



Southern ACT Waterwatch Report 2011

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 (3 days/week)

Southern ACT Catchment Group (SACTCG) supports a part time Waterwatch (WW) 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 in 3 groups. This reflects the change in outputs required by the ACT Natural Resource Management (NRM) council for funding under the federal government's 'Caring for Our Country' grant program.



November 2010

Facilitate and increase the involvement of youth in NRM projects:

(In addition to outputs under the Water Education Officer project.)

The WW Coordinator updated our online teacher resource, delivered a Waterwatch program to Wanniasa Girl Guides and facilitated the participation in Waterwatch of a group of teenage boys.

Land managers adopting improved NRM practices/skills:

The WW Coordinator participated in Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee's (UMCCC) forum and work shop '*The Upper Murrumbidgee-Making it Work!*'

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

The WW Coordinator assisted Waterwatch groups with establishing a new monitoring site, accessing sites blocked to public access due to ActewAGL construction work. Also assisted a Waterwatch group with their regional Frogwatch survey and assisted with equipment needs.

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

The WW Coordinator attended field days and workshops held by the UMCCC, the Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach (UMDR) and Greening Australia. The coordinator appeared on 2XX Radio Landcare and represented the SACTCG at a forum of the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and assisted with volunteer Waterwatch certification training (QA/QC).

MERI actions carried out:

The WW Coordinator conducted, and assisted volunteer groups with conducting, water quality assessments and aquatic macroinvertebrate surveys.

December 2010-July 2011

NRM target: 1 new project using, recording and sharing indigenous knowledge.

During this period, the WW Coordinator met with stakeholders in the NRM's Aboriginal Green Team trainee group, know as 'Yurung Dhuara' (Ngunnawal for 'Strong Earth') to establish a Waterwatch program as part of their training package. The team began monitoring and providing data for 3 sites within the Cotter and Paddy's River catchments on a monthly basis.

NRM target: Facilitate and increase the involvement of youth in NRM projects for up to 6 schools and youth organisations by coordinating activities associated with nrm onground outcomes.

During this period, the WW Coordinator was required to deliver 1 holiday program in addition to facilitating the delivery of the "Sustaining River Life" Waterwatch education resource.

A holiday program was delivered at Dickson Library in partnership with Molonglo Catchment Group's Waterwatch program. Copies of the "Sustaining River Life" resource were obtained to facilitate issuing to schools and educators.

The WW Coordinator facilitated the continued monthly involvement of our teenage volunteer Waterwatch team ('Fish').

Outwardbound Australia were also supported by the WW Coordinator through equipment, training and on ground support to deliver Waterwatch as part of their schools program this period.

The WW Coordinator provided support for Lions Youth Haven's ACT Environment Grant and Landcare nomination.

NRM target: Facilitate and support the development and implementation of 5 community groups and their involvement in local projects

During this period, the WW Coordinator was required to provide financial, facilitation and administrative support to Waterwatch and other community organisations, as well as promote Waterwatch and other community groups through website, displays and publications.

11 trainings session were provided this period to establish 3 new Waterwatch teams and refresh existing groups. Equipment and chemical supplies were delivered to 15 groups and QA/QC assessments were conducted with 5 groups in addition to the region wide QA/QC event which the WW Coordinator helped deliver.

The WW Coordinator established a remote safety beacon (EPIRB) program for volunteers working in communication 'black hole' areas. A social function was also organised by the WW Coordinator.

Other community groups and actions supported by the WW Coordinator this period included: The Review of the ACT Nature Conservation Act, the UMCCC, Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch, the 'Action for Clean Water Alliance' (ACWA), the Minders of Tuggeranong Homestead (MOTH), the Catchment & Landcare Association (CLA) and the SACTCG nomination for the ACT Landcare awards.

In addition the WW Coordinator recruited 3 new volunteers were into existing Waterwatch groups and discussed volunteering with a number of individuals. The WW Coordinator made monthly appearances on 'Radio Land', staffed a public information stall, gave a presentation to the NRM council and published a seasonal newsletter on the SACTCG and ACT Waterwatch websites to promote the SACTCG's Waterwatch program.

MERI (Monitoring Evaluating Reporting and Improvement) actions carried out in accordance with MERI plan with 6 mthly reporting

For this output the WW Coordinator received and collated Waterwatch data from volunteers. Anomalies and readings of concern were reported to the ACT Dept. of Territory and Municipal Services along with monthly reports and a 6 monthly catchment health synthesis.

