

Field in Focus - Biodiversity

What are we doing?

This project provides infrastructure to deliver water to nine high-value floodplains.

The infrastructure will be used to provide water at a frequency, duration and interval required to support the ecological needs of the floodplain. This water will bring new life and help these ecologically significant floodplains to survive and build resilience to cope with future dry conditions and drought.

We aim to provide positive social and economic outcomes at the local and regional scale, whilst minimising potential impacts on existing infrastructure and open spaces.

This fact sheet is part of the 'Field in Focus' series, covering:

- Surface water, groundwater, and geology
- Biodiversity
- Land use, community, and business
- Cultural and Historical Heritage.

What are we investigating?

We are investigating the flora, fauna and habitat found within each project area and considering the likely benefits and potential impacts resulting from the works.

We are considering changes associated with construction activities (i.e., the building phase) with future environmental watering (i.e., the operations phase).

Our investigations will help us identify and better understand the native flora, fauna, and habitat values found in the project area, and consider how they are likely to respond to a changed watering regime.

Our studies address the published Scoping Requirements and are focused on:

- The predicted benefits to biodiversity, including:
 - Native vegetation condition and extent.
 - Outcomes for rare or threatened species, including those which are protected under State and Commonwealth legislation.
 - Ecosystem functions.
- Assessing and avoiding or minimising:
 - The potential impacts to native vegetation resulting from construction.
 - The potential loss or degradation of habitat for threatened flora and fauna species.
 - Potential indirect effects on biodiversity values including, for example, habitat fragmentation, contaminants and pollutants, pathogens, and pest animals.
 - Potential disruption to the movement of aquatic fauna.
- Comparing between the identified impacts and potential benefits for specific species and communities.
- Potential cumulative changes associated with these nine projects as well as other existing and proposed developments in the region.



How are our specialists investigating these issues?

Our specialists carry out their investigations using a mixture of techniques including desktop studies, modelling, and carrying out field studies. The team also undertake risk assessments for each discipline, including how the risks can be mitigated.

Our investigations generally involve:

Aquatic Ecology

- Field surveys for platypus, turtles, and crayfish.
- Evaluating the potential for temporary and permanent changes to waterway health during the construction and operational phases.
- Evaluating the potential impacts to aquatic ecosystems within and downstream of the sites.
- Considering the potential for noise and vibration associated with construction activities to impact on fish communities.
- Assessing the potential impacts of the project on ecological communities and flora and fauna species of conservation significance.

Terrestrial Ecology

- Field surveys for flora, including vegetation quality assessments, threatened species surveys, and large tree assessments.
- Field surveys for threatened fauna species.
- Evaluating the potential for temporary and permanent changes to native vegetation, fauna and ecosystems during construction and operation.
- Assessing the ecological benefits to terrestrial flora and fauna as a result of the changed hydrological regime.
- Evaluating potential impacts to any aquatic and groundwater dependent ecosystems.
- Assessing the potential impacts on habitat connectivity and wildlife movement.

Noise & Vibration

- Desktop assessment of potential sensitive receptors (such as households near the sites) and background levels of noise and vibration data available.
- Modelling of construction and operational noise levels.
- Considering the potential noise and vibration impacts to the sensitive receptors and ecologically sensitive places within and adjacent to the project area during construction, commissioning, and operation of the works.

Air Quality

- Desktop assessment of potential sensitive receptors (such as households near the sites) and background levels of air quality data available.
- Considering the potential air quality impacts to the sensitive receptors during construction, commissioning, and operation of the works.

How will these assessments be used?

These assessments are part of the Environment Effects Statements (EES) and Environment Reports (ER) that inform statutory approvals required for the projects. This includes planning scheme amendments under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and Commonwealth environmental approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

You will have an opportunity to make a submission on the EESs, ERs, and supporting approval documents, and your submission will contribute to the statutory decision-making process.



Find out more

To find out more about the impact assessment process, please visit the 'Planning/Approvals' tab at www.vmfrp.com.au.

To provide feedback, email info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au or contact the Communications and Engagement Project Officer on **0428 516 233**.

If your query relates specifically to VMFRP proposals at Guttrum-Benwell or Gunbower, contact the Senior Engagement Officer at North Central Catchment Management Authority on **0439 554 186**.