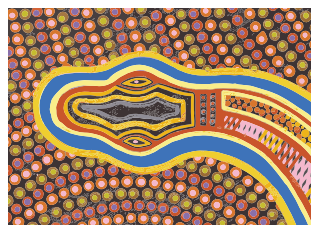




Powlett River / Kugerungmome Partnerships

Project Summary



**POWLETT RIVER /
KUGERUNGHOME
PARTNERSHIPS**



Introduction

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) has received funding through the Victorian Government's Our Catchments, Our Communities (OCOC) program to undertake an integrated catchment management project over three years in the Powlett River catchment area.

Kugerungmome is the Bunurong people's Traditional name for the Powlett River catchment. The Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) have given us permission to name our project as the 'Powlett River / Kugerungmome Partnerships' project. We respectfully use the dual name Powlett River / Kugerungmome.

The aim of the project is to establish a coordinated approach to the management of land, water, and biodiversity at the catchment scale.

Powlett River / Kugerungmome catchment

The Powlett River / Kugerungmome catchment includes the waterways and associated land, biodiversity, coastal and marine assets. The catchment is of major cultural significance to the Traditional Owners, the Bunurong people, represented by Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation.

The Powlett River / Kugerungmome catchment extends from Korumburra to Wonthaggi from the hills to the coastal plain. The Powlett River originates on the southern slopes of the Strzelecki Ranges, flowing in a southwest direction and discharging to Bass Strait via an intermittently closed estuary system. The surrounding catchment has a mild climate, with high annual rainfall.

The catchment incorporates parts of Bass Coast and South Gippsland Shire Councils. Urban and built-up areas make up 1.7% of the catchment area, and include the townships of Wonthaggi, Korumburra and smaller localities of Jumbunna, Kongwak, Outtrim, Wattlebank and Dalyston.

Water is an important resource in the catchment supporting agriculture, domestic and urban consumption, and the environment. Soil and land assets are highly valued for supporting agricultural production. Whilst the soil is susceptible to acidity, it is largely intact and meets desired land use requirements under appropriate management. Upper reaches of the catchment can be subject to erosion.

The catchment was once heavily forested and was almost entirely cleared for farming in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some areas of fragmented native vegetation remain, mostly along the waterways, coast, estuary and around Wonthaggi.

Coastal and inland reserves including the new Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park support an array of diverse native flora and fauna, including threatened species such as Eastern Spider-orchid, Swamp Antechinus and Hooded Plover. A further 46 hectares is permanently protected on private land through Trust for Nature covenants. There are also areas of Crown water frontage along parts of the Powlett River and its tributaries and an extensive network of road reserves.

The Powlett River estuary is listed on the Directory of Important Wetlands Australia due to the diverse range of birds, plants, and fish communities it supports. These include many listed threatened and endangered species, as well as its extensive saltmarsh and wetland communities and cultural heritage values.

Community interest in land, water and biodiversity management in the catchment is high with a strong history of collaboration on waterway, biodiversity, and coastal projects. The Powlett Project was established in 1996 as part of the Bass Coast Landcare Network and covers the five landcare groups in the Powlett catchment. In that time the project has put 1,630,000 plants in the ground. Other active groups in the area include the South Gippsland Conservation Society, the friends of Wonthaggi Heathland & Coastal Reserve, Wonthaggi Seedbank and Nursery, and Bass Coast BirdLife.



Artwork 'Kugerungmome'

The Artist – John Thomas Winch

John was born in Melbourne and taken back to Balranald NSW shortly after his birth. John is descendent from the Mutthi Mutthi, Yorta Yorta and Bunurong tribes from south east Australia.

John is currently a director and senior culture and heritage officer with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. He draws his inspiration to paint from the land and waters associated with his home land south east Australia.

