



Southern ACT Waterwatch Report 2010

The Waterwatch Volunteers

Waterwatch is a national association of volunteers who look out for the health of the waterways of Australia. Like so many community based groups in the environmental field, Waterwatch provides a wider coverage of waterways than statutory bodies and research organisation have the support and resources to cover, and so provide a vital but often unacknowledged backup to those organisations. Here in the Southern ACT, Waterwatchers monitor the physical and chemical health of the headwaters of the Gudgenby, as well as the Tidbinbilla and the Paddy's, several popular public access areas along the Murrumbidgee, and urban ponds and waterlines in the region. Many also do spring and autumn bug counts on these places, participate in the annual 'Frog Watch' program and monitor platypus sightings while others send through an annual appraisal of the state of the riverbank and its vegetation across the region. They do this in their own time, with their own vehicles, and a little support with equipment and training from the national organisation and they do it for us all.

The Waterwatch Coordinator

Southern ACT Catchment Group supports a Waterwatch Coordinator who backs up the volunteers, collects their data, refills and repairs their equipment and sends them feedback on how their contributions have been received. As well as that the coordinator engages with the local community to increase awareness and hopefully increase voluntary involvement.

Here is a report on the last twelve months of the Southern ACT Catchment Group's involvement in Waterwatch through both the volunteers and the coordinator. The following headings are the agreed focus outcomes under the SACTCG's 'Caring for Our Country' funding for 2009 to 2011.

Facilitate and increase the involvement of youth in NRM projects

- *Waterwatch Holiday programs:*

This year ACT Waterwatch ran a holiday program in January at the National Museum as part of its 'H2O=LIFE' event. The SACTCG Waterwatch Coordinator attended planning meetings and delivered 4 days of activities.

- *Waterwatch school programs:*

The coordinator organised and ran 'Macroinvertebrate Survey' activity in partnership with ACT Waterwatch team for the 'National Youth River Health' Conference in October last year. The focus was on comparing catchments health through analysis of indicator invertebrate species. Groups included primary and secondary students from all over Australia and N.Z.

This year there were two educational programs delivered to local schools that featured a collaboration between the 3 catchment group's Waterwatch coordinators and the ACT Waterwatch facilitator.

One was a 3-day program of activities for Radford College's Year 5. The other was a morning field trip for N.S.W. Monaro High School's Year 8.

Land managers adopting improved NRM practices/skills

- *Land manager training programs:*

The Waterwatch Coordinator was involved in a number of training opportunities with a land management focus this year. These include;

- Assisting with the 'Living with Love Grass' public seminar hosted by Steve Welch.
- Attending erosion works tour on Mt Painter with land function analysis consultant David Tongway.
- Water quality monitoring training for land managers of Lion's Youth Haven farm and a resident of Lanyon Homestead.

Assistance was also provided for;

- Lion's Youth Haven 'School as Communities' grant application.
- Bumbalong Homestead (NSW) water quality issues.
- Tharwa residents water monitoring and habitat assessments.

The coordinator also assisted Molonglo Catchment group's application for funding for a Waterwatch coordinator in the Cooma/Monaro region, with a land manager focus, and represented the SACTCG at the Murry-Darling Basin Authority's stakeholder forum on 'Sustainable Diversion Limits' for the basin's waterways.

Facilitate and support the development and implementation of community groups and their involvement in local projects

- *Provide support to Waterwatch groups and other organisations:*

The coordinator has supported all of the Waterwatchers throughout this year and has visited all the teams at least once. All groups now have tests for nitrate and nitrite levels at their sites and have been issued with manuals. There has been a significant increase in the number of monitoring sites with many new individuals and groups joining this year. Unfortunately we have also lost a number of volunteers. Some have had changes in circumstances that have reduced their availability. Others have retired from Waterwatch after many years of tireless service. Notable absences will include, among others, Audrey Stewart who began the 'Bidgee Blue' Waterwatch team ten years ago. Mick McGhie moved to Goulburn this year. He has offered to return as often as possible to assist with newcomer Ian Bell, who has been left to carry the Bidgee Blue banner with the help of his two

sons. Our two NSW Waterwatchers have also been handed over to the new coordinator based in Cooma.

Two Parkcare groups, Cooleman Ridge Parkcare and P.O.S.M. (Parkcarers Of Southern Murrumbidgee) have rejoined Waterwatch. Deb from POSM has taken on key sites on the Murrumbidgee River. Many of the 'Friends of Tidbinbilla' Parkcare have also picked up the Waterwatch baton to help out Fiona and Gary after the birth of their daughter this year.

