



Monitoring Information
87 groups, 132 participants, 151 sites
Education Participation 7 911 participants
Coordinator FTE 4.1
Program Budget \$463 500

Waterwatch Coordinators



Tammy Dawson



Greg Gilbert



Tanya Cowell



Marni Speed



Jill Vella



Bruce Paton



Phil Marantelli



Photographer Alison Pouliot introduces workshop participants to the essentials of photo point monitoring.

Catchment Connections

The volunteers who collect information on Gippsland's waterways are true community scientists and partners in regional catchment management. To recognise their contribution, Gippsland Waterwatch recently hosted a 'Communities Caring for Catchments: Volunteers Protecting our Waterways' Conference.



Volunteers attending the event learnt about the long term implications of fire in their catchments.



Conference participants received an update on Gippsland's drought from catchment managers.

Sixty delegates, including volunteers, teachers and representatives of management organisations and industry attended the conference, which kicked off with a 'welcome to country' by senior Gunai/Kurnai elder Uncle Albert Mullet. An inspiring presentation by Jason Alexander, the Executive Director of Earthwatch, on the importance of the community in protecting our environment was also a big hit. Participants then had the choice of hearing from experts on a range of natural and cultural heritage subjects, including the effects of bushfires and drought on Gippsland's catchments and communities. Free training was also provided by experts in ecological assessment and photo-point monitoring, while new Waterwatchers had the opportunity to learn the skills of a Waterwatch monitor.

A highlight for community monitors was the opportunity to meet those who use their data. Volunteer Susan Collingbourne commented "The most important thing for me was knowing how vital our data is to managing our waterways – when I

found out I felt really proud of the work I've done", while Jodi Halliwell of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority said "It was great to let the volunteers know how important their partnership, involvement and data is in managing our catchments for the future".

Bruce Paton, Waterwatch's Gippsland Lakes Education Officer said after the conference "I really feel we have helped to renew community interest in our waterways – it's great to see local community and catchment managers connecting and discussing ways they can work together to protect our rivers and catchments".

Waterwatch Objective 4:

Establish and maintain effective partnerships between the community and catchment managers

Waterwatch attracted a new audience for catchment health messages recently, by hosting a family-oriented Tarra Bulga Rainforest and Rivers Discovery Day. Ten families embarked on a journey into the rainforest to see what water quality is like at the top of the catchment, before seeking and learning about sensitive aquatic life. Since then, two families have become Waterwatch monitors and all are looking forward to the next big event.

"My two boys and I enjoyed ourselves immensely and learned a thing or two along the way about the importance of caring for our water catchment areas. They particularly enjoyed the macro-invertebrates session".

The Thompson Family

Waterwatch Objective 1:

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



Michael Starikov records water quality data at a monitoring site.

Nicole and Michael Starikov joined Waterwatch in 2006 with a strong desire to make a contribution towards the future health of our waterways. Together with other Waterwatchers they began assisting the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to collect vital water quality and photo point monitoring data on the Thomson River as it entered an environmental flows program. Cath Paulet, Environmental Water Resources Officer with the WGCMA says "Waterwatch volunteers are providing the WGCMA with valuable data at a frequency that we would not be able to achieve without them".



Waterwatch Coordinator Marni Speed leads an educational exploration of Tarra Bulga's waterways.



Photo point monitoring captures changes to a river's physical form under different flow conditions.

Waterwatch Objective 3:

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

In 2007, the Nooramunga Corner Inlet community water monitoring project celebrated its 10 year anniversary and won the prestigious United Nations Association of Australia's Community Award. The project has involved over 50 community volunteers to sample 30 river, stream and estuary sites weekly since 1997. Samples are laboratory tested by the NCI Project Officer, with data used by catchment managers, academics and the general public to identify issues, develop management plans and build a better understanding of local water quality issues.

Waterwatch Objective 2:

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

Professional development sessions in Leongatha and Traralgon have helped Grades 3-6 Primary teachers to integrate Waterwatch's water and catchment themes into the curriculum under the new Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). Teachers focussed on regionally-relevant topics including water as a vital resource, urban development, community action towards improving waterways, the importance of habitat, and how drought affects us all.

Waterwatch Objective 5:

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

Other outstanding highlights and achievements

Nooramunga Corner Inlet Project wins United Nations Association of Australia World Environment Day Award (Community category) after 10 years of community monitoring. Also a category finalist in Banksia Awards.

Waterwatch Coordinator Greg Gilbert celebrated 13 years of service.

Partners/Sponsors Natural Heritage Trust, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Gippsland Water, South Gippsland Water, Southern Rural Water, Grand Ridge Plantations, Esso / BHP Billiton Australia, TRU energy, Loy Yang Power, SGS Environmental Services, Gippsland Lakes Future Directions and Action Plan.

Photos courtesy of West Gippsland Waterwatch and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.