



Lessons learned at Gunbower Forest



The watering of the forest has huge benefits environmentally, socially and economically BUT ONLY if we capitalise on its potential.

# Cost to our communities...

- 28GL or **\$8.4 million** of water was used in 2015 in the Gunbower Forest
  - That water could have produced:
    - \$14 million dollars of milk, or
    - \$140 million if used for Horticulture
- and**
- It could have created 1,800 jobs.
- Further 450 GL may be recovered under Basin Plan

We manage water on our farms as efficiently as we can,  
environmental water should be managed the same way too



## Use of trade and carryover...

- In a year of low irrigation allocation it would be a great outcome to free up environmental water for irrigation, and return it in a year of plenty.
- The EWH should be able to use the dollars for environmental benefit, eg fish ladders on the Gunbower Creek at Koondrook, Cohuna and at the top end of the Creek, rather than have to purchase more water

# Water is only part of the solution...

- Kangaroos need to be sustainably culled for human consumption, as they are costing farmers and motorists dollars.
- Pest plants and animals need to be controlled eg. foxes eat turtles.
- Fish ways need to be installed to allow fingerlings to migrate up the Creek and not die at the bottom of the weir.
- Dead fish will need cleaning up once carp herpes is released
- Without investing in these things too – water is not being used most efficiently



**Trees need to be thinned in a sustainable way to improve the health of the forest and minimise the fire risk**

# Tourism

- A huge opportunity for those that enjoy the natural environment.
- Cultural Heritage, camping, fishing, bird watching, canoeing, bike riding, bush walking, orienteering, BBQs, just relaxing and enjoying the sounds of nature.
- We need to improve the on line information for all types of tourists.





# The Many Authorities:

- **NCCMA:** Environmental watering
- **Gannawarra Shire:** Recreation for locals and visitors, tourism and firewood, economic activity for businesses
- **Parks Victoria:** management of visitors, roads and Park conservation.
- **DELWP:** management of Forest and roads.
- **Murray River Tourism:** promotion, media, both hard copy and social, maps,
- **RDV:** funding
- **Small business:** economic activity, servicing the travelling public.
- **GMW:** water management
- **Yorta Yorta and Barapa:** cultural heritage.

## We need:

- **Coordination:** between all agencies and Council, the culture has to change
- **Protection and interpretation:** signage for the Cultural Heritage and environmental features
- **Promotion:** Need to promote watering of the forest, interpretive boards, CDs/apps
- **Education:** booklet on the flora and fauna by Kate Bennetts, maps, up to date access information, better roads

Visitors need to be managed...

We need to provide ways for people to engage with the bush and the water in a **low impact, safe way**:

- **Boardwalks** to give access to Reedy Lagoon and onto Black Swamp.
- A **viewing platform** over/into town swamp near the Cohuna caravan park.
- Good **walking/bike trails** from Koondrook to Cohuna to Torrumbarry and to important sites
- **Good access** along the River.
- Ideally one accessible track from Cohuna to the River.

## Visitors need to be managed...

- Weeds and rubbish are an ongoing issue.
- Take in take out, policy does not work in the Gunbower Forest - people camp on the Murray for extended periods
  - Shires and Parks Victoria have to pick up the cost
  - \$70,000 for Gannawarra Shire alone
- Need funding to enforce illegal activities and repair roads after flooding occurs

# Summary

- The watering of the forest has huge benefits, not only environmentally.
- But we need to capture the social, tourism and economic potential - invest in the necessary management and infrastructure in our parks as well.
- To do that we need to work closely together to achieve that for all locals/Victorians/Australians and overseas visitors that are many.
- We do need to remember that the environmental watering comes at a cost to the consumptive pool, the local community and GDP

A photograph of a swampy area. In the foreground, there is a body of water covered with a thick layer of green duckweed. Several large, dark logs are scattered in the water and along the banks. The background is filled with tall, slender trees with light-colored bark, likely cypress trees, under a clear blue sky. The text "Thank you for taking the time to come to our area." is overlaid in the center of the image.

**Thank you for taking the time to  
come to our area.**