Youth involvement this year has included a commitment by Lanyon High School's 'Trek' students to undertake monthly monitoring at Lion's Youth Haven and a Wanniasa School student undertaking monthly monitoring with mentoring from the coordinator.

The Paddy's River Group were the most consistent team delivering 12 months of unremitting data. As well as undertaking an increased range of phys/chem tests, Waterwatchers are trialling a new algae monitoring program that has been developed by Dr Skinner, of Molonglo CG. Training and support around this has been ongoing this year.

In addition to supporting Waterwatch groups, the coordinator is a member of the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee (UMCCC), attending their regular meetings, training events and field days. He participated in an action plan held by the UMCCC, meeting with government, N.G.O and corporate representatives over the issue of continued high turbidity in the Murrumbidgee River. He has supported Mt Taylor Parkcare, MOTH and Cooleman Ridge Parkcare on specific issues and has contributed to the 'World of Tidbinbilla' book.

In addition the coordinator submitted feedback to Tuggeranong Community Council on local waterway concerns, attended a Conservation Council meeting on lower Molonglo development proposals and assisted Calwell HS with Yr9 'Exhibitions Program' by attending as a community representative at the 'round table' assessment sessions.

The coordinator has also attended monthly meetings with the ACT Waterwatch facilitator and the other Waterwatch coordinators.

- *Promote Waterwatch and other community groups through website, displays and publications:*

Waterwatch group profiles and seasonal updates now form a regular feature of the SACTCG website. There have been two catchment updates published this year so far. These are also made available for the ACT Waterwatch newsletter.

There were 3 Waterwatch group profiles published this year, in addition to an article on drain stencilling.

The coordinator also attended training on website development hosted by the NRM.

In addition the coordinator interviewed groups and penned the section on Waterwatch for the 'World of Tidbinbilla' book.

Deliver initiatives that support access to knowledge and skills for community organisations and youth through the involvement of NRM Organisations and Indigenous Organisations

- *Field days:*

The coordinator held 6 field days for Waterwatch groups this period, focusing on various monitoring outcomes. He also supported field days held by the NRM, Molonglo Catchment Group and ActewAGL through out the year. He assisted with UMCCC's Namadgi NP field day and 'Sharability's' field trip to Tidbinbilla NR.

- *Public events and website:*

The coordinator made monthly appearances on 2XX 'Radio Landcare' inviting guests from SACTCG Waterwatch and other environmental groups to discuss issues and involvement. The coordinator staffed gave a talk at Floriade this year, and staffed our information stand at four community festivals and events.

He contributed to three public forums, both local and national and organised opportunities for members to meet and discuss issues with political candidates. He also attended four publication launches this period.

- *Training opportunities:*

All Waterwatch groups received training in testing for nitrates and nitrites early in the year. A new manual has made things smoother for new groups, as well, this year. There was a training event held by Molonglo CG on the new algae monitoring system. Two follow up training sessions on algae monitoring were provided by the SACTCG WW coordinator with additional individual training provided through out the year. Additional training has been provided to existing groups on RARC assessments and macro-invertebrate surveying.

Roughly a dozen volunteers new to Waterwatch have been separately trained this year. This typically spans three monitoring sessions.

A special presentation on turtles, including pest species identification and care for injured turtles, was held this year. Involvement with Frogwatch training also continued this year with an increased involvement from our Waterwatch teams.

- *Volunteering opportunities:*

Promoting Waterwatch as an exciting and engaging volunteering activity, is ongoing. There have been at least 15 enquires this year with 8 new volunteers joining the regular ranks of the SACTCG under the Waterwatch program.

The coordinator has also facilitated the attendance of volunteers at Green Australia planting days, providing transport and equipment to two this year. Three Waterwatch teams have undertaken Frogwatch monitoring this year with the assistance of the WW coordinator. Support has also been given to a Barnardo client to under take platypus monitoring.

MERI (Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement) actions carried out

- *Monthly Catchment Health Indicators data gathered and recorded:*

Waterwatch groups in our region continue to submit information on a range of features in addition to 'phys/chem' data, as part of their valuable water monitoring efforts. There is an increase in the number of groups undertaking signal 2 score and RARC evaluations of their sites. This all now forms an important part of the 'CHiP' (Catchment Health indicator Program) evaluation system. There are 53 Waterwatch sites now 'active' in the Southern ACT. Some are only intermittently monitored, however at least 25 should be providing monthly information for the CHiP system. The SACTCG WW program now develops a 6 monthly health check at the sub-catchment level. This is forwarded to the ACT WW facilitator and the summary published on the ACT Waterwatch web site and newsletter.

