Acheron Waterwatch members ponder the origins of murky water

Margaret Daniel, a local resident was keen to become involved with Waterwatch to understand her local waterway, learn more about what affected it and to do something to help improve it.

Margaret is one of 23 monitors in the Acheron River sub-catchment network, who got involved in the Goulburn Broken Waterwatch monitoring program after noticing the dramatic changes in the turbidity of the Little Steavenson River. This river is a tributary of the Acheron River which in turn flows into the Goulburn River.

Early in the project it became clear that the understanding about who or what was responsible for the sources of turbidity was based on long standing assumptions. Through the process of monitoring, the network has discovered some of the possible causes of the river's sediment loads. The network has shared this information with their community, the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and local industries reliant on the water.

To keep the group functioning like a well-oiled machine, group Waterwatch coordinator Glenda Woods holds a network meeting twice a year. Meetings provide the group with a forum to share experiences with other members in the network and refine their turbidity sampling techniques against Glenda’s more sophisticated turbidity meter.

At their last meeting in September, members went on a sub-catchment tour visiting logging coupes in the upper part of the Acheron sub-catchment. The group spent time looking at the impact of forest roads on turbidity and had the opportunity to speak to employees from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, who have joined the network as partners involved in the monitoring program.

Increased monitoring in heavy rainfall events will complement existing data and assist in gaining a better understanding of possible turbidity sources. In the future Margaret hopes that people will continue working together to improve long term river health.