The WW Coordinator conducted monthly monitoring at 3 sites including conducting the adjunct surveys for 'Macroinvertebrates' (Signal 2 survey) and riparian condition (Rapid Assessment of Riparian Condition-(RARC)). Volunteers were also supported through having their site monitored in their absence on several occasions.

In addition to the above a lot of the WW Coordinators time and energy went into the ACT NRM's 'Expression of Interest' and milestones negotiation processes as part of the SACTCG's application for 'Caring for Our Country' Federal Government funding.

August -October 2011

Improving urban land health and biodiversity.

During this period, the WW Coordinator attended training sessions on pest fish control, attended a the field day of a member group and assisted with the herbicide use training program offered by the SACTCG (supported by the NRM and ActewAGL)

Improving the protection and management of threatened species and communities

During this period, the WW Coordinator published a Catchment Update newsletter and assisted with habitat assessment (RARC) training for volunteers.

Community engagement

During this period, the WW Coordinator provided support for our Waterwatch volunteers, conducted monthly monitoring, and assisted with the delivery of ACT wide Macroinvertebrate survey training and RARC training days. Equipment was organised for loan to a number of organisations and individuals.

A group profile was penned and published on the ACT Waterwatch website and the SACTCG Coordinators delivered the Radio Landcare show on the 18th Oct, in addition to organising the recording and broadcasting of Tony Brownlie's address to the Cooleman Ridge PC's 20th anniversary celebrations.

The WW Coordinator also attended the presentation of the ACT Landcare awards where our own Steve Welch was a successful nominee.

This period also saw a lot of WW Coordinator work on workplace safety issues for our volunteers, including attending a workshop on recent changes to legislation, drafting our own work safe presentation and conducting consultation with volunteers to ascertain safety provisions while monitoring. First aid kits were purchased and issued to volunteers that lack them.

The SACTCG Waterwatch volunteer base also continued to grow during this period.

Increasing indigenous participation in natural resource management

The WW Coordinator continued to support the 'Yurung Dhaura' Aboriginal team during this period. The team now independently collects data on water quality and submits this to the WW Coordinator in a timely manner. Attendance and presentation at a meeting of the United Ngunnawal Healing Centre's advisory board is pending.

Collaboration and partnership

Partnerships this period included working with Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch, the CLA, UMCCC, Australian Red Cross, 'JOB Futures' Inc., Frogwatch and Greening Australia..

Below is summary of monitoring over the last 12 months.

(Nominal number of sites)	Number of data sheets submitted by month.(Oct 2010-Sept 2011)											
	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S
Eric (1)	2	2	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	1
Sands (1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cooleman Ridge PC (2)	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Bidgee Blue (3)	3	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
Lion's Youth Haven (2)	1	3	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	4	1
POSM (5)	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Alan Parker (1)					1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Lanyon High School 'TREK' (2)	1	0	0		0	1	2	3	2	2	2	2
Conder Wetlands (1)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
FISH (1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lake Tuggeranong team (2)	5	5	2	4	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Wanniassa School (2)											2	2
Brad Wilken(1)	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Paddy's River group (2)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Yurung Dhaura (3)									1	3	3	
Gibraltar Ck & Paddy's River (3)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
Miranda Gardner (3)												3
Friends of Tidbinbilla (3)	3	3	*	3	3	3	3	3	0	3	3	3
CVA Tidbinbilla (2)	0	0	*	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	2
Gudgenby Bush Regenerators (7)	7		5		7		7		7		7	
Diana Kirby (1)		1										
Ian Long (4)							3	4	3	4	3	3
One off monitoring							1					
Total Sites (registered 52)	38	29	27	26	31	30	43	36	37	36	49	27

Average 2010= 26.6/month

Average 2011= 34.1/month



Water Education Project Officer 2011

The Water Education Officer (2 days/week)

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 educators in implementing these in their class rooms and in the field.

Here is a report on the last twelve months of the Southern ACT Catchment Group's Water Education Project. This project is receives shared funding through the ACT NRM Council and ActewAGL.

The report is divided into 2 parts. This reflects the change in reporting requested by ActewAGL in conjunction with a change in curriculum by the ACT Dept. Education and Training.

