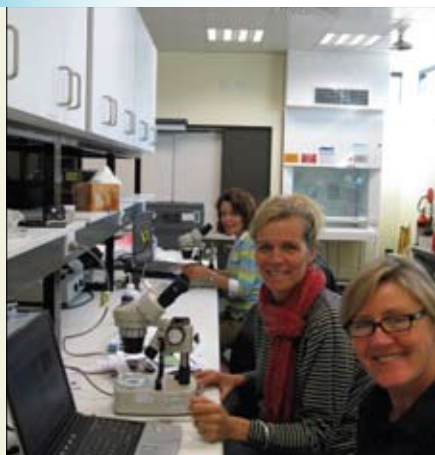
"This database upgrade is a step towards having good data management systems in



The Victorian Waterwatch Coordinator network attending training on how to use the upgraded database.

place so that the true value of Waterwatch data is recognised. The next step is to have our data readily accessible online for data users."

Of course a new and improved database also makes the lives of the Waterwatch data custodians easier too. As Amy Paraman, Port Phillip and Westernport Waterwatch Coordinator exclaimed, "I really like the new database ... I have my nice up-to-date data file and the reporting functions are working beautifully ... it almost makes me look forward to my annual reporting period!"



Waterwatch Coordinators Bec Callea, Caz Humby, and Dani Beischer using the Online Bug Guide to identify macroinvertebrates during Waterwatch Victoria's annual training event.

All you ever wanted to know about water bugs



Children love hands-on learning, but what if they don't have that opportunity? New online education resources are helping to bring 'virtual' water bugs into the classroom, and an online interactive identification key is an excellent support for teachers and Waterwatch Coordinators.

The Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre (MDFRC) has developed a fantastic new internet 'Bug Guide' – a taxonomic key for identifying aquatic macroinvertebrates.

Waterwatch Victoria recognised its huge potential for bringing the science behind taxonomy into the classroom and commissioned the MDFRC to develop some versatile educational resources to be used in conjunction with the online guide.

The resources include a series of Powerpoint presentations relating to Victoria's five bioregions and access to higher resolution images of bugs representative of the main macroinvertebrate families in each bioregion. The information is divided into five categories generally used to interpret macroinvertebrate data: SIGNAL (Stream Invert Grade Number Average Level) bands, functional feeding group, trophic level (nutrition), habitat and flow.

For many years, the MDFRC has run Waterwatch Victoria's annual training on macroinvertebrates for coordinators. This relationship gave the MDFRC team a great opportunity to test and refine their 'Bug Guide' and the education resources with scientifically trained adults who can still see things from the student's perspective! The Waterwatch Coordinators can now use the online guide themselves throughout the year.

The new resources were introduced to the Waterwatch Network at the 2007 Annual Conference and a number of Waterwatch Coordinators have started using these Bug Guide resources in their schools programs.

"It has been good for schools visits," says Caz Humby, North East Regional Coordinator. "We promote the website to the schools so that they can get additional information if they want it. Teachers can use it in the classroom depending on what level of identification they want go to. It is a great resource and it is really helping to engage students."

View the Bug Guide at www.mdfrc.org.au/bugguide and follow the links through the map of Victoria to access the regional resources.