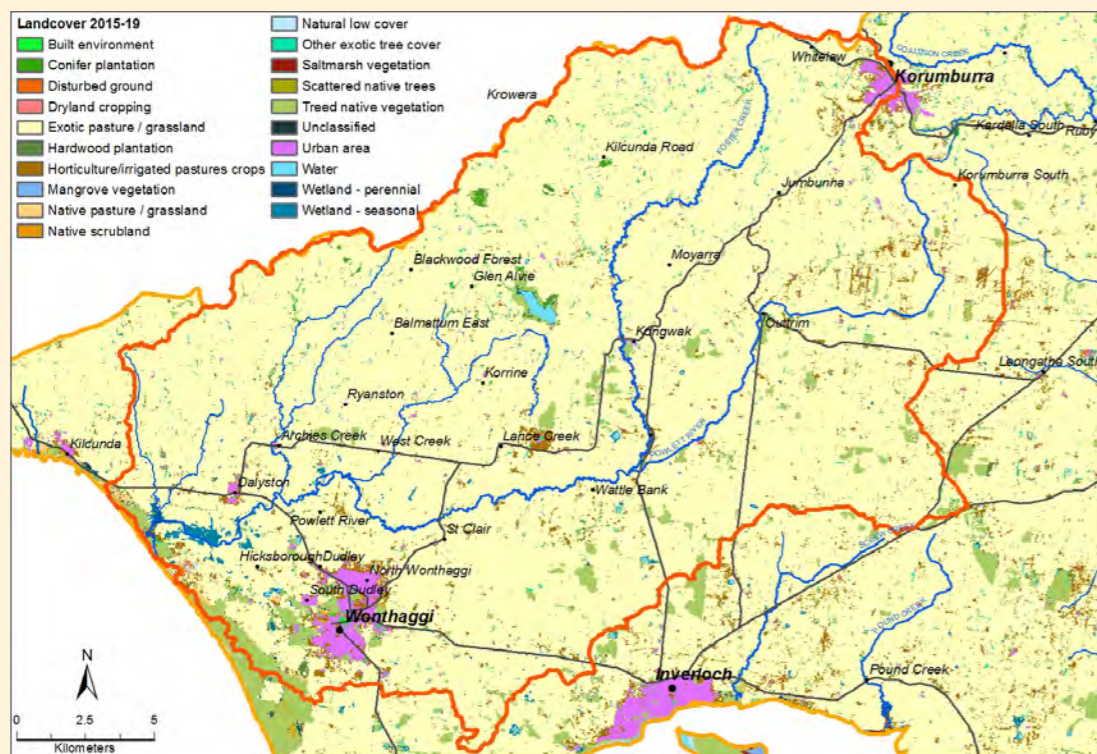
Artwork design and use has been approved by BLCAC.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of this country, the Yallock – Bulluk Clan of the Bunurong People, and to their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country.

Traditional name – Kugerungmome



Powlett River catchment with local government and Catchment Management Authority boundaries



Landcover land use for the Powlett River catchment 2015-2019

Strategic Directions

A Stakeholder Reference Group, consisting of a broad range of representatives from agencies, organisations and community, were involved in a collaborative planning process to develop a set of long-term priorities for the Powlett River / Kugerungmome catchment. These are documented in a Strategic Directions Statement, which is available on the WGCMA website at www.wgcma.vic.gov.au

From this, sub-projects were developed to address the threats to the most significant natural assets within the Powlett River / Kugerungmome catchment and to achieve the following priority goals:

- Protect and rehabilitate the riparian areas of the Powlett River and its tributaries.
- Protect and enhance the environmental, social and cultural values and associated ecosystem processes in the Powlett River estuary.
- Protect and enhance habitat for threatened fauna and flora species to maximise conservation outcomes.

- Protect and enhance remnant vegetation on public and private land including hollow bearing trees.
- Empower Bunurong Traditional Owners to manage land and sea Country according to their aspirations, principles and priorities.