November 2010

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

This month the Water Education Officer delivered algae monitoring and RARC lessons to Lanyon High School 'TREK' program students.

The excursions listed below 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.

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

The Water Education Officer delivered water testing, carp fishing and RARC lessons to Telopea School students as part of a partnership with Lions Youth Haven.

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

The Water Education Officer assisted with a macro invertebrates survey of Lanyon High School pond site with the 'TREK' students and conducted an interview with the students for a website group profile.

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.

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

In addition to the teaching activities above the Water Education Officer negotiated continued funding for the Source Water Education program with new staff at ActewAGL including a outputs and a new reporting format. The ‘Our Water’ was updated with additional resources.

December 2010-October 2011

Institution name	Institution educational level	Teacher name	Year group	No. of field trips	No. of classroom sessions	Other activities (please detail)
Lanyon HS	Secondary	Ms S Connors	9	2	4	Planning session re: Platypus Watch project and participation
Lanyon HS	Secondary	Mr Kupke	8	3		
Lanyon HS	Secondary	Ms McDonald	10	4	5	Platypus Watch intro lesson. Platypus lecture at Tidbinbilla NR and platypus spotting session.
Calwell HS	Secondary	Ms A Fogtik	9		4	Attended Yr 9 ‘Round Tables’ as Community rep.
Stromlo HS	Primary	Mr P Banks	6	1	2	
Erindale College	Secondary	Ms F Oliver	11/12	4		
Lanyon HS	Secondary	Ms McDonald	10	4	1	Algae ID lesson Macro surveys at 2 sites
Wanniassa School	K-10	Mr J Irons	7-8	3		WW equipment support
Erindale College	11-12	Ms F Oliver	10			Provided WW equipment for course promotion event
TOTALS for school groups				21	16	

Other Activities

In addition to the tabulated activities above the Water Education Officer attended numerous meetings with schools to provide information on the Source Water Education program. Teacher training in using the basic water testing kits was delivered and equipment was loaned along with macroinvertebrate surveying equipment.

Groups that are not formally part of the ACT government education system were provided the same opportunities for engagement in the program and given similar support. These included Outwardbound Australia, The ACT Home School association and a number of ACT Scouting groups.

Support included the delivery of numerous field trip sessions and long term equipment loans. An alternative education program, dubbed the Greening Urbanised Murrumbidgee (GUM) project was initiated and delivered this period. It involved a partnership between the Dept Education, Lion's Youth Haven, Greening Australia, SACTCG and the ACT Chamber of Commerce. The Water Education Officer delivered a water and riparian assessment element and assisted with the successful funding application by the Chamber of Commerce to the ACT Government. Another developing partnership this year has been with 'JOB futures' who aim to deliver a trainee package for young people to improve their employment prospects. Waterwatch activities are planned to be a significant part of the program. Outwardbound have also been set up with specialist kits to enable Waterwatch activities to be a regular feature of all their schools programs in the Gudgenby Valley. It is planned for data collected to be included in the SACTCG Waterwatch data base. Another partnership will begin soon between the SACTCG and the 'Lanyon Cluster' school's network, with funding from the National Australia Bank's 'School First' funding. This will involve Gordon and Bonython Primary Schools in addition to Lanyon High School.

Evaluations

School evaluations were sent out in December as part of the obligations under the ACT Environment grant in 2010. The feed back that was received indicated satisfaction from both students and teachers.

A new questionnaire developed by the Water Education Officer, in consultation with Miranda Gardner from ActewAGL, is currently being reviewed by ActewAGL's Source Water Protection program. This will aim to measure any changes in knowledge and attitude as a result of a Source Water Education program activity.

Other

The on line teacher resource 'Our Water' hosted by the SACTCG website and show casing websites and resources for teachers and aligning them to the ACT Curriculum, had to be withdrawn and undergo major rewriting as a result of the ACT Department of Education's disbanding its local curriculum in favour of a national curriculum.

A second edition was developed and, after a review, is now being modified to give better guidance to teachers on the usefulness of the listed resources. The aim is to have this up on the website asap. Other activities included the development of educational material to assist in lesson delivery and assisting students with material for assignments and presentations.

Attended Lanyon Cluster Assembly to launch new Environmental education program partnership.

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



Australian Government