



**Monitoring Information**  
99 groups, 120 participants, 201 sites  
**Education Participation** 7 546 participants  
**Coordinator FTE** 4.0  
**Program Budget** \$470 000

### Waterwatch Coordinators



Leigh Mitchell

Melanie Barrot

Britt Gregory

Jennelle Carlier

David Marsden

Danielle Guilfoyle



Rob Loats measures waterway salinity at dozens of sites each month.

*"The way forward will be for all to closely work in partnership with the North Central CMA to identify and implement suitable rehabilitation and restoration projects along our riparian lands, and most importantly implement a natural flow regime to all our waterways, wetlands and floodplains".*

## A salty motivation

Rob Loats, an active member of the Donald Angling Club, celebrated 10 years of water quality monitoring and restoration projects within the Avon/Richardson catchments in 2006. His love for the rivers and lakes has grown from a life long passion of recreational fishing and concern that declining water quality – largely due to increasing stream salinity – was negatively impacting on the health of aquatic communities.

"Water quality monitoring over the years has produced some interesting results, including data that indicates that salinity continues to impact on several community assets" said Rob. "I am continually surprised by the changes that I see each month". A striking example of this was when Rob arrived at one of his monitoring sites on the Richardson River during this year's drought to find a thick layer of salt encrusting the remaining pool of water!

Rob's efforts have been sustained by grants\* to purchase and maintain water testing equipment and reimburse Rob for the substantial travel and administration costs involved in travelling to and from monitoring sites. Currently, Rob monitors 29 lake, river, dam, channel, reservoir, and occasional groundwater sites monthly. Ongoing support from both Wimmera and North Central Waterwatch coordinators have helped sustain his commitment to the monitoring program.

Rob, as a spokesperson for the Donald Angling Club, regularly reports his data and observations in Donald's local Buloke Times newspaper. Four years ago Rob was invited to sit on the North Central Catchment Management Authority's Avoca/Avon-Richardson Implementation Committee because of his active involvement in the Waterwatch program and the Donald Angling Club.

Rob has shown amazing commitment to his local region through his extensive monitoring, communication of results and input into North Central CMA's on ground projects and planning. We salute!

\* Thankyou to the Second Generation Landcare and Community Salinity Grants programs for financially supporting Rob's work and similar community projects.



This thick salt crust greeted Rob at a monitoring site on the Richardson River in January, 2007. The water beneath was almost four times saltier than sea water.

### Waterwatch Objective 3:

Increase community involvement in water management decisions and gain community commitment to action in addressing waterway and catchment issues



Over 50 Waterwatch volunteers and members of the local community engaged in river health discussion at Bendigo's 'Rivers of Knowledge' information session. Participants enthusiastically interacted with presenters on platypus monitoring, the environmental values of the Loddon and Campaspe rivers, as well as local frog species and Waterwatch's frog monitoring program. The community showed genuine interest and desire to get involved in North Central Catchment Management Authority projects.



Regional Waterwatch Coordinator Leigh Mitchell answers questions about frogs at the successful 'Rivers of Knowledge' information day.

#### Waterwatch Objective 1:

Increase community awareness, understanding and ownership of water issues and their relationship to catchment health



Darren White assesses the water quality at his Bendigo reservoir site.

Waterwatch has raised water quality concerns at a local parkland reservoir with local council. Community Waterwatch monitor, Darren White, has been monitoring the reservoir over the past 9 months and has observed and documented consistently low pH values. City of Greater Bendigo Parks Ranger Mark Toohey has been reviewing results since Darren began monitoring. NCCMA staff have recently written a letter to Council outlining concerns over water quality in the reservoir, using this Waterwatch data as the primary supporting data.



#### Waterwatch Objective 2:

Involve communities monitoring their local waterways to collect and provide data which is credible, accepted and used



Protected heritage: a historic sheep wash present on the Penny property.

#### Waterwatch Objective 4:

Establish and maintain effective partnerships between the community and catchment managers

#### Other outstanding highlights and achievements

Hosted Victoria Waterwatch conference.

Community frog monitoring program discovers 60+ new populations of threatened species.

New Waterwatch trailer launched.

Murray Human Services receive grant for Waterwatch activities.

Cross-catchment schools tour with Wimmera and Glenelg Hopkins Waterwatch.

**Partners/Sponsors** National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, Bureau of Rural Sciences, North Central Catchment Management Authority, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Primary Industries, Coliban Water, Buloke Shire (Sustainability Fund sponsored project), City of Greater Bendigo, Shire of Campaspe, Rochester Campaspe Water Services Committee, Ecowise Environmental, Lower Murray Water, Landcare, Central Highlands Water.

Photos courtesy of North Central Waterwatch and North Central Catchment Management Authority.



Active students of Swan Hill North Primary School undertake Waterwatch activities outside of school hours.

#### Waterwatch Objective 5:

Provide school learning opportunities and be an integral part of the curriculum

An environmental group made up of Swan Hill North Primary School students demonstrates that Waterwatch has a place in schools outside of the classroom. A number of senior students make up the special interest group that monitor several lakes at a local golf course, as well as continually monitor the weather from a station on site at the school. They have developed and author a website to demonstrate their results to other students and members of the community.