

21.04 ENVIRONMENT

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21.04-1 Catchment Management

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Overview

Colac Otway has a great diversity of ecosystems in the region which provides a base for an equally diverse and rich flora and fauna. The deeply dissected ridges and valleys of the Otways contrasts strongly with the open northern plains studded with crater lakes.

The Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy describes the land, water and biodiversity assets of the region and provides a planning framework for the protection and restoration of these assets.

Integration of Shire policies and actions with those of its partners, specifically those related to catchment management, coastal action and forest management is an important component of sustainable natural resource management in the Shire.

Objectives

- To promote a co-operative regional approach to natural resource management

Strategies

- Adopt an integrated catchment management approach to the assessment and development of the Shire's natural resources.
- Consider land capability in the assessment of use and development proposals.
- Encourage land management practices and land use activities that are sustainable and can protect the environment.
- Promote the integrated management of public and private land with particular attention to the interface between the two.
- Protect the lakes from environmental degradation by limiting adjacent development and maintaining high quality wastewater treatment in Colac.

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Water

Overview

- The Draft Corangamite River Health Strategy identifies waterways of national, state and regional importance. The Colac Otway Planning Scheme currently recognises the significance of these assets with the Environmental Significance Overlay applying to lakes, wetlands and streams across the municipality.
- The saline lakes of the Volcanic Plain north of Colac are a significant feature of the region. These lakes are of international significance because of the number of threatened species and migratory species which depend on the sites.
- Lake Colac is a freshwater lake and is the most prominent environmental feature in the locality being formed through volcanic activity. Water quality in Lake Colac has been identified as a major issue for a number of years, and this has been evident through indicators such as blue-green algal blooms and sediment build up. Some of the main causes of poor water quality in the lake have been associated with development, particularly industry, close to the lake, transport of nutrients and pollutants to the lake from creeks and through runoff and through leachate from the former tip site.
- Barwon Water and Wannon Water are responsible for managing the six declared water supply catchments in the Colac Otway Shire. The declaration recognises the importance of these catchments for domestic water supply and the need to protect the water quality from inappropriate land use and development such as timber harvesting and road and building construction.

- Southern Rural Water is the responsible authority for management of groundwater diversion. Three groundwater management areas have been declared in the Colac Otway Shire: the Warrion, Paaratte and Gerangamete. Groundwater Management Plans describe the nature of these groundwater areas and outline their management to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Water quality of rivers and streams north of the Otway Ranges is generally poor due to the impacts of land clearing and development.

Objectives - Water

- To protect water catchments.
- To retain and improve water quality and water yield.

Strategies - Water

- Ensure water quality standards and impact on water yields are considered in the assessment of planning permit applications.
- Ensure that the maintenance in natural condition of watercourses is considered in the assessment of use and development proposals.
- Promote the establishment of reticulated sewerage systems in townships where appropriate.
- Promote the introduction of improved septic tank systems and alternative waste treatment systems in areas where sewerage systems are not available.
- Encourage the use of "constructed wetlands" as a means of storing floodwater, improving water quality and adding to natural habitats.

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Vegetation

Overview

- The Corangamite Native Vegetation Plan (2003 – 2008) provides a strategic plan for protection, enhancement and restoration of native vegetation across the Region.
- The majority of native vegetation is found on public land within the Colac Otway Shire with small remnants on private land. An estimated 78 per cent of the region's original native vegetation is now cleared. Of the 22 per cent remaining vegetation, about half of this is found on private land or on linear strips such as roadsides and disused railway lines and much of this is considered threatened.
- Remnant vegetation on private land is generally small in size and often isolated and therefore particularly vulnerable to degradation from pests, disease or disturbance.

Objectives

- To protect and manage remnant native vegetation communities.

Strategies

- Maintain bio-diversity through the protection of significant habitats including remnant vegetation.
- Protect native vegetation and other significant stands of vegetation in order to prevent land degradation, maintain water quality and protect the bio-diversity of flora and fauna species.

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Salinity

Overview

- At present over 20,000 hectares of salinity are mapped in the Corangamite CMA region including both primary and secondary salting. Water quality in rivers and streams as well as lakes and wetlands has declined since European settlement due to increasing salinity and reduced flow regimes.
- The Draft Corangamite Salinity Action Plan (2003 – 2008) identifies salinity as a significant threat to agricultural production and biodiversity, especially in the lakes and plains area north of Colac.
- Salinity is a significant threat, particularly in the northern half of the Shire, to water quality and urban infrastructure.

Objectives

- To minimise the impact of salinity on agricultural land, water quality and urban infrastructure.

