

Partners/Sponsors Natural Heritage Trust, North East Catchment Management Authority, North East Region Water, City of Wodonga, Department of Primary Industries, Rural City of Wangaratta, Indigo Shire, Alpine Shire, Falls Creek Management Committee, Green Corps, Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre.

Monitoring Information 11 Groups, 135 participants, 160 sites. **Education Participation** 4301 participants.

Coordinators Carolyn Humby, Jessica Aiken, Bruce Birrell, Toni Costello, Shay Simpson.



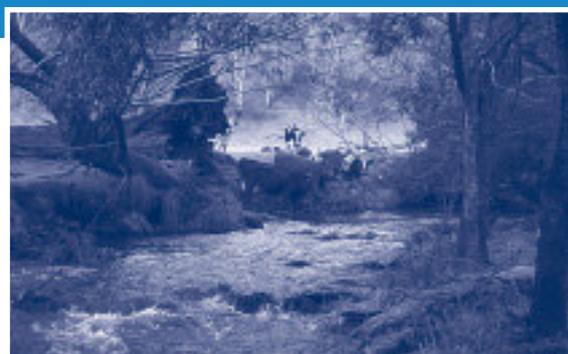
Healthy creeks, healthy communities

Since 2004, Eskdale has had an active and extremely committed Waterwatch group that began monitoring in “troubled waters”.

Little Snowy Creek is an important part of both the landscape and the livelihood of residents in the township of Eskdale, situated in Victoria's high country. Creek water is used for domestic, stock and irrigation water and the creek provides the basis for many recreational activities.

As Bruce Birrell, the local Waterwatch facilitator explained, authorities received intermittent complaints in 2004 regarding the water quality of Little Snowy Creek after residents became ill with gastroenteritis. A closer look at the Creek by the Environment Protection Agency, North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and local Council revealed a number of issues including deteriorating water quality, odours, stock access to waterways, eroding banks and willow infestation.

A six-week intensive water-sampling program was commissioned to quantify the magnitude of microbiological contamination but residents of Eskdale quickly realised that ongoing data collection was needed to keep a check on the health of their waterway and its uses. And so the Eskdale Waterwatch group was formed.



Kathy Wilde, a local Eskdale resident and dedicated volunteer monitor, recalled, ***“We realised that without extensive baseline data available there would be no records from which to assess progress and improvement in water quality. With assistance from the North East CMA and Waterwatch, we were provided with a water monitoring kit and trained to use the equipment.”***

Each month, the Eskdale volunteers test 6 different sites for physical-chemical parameters. Samples for nitrates and E.coli testing are collected bi-monthly and sent on to a laboratory. Eskdale Primary School is keenly involved in the collection of river health data and has the regular support of local volunteers and local Waterwatch Facilitator, Bruce Birrell.

The monitoring program has not only increased interest levels of the locals but also demonstrated ownership of the creek by many people in the community. Ongoing monitoring will show if improvements are being made in the future with respect to overall stream health.

Top The Eskdale report identified willow infestation as one issue affecting river health. **Top right** Eskdale residents get up close and personal with their local macroinvertebrate community at a Waterwatch training event. **Above** Cattle crossing waterways were contributing to some of the water quality issues affecting Eskdale's community.