In addition many teams have also conducted platypus surveys at there sites as well as frog population monitoring. ‘Photo point’ records have also increased this year, providing a valuable historical record of how our sites may change seasonally and over time.

Below is summary of monitoring over the last 12 months.

<i>(Nominal number of sites)</i>	Number of data sheets submitted by month.(Oct 2009-Sept 2010)											
	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S
Eric and Daniel (2)		2	2			2	2	2	2			
Sands (1)	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1
Tharwa Art Shed (4)	4	4					4					
Cooleman Ridge PC (1)												1
Bidgee Blue (3)	3	3	3	3		3	3	3	3	4	3	3
Lion’s Youth Haven (1)	1	1									2	2
Josh Bond (1)											1	1
Lake Tuggeranong team (4)	1			2		1	4	6	4	4	2	3
Brad Wilken(1)	1	1	1	1			1	1				
Gibraltar Ck & Paddy’s River (3)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Lanyon HS (2)	6	4						2		1	2	1
Conder Wetlands (1)	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1
POSM (5)												3
Geoff Hyles (1)			1	1	1	1			1	1		
Paddy’s River group (2)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Friends of Tidbinbilla (3)	3	3	3		3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2
CVA Tidbinbilla (5)	2	5	2		1	1			1	4	4	1
Diana Kirby (1)	1						1					
Gudgenby Bush Regenerators (7)	7		7		7		7		7		7	
Mark Jakobsons (3)					2							
Gundharwar Homestead NSW (1)		1		2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Bumbalong Homestead NSW (1)	1	1										
One off monitoring								1	5			
Total Sites monitored (53)	35	32	25	16	21	19	33	26	32	26	31	23



Water Education Project Officer 2010

The Water Education Officer

The Water Education project is a joint initiative of the Southern ACT Catchment group and ActewAGL's Source Water Protection project. It aims to provide an up to date on-line file of water education materials suitable for the ACT curriculum and to provide support for teachers in implementing these in their class rooms and in the field.

- **Increase in education of catchment health and source water issues at a primary, secondary and college levels.**

The Education Officer ran programs in 1 preschool, 4 primary schools and 5 high schools this year. In addition the education project engaged with the Home School Association, the Galilee School and C.I.T students.

The SACTCG formed a partnership with Lion's Youth Haven to deliver the 'water' component of their education package. This partnership has involved 4 schools to date.

Many schools have engaged in intensive immersion programs for students over one or two weeks. These are planned to occur each year. Other schools have booked an ongoing commitment of fortnightly visits by the education officer.

- **Increase in school excursions to venues and activities highlighting catchment and source water issues.**

The excursions facilitated by the Education Officer also acted to increase education of catchment health issues. Many excursions also begin with an in class session to discuss concepts encountered in the field.

The Education Officer organised and facilitated 7 of ActewAGL's 'Source to Sewer' demonstration visits to schools, 12 field excursions focusing on macro invertebrates, 14 field trips focusing on water quality testing, two field trips focusing on RARC, an excursion to the Stromlo WTP, a field trip to do frog monitoring, an appearance on Radio Landcare for one school group and drove the bus for a student group assisting at a national conference.

- **Increase in students "*Acting for an environmentally sustainable future*" as identified by the Essential Learning Achievements 20 (ACT Dept Education Curriculum)**

Through participating in the above field excursions students have had increased opportunities to learn and understand the key attitudes and values that are identified in the ELA 20 of the 'Every chance to learn' curriculum framework.

Lanyon High School also has an extra curricula group of students who undertake sustainable initiatives at the school. The Education Officer provides regular assistance to this group.

Lanyon High School's 'TREK' program students have also taken the initiative to increase their environmental monitoring and action both at the school and at Lion's Youth Haven. The Education Officer is providing assistance and guidance in this endeavour.

- **Increase in teacher awareness of learning activities and opportunities that address objectives of ELA 20 as identifies by the ACT Department of Education.**

The Education Project produced a teacher support resource that is now accessible from the SACTCG website. This was produced this year in consultation with stakeholders from ActewAGL, the NRM and the SACTCG. Education consultant Maureen Bartle was engaged to provide consultation on the ACT curriculum and it interpretation.

The resource has involved cross matching many education packages released this year and mapping them against the ACT school curriculum for ease of teacher use. Educational tours and visits have also been assessed and included in the resource.

The Education Officer has also run a number of in-service training sessions with teachers and held meetings with teacher groups to plan environmental education programs with a water bases theme.

The details of the work out lined above may be found on the SACTCG website under Waterwatch Coordinator and Water Education Officer Monthly reports.