

The Applied Aquatic Ecology Research Hub

Quarterly Update – Winter 2017



Quarterly Updates share information on progress of the Hub's activities with Hub Partners.

Background

Divisions with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) and Victorian Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) recognise the potential mutual benefits and efficiencies in creating a collaborative Applied Aquatic Ecology Research Hub (The Hub) to support Victoria's aquatic research needs and improve coordination. The Hub model represents a cost-effective solution for investors to collectively coordinate, share plan, deliver and evaluate a portfolio of knowledge assets that benefit the entire waterway investment sector. The Hub will support the Partners in achieving positive outcomes for Victorian waterways.

Who is involved?

The founding partners comprise:

- three areas within the Water and Catchments Group at DELWP (Water Health, Environmental Water and Inter-governmental)
- DELWP's Biodiversity Division (including ARI)
- Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH)
- Victoria's CMAs

It is intended that other key stakeholders in the management of Victoria's waterways will become involved in the Hub in the future.

Aims

The Hub aims to:

- Improve co-ordination of freshwater and estuarine research, monitoring and investment activity in Victoria

- Facilitate the dialogue between researchers, investors, and managers to improve management decisions
- Improve information sharing and communication of research findings to all Hub Partners
- Improve return on investment in aquatic ecology research and knowledge
- Improve the alignment of research with policy direction

2017 - Achievements so far

1. Employ a Hub Coordinator

A Hub Coordinator (Rob Richards) was employed in February 2017 for one year. The Coordinator will:

- implement the 2017 Work Plan, developed in association with the Partner Group
- facilitate actions in the Work Plan, with assistance from the Partner Group
- communicate extensively with the Control Group and Partner Group to ensure sharing of ideas and addressing needs of all partners
- ensure sound project management
- evaluate and improve the Hub effectiveness

2. Finalise a Governance Framework

A governance framework was established and agreed upon by the Control Group. This framework includes the following roles:

Project Owner: Director Waterways, DELWP

Control Group: Oversight/strategic direction and approval of decisions from the Partner group. The Control group is made up of Executive level representatives from the partner organisations.

Partner Group: Represent agencies/business units, oversee development and implementation of the Work Plan and operating environment, and provide recommendations to Control Group.

Completed: May 2017

3. Prepare Hub 2017 Work Plan

Completed: May 2017

4. Prepare a Hub Strategic Plan

A draft Hub Strategic Plan was circulated to the Partner Group for comments. A final version has been professionally designed for distribution in early August.

Completed: August 2017

5. Coordination of engagement and information sharing processes

Effective engagement across partners is an essential element of the Hub. A draft Engagement Strategy has been circulated to the Partner Group for comment and will be distributed in early August.

Completed: August 2017

There is regular dialogue between the Hub Coordinator and partners, via email and phone calls. Partner Group meetings are held every six weeks, and minutes circulated. A Partner Group meeting is scheduled for August 14 with a Control Group meeting on August 15.

6. Collate current research and monitoring projects (2013-2017)

A Research and Monitoring Directory (RaMonD) is being created. Version 1.0 (spreadsheet) was distributed to partners in March 2017, with interpretive notes. It includes about 600 records of Partner monitoring and research activities (largely 2013-2017).

A RaMonD User Group (RUG) was established in May 2017 to provide input regarding the utility of Version 1.0. Planning for the development of Version 1.1 is underway. The Hub Coordinator prepared a project plan for consideration by the Partners outlining proposed steps, personnel, timeframe and budget for development of RaMonD Version 1.1.

Target completion date: September 2017

7. Prepare a Research Landscape Map

A draft set of maps has been developed of the research landscape to provide a visualisation for Hub Partners of where their work fits within the broad

research landscape and to outline the relationships (including overlaps) between various programs, policies and Partner monitoring and research activities. Draft maps were circulated to Partners in July.

Completed: August 2017

8. Prepare a systematic Gap Analysis

Over 300 Partner research and monitoring projects (2010-2017) were mapped, into a spreadsheet which will provide the basis for exploring potential gaps. An approach is being developed to identify knowledge gaps to help develop future policy directions and our understanding of current policy knowledge need gaps. A methodology document was circulated to Partners in July.

The Partner Group sought the development of a brief project rationale for the Research Landscape mapping and gap analysis work to enable partners to fully understand scope, purpose and end product. This has been prepared and circulated to the Partner Group.

Target completion date: September 2017

9. Organise a Hub Knowledge Exchange Forum

This Forum will provide an opportunity for exchange of information between policy, science and practitioners. The topic of environmental water has been suggested, similar to the VEWH forum in 2015. The Hub Coordinator will assist in organising and facilitating the forum.

Proposed Forum date: 25 October 2017

10. Organise Public Research Forum

This Forum will showcase the research achievements of CMAs and other Partners. The Hub Coordinator is seeking advice from CMA CEOs regarding a suitable topic and location for the forum, which the Hub will assist in organising and facilitating.

Proposed Forum date: February 2018

11. Monthly collaborative opportunities roundtable

The Partners will be commencing a monthly 1 hr roundtable session to bring forward any collaborative project or knowledge exchange opportunities. The first roundtable will be held in early September.

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