



# VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL WATER HOLDER

**MEDIA RELEASE, 13 July 2016**

## **The year ahead for Gippsland's environmental water**

Gippsland is expected to receive enough environmental water in 2016-17 to support key rivers, wetlands and the wildlife that rely on it.

Environmental water will be provided to the Latrobe, Thomson, Macalister and Snowy rivers to benefit native fish including black bream, estuary perch and the protected Australian grayling.

Environmental water will also be delivered to wetlands along the lower Latrobe River: Dowd Morass, Sale Common and Heart Morass.

The water will also help plants germinate and grow, provide habitat for waterbirds, improve water quality and stabilise river channels.

Environmental water also benefits communities by improving conditions for fishing, camping and canoeing, sustaining healthy Country for Aboriginal communities, and improving water quality which can have indirect economic benefits for irrigation and urban water supply.

Details have been released in the Victorian Environmental Water Holder's (VEWH) annual plan for watering in 2016-17. The VEWH is an independent statutory body responsible for making decisions on the most efficient use of Victoria's environmental water.

The plan scopes potential environmental watering in Victoria using water held in reservoirs, set aside to be returned to rivers and wetlands for plants and animals.

In 2015-16, 27 rivers and 73 wetlands in Victoria received environmental water.

The VEWH plans for a range of scenarios – from drought to wet seasonal conditions – adjusting environmental water deliveries according to conditions.

The VEWH chairperson Denis Flett says environmental watering is essential for Gippsland and the benefits are clear.

“In West Gippsland, environmental watering triggered migration and breeding of fish in the Thomson system, with record numbers of Australian grayling eggs recorded in 2015,” he says.

Watering in the Gippsland Region will also include flows for the iconic Snowy River.

The annual Snowy River Increased Flows Program is developed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries – Water on behalf of three partner governments; the Commonwealth, Victoria and New South Wales.

The total volume planned for release in 2016–17 (including contributions from water savings in Victoria and New South Wales) is 131,071 megalitres (or million litres).

Environmental watering in the Snowy aims to mimic the unique natural flow pattern of the mountainous river system.

This flow pattern is important to maintain the shape of the Snowy River channel which has suffered from years of dwindling water flows caused by river regulation.

During 2016-17 the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, with assistance from the Department of Environment Land and Water Planning, will install equipment in the Snowy River estuary to monitor the impact of the environmental flows in the estuary.

Environmental Water Officer with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Liz Brown, says, "This data will show how the salinity and water temperature changes as a result of the flows.

"This is important in helping us understand the potential impacts of the flows on fish in the estuary."

The *Seasonal Watering Plan 2016-17* is based on proposals from Victoria's waterway managers which recommend the most effective watering activities for their region based on the best-available science.

The plan is available at [vewh.vic.gov.au](http://vewh.vic.gov.au).

PHOTOS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

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