Strategies

- Adopt an integrated catchment management approach to the assessment and development of the Shire's natural resources.
- Promote land management practices that protect soil resources from degradation.
- Encourage land management practices that seek to improve areas of soil degradation.

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Erosion

Overview

- Landslides are a significant hazard in the southern half of the Shire associated with steep slopes and high rainfall including the Otway Ranges from Marengo to Wye River; the slopes of the Barham River and Gellibrand River valleys; the Hordern Vale – Glenaire area; the Lavers Hill – Johanna River area; the Kawarren – Yeodene area; and the Irrewillipe area.
- Landslides are triggered by prolonged and/or intense rainfall, man-made changes to the landscape primarily through clearance of native vegetation and rare earthquake events.

Objectives

- To ensure that use and development has regard to the potential for landslip.
- To ensure that in areas where a risk of landslip is identified, all new buildings and works do not increase the possibility of landslip on the land or surrounding land.
- To manage landslip risk especially along the coastal areas.

Strategies

- Ensure that in areas where a risk of landslip is identified, all new buildings and works do not increase the possibility of landslip on the land or surrounding land.
- Avoid vegetation removal in areas susceptible to landslip.
- Reduce and stabilise movement and disturbance in landslip areas by replanting vegetation and by good site drainage including limited on-site disposal of treated wastewater effluent and stormwater, where appropriate.
- Ensure new development demonstrates tolerable risk to property and loss of life.
- Consider land capability in the assessment of use and development proposals.
- Promote land management practices that protect soil resources from landslip, contamination, compaction and other forms of degradation.

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Floodplain Management

Overview

- The Colac Otway Planning Scheme currently has a Floodway and Land Subject to Inundation Overlay that reflects the floodways in the Shire.
- Flooding is a significant threat north of the Otway Ranges particularly associated with the Barwon River and the lakes system of the Volcanic Plains.
- The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority has prepared the Deans Creek and Barongarook Creek Flood Study 2017. This Study has helped inform changes to the flood mapping and associated controls in Colac.

Objectives

- To minimise environmental hazards.

Strategies

- Promote floodplain management policies, which minimise loss and damage, maintain the function of the floodway to convey and store floodwater and protect areas of environmental significance.
- Encourage the use of "constructed wetlands" as a means of storing floodwater, improving water quality and adding to natural habitats.
- Ensure that all new development maintains the free passage and temporary storage of floodwater, minimises flood damage, is compatible with flood hazard and local drainage conditions, and minimises soil erosion, sedimentation and silting.
- Ensure that development and subdivision demonstrates how the risks associated with flooding and inundation are met.

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Climate Change

Overview

- The impact of climate change on land within Colac Otway Shire has been considered in a recent report (Climate Change in the Corangamite Region – DSE 2004) that addresses temperature, rainfall, drought, water resources, fire, winds, storms and sea level rise.
- It is appropriate to apply the precautionary principle by ensuring that the land use and development considers the future impacts of climate change

Objectives

- To ensure that the future use of land for agriculture is adaptable enough to respond to the impacts of climate change.
- To ensure that coastal planning considers and responds to the forecast impacts of climate change.

Strategies

- Adopt an integrated catchment management approach to the assessment and development of the Shire's natural resources.
- Ensure highly capable land is protected for agriculture into the future by discouraging dwellings and subdivision in areas of high agricultural capability and high rainfall.
- Ensure use and development proposals take into account and respond adequately to future sea level rise and storm surge related to climate change.

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Landscape Character

Overview

The Great Ocean Road Coastline is recognised as one of the most spectacular in Australia and requires sensitive attention to maintain its visual qualities and physical features, biological features and cultural attachments.

The Shire contains various landscapes which have been recognised as being important to protect for their environmental, cultural, social and economic significance. The landscape character types within the Shire, as identified in the Great Ocean Road Region Landscape Assessment Study (GORRLAS) include parts of the Western Plains, Cones and Lakes; the Otway Foothills, Valleys and Uplands; the Otway Forests and Coast; and localised flatlands. Some of the key issues associated with the landscape of the Shire include:

- The importance of landscape character to the economy of the Shire and wider region.
- The need to relate new development to the landscape character types and precincts defined by the GORRLAS.
- The importance of containing township development within defined boundaries, and of managing development on the fringes of townships so that it enhances the character of the town's landscape setting.
- The need to retain the dominance of the landscape between townships and avoid ribbon development.
- The importance of views of the landscape from road corridors, and the need to control and manage development and land use that is highly visible from main road corridors and principal tourist routes.
- The need to retain the dominance of the landscape from key viewing locations throughout the Shire.
- The clear felling of plantation trees adjacent to main road corridors and tourist routes leaving large and often highly visible areas of the landscape scarred, detracting from the landscape character of the Region.
- The need to protect the scenic landscape values of ridgelines and landforms from inappropriate built form and removal of vegetation.