Powlett River / Kugerungmome Partnerships – Project Overview

The sub-projects include:

- Protecting and rehabilitating Bridge and Woolshed Creeks
- Permanently protect habitat and enhance the condition of remnant vegetation in strategic locations on private land
- Predator (fox) control and associated activities to protect Hooded Plover populations
- Powlett River / Kugerungmome Cultural Heritage Management

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Protect and rehabilitate the riparian areas of the Powlett River and its tributaries

Protect and enhance remnant vegetation on public and private land including hollow bearing trees

Protect and enhance environmental, social and cultural values and associated ecosystem processes in the Powlett River estuary
Protect and enhance habitat for threatened fauna and flora species to maximise conservation outcomes

Empower Bunurong Traditional Owners to manage land and sea Country according to their aspirations, principles and priorities

PROJECTS

f Protecting and rehabilitating Bridge & Woolshed Creeks

f Permanently protect habitat and enhance the condition of remnant vegetation

f Predator control and associated activities to support Hooded Plover

f Powlett River / Kugerungmome Cultural Heritage Management Project

DELIVERY PARTNERS

Bass Coast Landcare Network & West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

Trust for Nature

Bass Coast Landcare Network, Parks Victoria, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, BirdLife

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation & West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority



f Protecting and rehabilitating Bridge and Woolshed Creeks

Bridge and Woolshed Creeks are short tributaries of the Powlett River, rising in the south-west of the catchment and joining upstream of their confluence with the Powlett River estuary. This sub-project will establish a riparian buffer to protect and restore much of the remaining unfenced areas of the two tributaries.

The on-ground works will include:

- Fencing to exclude stock.
- Vegetation establishment and weed control.
- Control of willow infestations.

This sub-project is being delivered by Bass Coast Landcare Network and WGCMA.

f Permanently protect habitat and enhance the condition of remnant vegetation

The Powlett River / Kugerungmome catchment is a largely cleared landscape, and native vegetation accounts for only 3.2% of the catchment area. Much of this vegetation is highly fragmented and in moderate to poor condition. This sub-project will improve the condition of 33.9 hectares of Lowland Forest within existing covenanted sites at Archie's Creek and establish a new covenant to protect EPBC listed Giant Gippsland Earthworm habitat.

The on-ground works will include:

- Weed searching and mapping.
- Control of transformer weeds including Blackberry, English Ivy, Holly and Sweet Pittosporum.
- Supplementary planting to improve structure and diversity.

This sub-project is being delivered by Trust for Nature.

f Predator control and associated activities to support Hooded Plover

The Hooded Plover is a threatened shorebird, listed as vulnerable in Victoria (Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. 1988) and nationally (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. 1989). The Powlett River estuary and adjoining shoreline areas are an important habitat site for the species. Predation from the Red Fox is recognised as a major threat to the breeding success of the species. At present, while there is some investment in predator control programs in adjacent areas, the Mouth of the Powlett remains a gap.

This sub-project will address this issue by undertaking a targeted soft-jaw trapping program in a 181-ha area around the Mouth of the Powlett, to support conservation outcomes for Hooded Plover and other vulnerable beach-nesting birds.

Monitoring of fox control activities will involve tracking the effectiveness of the trapping program (in terms of fox activity, trap results). A bird monitoring program will also be established to better understand the range of threats to the Hooded Plover, and to support evaluation of the effectiveness of the fox control program.

This sub-project is being delivered by Bass Coast Landcare Network, Parks Victoria, WGCMA and BirdLife Australia, in partnership with Friends of the Hooded Plover.

f Powlett River / Kugerungmome Cultural Heritage Management

The aim of this project is to support Bunurong Traditional Owners to manage Country. It provides for:

- Traditional Owner participation in the planning of on-ground works.
- Traditional Owners undertaking studies and investigations of cultural values in the Powlett River / Kugerungmome catchment.
- Traditional Owners working with landholders to document property owner knowledge of Traditional Cultural values, connecting with Landcare.
- Commissioning artwork for use on publications and materials associated with the Powlett River / Kugerungmome Partnerships project.

This sub-project is being delivered by Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and WGCMA.

