

# Managing riparian land: an overview of benefits to landholders

Over the past 20 years, catchment management authorities (CMAs) and government have worked with landholders to manage riparian land. Typical management activities have included fencing, revegetation, provision of off-stream stock watering infrastructure and weed and pest animal management.

Riparian land with native vegetation in good condition is important for waterway health. It provides habitat for plants and animals, improves water quality, stabilises stream banks, supplies food for fish and other in-stream organisms and provides a corridor for the movement of native plants and animals.

## What is riparian land?

Land that adjoins rivers, creeks, estuaries, lakes and wetlands is known as riparian land (often called 'frontage'). Riparian land is often the only remaining area of remnant vegetation in the landscape.

## What are the benefits of riparian works to landholders?

On a personal and property scale, managing riparian land has a number of direct benefits to landholders that are supported by sound evidence. A summary of these landholder benefits is outlined below.

### Summary of evidence: landholder benefits from selected riparian management activities

Activity	Benefits	Benefit by production type
Fencing	Reduced time mustering stock	  
Revegetation	Riparian shelter belt → improved stock health and increased crop productivity	   
Off-stream watering	Access to higher quality water → increased water and forage intake → increased milk production (dairy) or weight gain (beef and sheep)	  
Fencing	Keeps stock out of waterways → reduced risk factors for diseases	 
Revegetation	Riparian vegetation in good condition → increased land value	   
Revegetation and weed control	Healthy riparian land → enhanced aesthetics and landholder wellbeing	   

### Table Key

	Dairy		Beef		Sheep		Crop
---	-------	---	------	---	-------	---	------

# Managing riparian land: an overview of benefits to landholders

## Production benefits

### *Reduced time mustering*

A number of independent Australian studies have shown that fencing riparian land can make it easier to muster stock, which in turn can reduce farm costs.

For example, a Victorian study of Crown frontage licence holders revealed that 50% of survey respondents considered fencing their waterway to be an important to very important productivity benefit in managing livestock.

### *Increased production*

Off-stream stock watering can provide a cleaner and more reliable source of drinking water. Studies have shown that greater access to higher quality water means that livestock will drink more, and the more water stock consume, the more they eat and hence the more milk they produce (dairy) or weight they gain (meat production).



**Off-stream stock watering as part of riparian management.**  
Photo: Johanna Slijkerman, (then) Department of Sustainability and Environment

Numerous studies have demonstrated many different ways in which shelter belts improve stock and crop production.

The presence of a diversity of native vegetation types on farms can assist biological control of insect pests in crops by birds and other animals.

A study of bees in California showed that proximity to native vegetation enhances pollination services in cropping areas.

### *Reduced risks to animal health*

As well as increased productivity, fencing off the waterway and providing a clean alternative water source reduces the risk factors known to cause mastitis and other cattle diseases.

For example, interviews with cattle producers in the USA noted that most producers who fenced waterways and provided an alternative source of water for their livestock saw a decrease in incidence of disease, including mastitis.

## Improved property prices

Evidence from several Australian studies based on farm sales suggests that well managed riparian frontages can improve the market value of a rural property.

For example, one study of the effect of native vegetation on properties showed that with the optimum amount of vegetation, property values rose between 5% and 16% depending upon the size of the property.

## Improved aesthetics and landholder wellbeing

Many landholders are motivated to carry out riparian works for aesthetic and environmental reasons, including the peace and beauty of having native vegetation and wildlife on the farm.

For example, landholder surveys undertaken as part of a Victorian evaluation of riparian management showed that improving the aesthetic value of the riparian land was one of the top three responses given by landholders in response to why they undertook riparian works.

This and other studies also showed that regardless of a landholder's initial motivation for managing riparian land, a key outcome is often a more aesthetically pleasing farm which is highly valued by the landholder.



**Wannon River, SW Victoria. Pre-riparian works.**  
Photo: Glenelg Hopkins CMA

# Managing riparian land: an overview of benefits to landholders



**Wannon River, SW Victoria. Fifteen years after riparian works. Photo: Glenelg Hopkins CMA**

## Want to manage your riparian land?

More information about riparian management programs in your region can be obtained from your CMA.

East Gippsland CMA	5152 0600
West Gippsland CMA	1300 094 262
Corangamite CMA	5232 9100
Glenelg Hopkins CMA	5571 2526
Wimmera CMA	5382 1544
Mallee CMA	5051 4377
North Central CMA	5448 7124
Goulburn Broken CMA	5822 7700
North East CMA	1300 216 513
Melbourne Water*	131 722

\* Melbourne Water is the waterway manager for the Port Phillip region

## Further information

### Fact sheet series

This is one in a series of fact sheets on the benefits for landholders in managing riparian land.

Other fact sheets cover specific benefits to:

- dairy farmers
- sheep graziers
- beef cattle farmers
- croppers.

The fact sheet series has been developed from a longer report investigating the benefits to landholders of undertaking riparian work. The fact sheets and full report can be found in the [riparian land](#) section on the DELWP website.

### Riparian land

More information about managing riparian land can be found on the DELWP website at: [Riparian land](#) and [Crown land leases, licences and permits](#).

The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2019



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as aut3hor. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISBN 978-1-76077-468-4 (pdf/online/MS word)

#### Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

## Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136186, email [customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au), or via the National Relay Service on 133 677 [www.relayservice.com.au](http://www.relayservice.com.au). This document is also available on the internet at [www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au).