Objectives

- To retain the open and rural character of views and outlooks, particularly from main road corridors.
- To maintain the dominance of the natural landscape when viewed from main road corridors and tourist routes outside townships.
- To protect the variety of landscape features and landmarks of the precincts identified in the GORRLAS.
- To increase indigenous planting in the Landscape precincts to further emphasise natural features such as creeks.
- To protect ridgelines from inappropriate development and vegetation removal.

Strategies

- Retain existing indigenous and native trees and understorey wherever practical.
- Discourage the loss of indigenous vegetation particularly in or adjacent to landform features such as rocks.
- Locate development sparsely in the hinterland landscape, maximising space available between buildings and structures for vegetation.
- Utilise finishes and colours that complement those found naturally in the hinterland landscape, with consideration as to how the material will weather over time.
- Between townships, site development a substantial distance from main roads wherever possible.

- Discourage the loss of rural outlook and openness from main road corridors.
- Ensure townships have a definite visual edge, delineating the boundary between urban development and the natural landscape beyond.
- Locate and screen large buildings and structures to minimise their visibility from main roads and key viewing locations.
- Discourage ribbon development between townships.
- Discourage signage clutter at entrances and exits to townships.
- Site buildings and structures away from geological features such as volcanic cones, craters and lakes, wherever possible.
- Retain views of geological features such as volcanic cones, craters and lakes from the Princess Highway and other main roads.
- Discourage quarrying or excavation on geological features.
- Utilise vegetation to screen land use and development, including timber production, which has the potential to impact upon the natural landscape when viewed from main road corridors and tourist routes.
- Discourage new development and removal of vegetation on ridgelines and hill tops where it is of a significant scale that is likely to impact the landscape character of the area.

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Colac Otway Shire has a rich and diverse history that is a microcosm of much of Victoria's history from the days of earliest permanent settlement in the 1830s. The Shire has played an important role in Victoria's growth through pastoral activity; through the dairy industry and farming; through the forest industry, as well through the tourist industry.

Physical evidence of this history is discernible in buildings, archaeological sites and landscapes. It is identified in the homesteads built by squatters and pastoralists, as well as those constructed by later settlers. The history of the Shire's economic development is demonstrated by its main industries – dairying, crops, timber, wool and tourism and is apparent in the surviving woolsheds, dairies, onion factories, sawdust burners and in the variety of different forms of accommodation offered to its visitors since the mid-nineteenth century.

The Shire's ethnic composition and distribution, and the importance of religion in nineteenth and early twentieth century society, is gauged by the distribution of churches and denominational institutions. Local government influences are demonstrated in the shire's buildings and numerous maternal child health centres while State government influence are demonstrated in the hospitals and police facilities as well as in public housing, rail links, roads and bridges.

The history is evident in the commercial areas of Colac in the public, civic, religious and residential buildings, infrastructure, cemeteries, monuments, archaeological sites and landscapes. A large proportion of the Shire's cultural heritage also remains within the smaller townships and centres of the Shire and in outlying rural areas.

Many of the Shire's heritage buildings and sites have been identified and their significance described in the Colac Otway Heritage Study 2003, however the study is not a complete listing of the Shire's cultural heritage resources and other places will also need to be identified as time and resources permit. For example further work is required to identify and conserve the Shire's many fine dry stone walls.

Objectives – Cultural Heritage

- To protect places and areas of cultural heritage significance and encourage development and adaptation where appropriate that does not detract from their significance.

- To enhance and conserve the Shire's cultural heritage resources while facilitating adaptation and development which does not detract from their significance.

Strategies – Cultural Heritage

- Support the retention of the cultural heritage significance of the Shire's heritage places and areas by:
 - Encouraging works to individual places in the Heritage Overlay which contribute to their conservation and enhances their significance.
 - Discouraging demolition of places of heritage significance while encouraging the removal of alterations that do not contribute to their significance.
 - Retaining all places in heritage precincts that contribute to the significance of the precinct.
 - Encouraging new development in precincts that responds to the historic character, form and context of the precinct and makes a positive contribution through innovative design.
 - Applying the local policy (at Clause 22.01) on 'Heritage Places and Areas'.