

**21.06**

23/07/2015  
C110

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**NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**Vision**

Council will consider planning applications and make decisions in accordance with the following vision:

- To ensure the protection, conservation and sustainable management of the Shire's natural environment.
- To recognise the State and National importance of the Shire's resources while ensuring they are utilised in a way that maintains a high quality life for residents.
- To recognise the Shire's natural environment as the habitat for a wide range of indigenous flora and fauna and the importance of providing for the long term survival of these species.

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**Overview**

- The Shire contains mountainous country, rural areas and significant water catchments. These all play a significant role in the provision of the State's water and natural resources.
- The natural environment of the Shire provides a variety of pastoral, rural and bushland landscapes which are greatly valued by residents and visitors for their recreational, economic, spiritual and cultural attributes.
- The natural environment provides flora and fauna habitats as described in Clause 21.06-3 Biodiversity that have cultural and biological significance. The utilisation of resources from these habitats requires informed and sensitive management in order to protect them in the long term.
- The demands on the natural environment to harvest its resources such as water, landscapes, timber and extractive materials, soil fertility – have an impact on its sustainable ecological management.

Baw Baw Shire falls mainly within two catchments, being the WesternPort and West Gippsland catchments. Land use and development within catchments may have an impact on water quality, biodiversity and natural resource management both within and outside the Shire. Therefore a whole of catchment approach is required for the management of natural resources in the exercise of decision-making.

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## BAW BAW PLANNING SCHEME

The extent of remaining native vegetation cover on freehold land within the Shire is estimated to be 14% of pre-European settlement cover whilst the condition of a large portion of this vegetation is considered to be fragmented and degraded. The extent of vegetation clearing for agriculture and urban development has resulted in some flora having a threatened conservation status within the region, including the Strzelecki Gum and vegetation communities that support this species. Approximately 90% of the remaining population of Strzelecki Gum within the landscape occur as scattered trees on freehold land.

The Shire also comprises a unique assemblage of invertebrate species that live within the soil, including Giant Gippsland Earthworm, a diverse range of terrestrial burrowing crayfish (e.g., Warragul Burrowing Crayfish and Narracan Burrowing Crayfish) and the Trafalgar Millipede. Together with other soil invertebrates, these species play a significant role in long-term maintenance of soil fertility and structure within the Shire.

The Council acknowledges the link between the long-term productivity of its highly valued agricultural landscapes and the provision of vital services by natural ecosystems (e.g., provision of clean water from healthy streams and wetlands). With predictions of more intense weather patterns in the future, building resilience and connectivity into natural ecosystems is considered fundamental to the long-term sustainable use of land within the Shire.

### Objective 1

To increase the quality and extent of native vegetation within the Shire.

Strategy 1.1	Protect, maintain and improve the condition of native vegetation remnants and scattered trees within Council's key reserves.
Strategy 1.2	Encourage the protection, maintenance, improvement and recruitment of native vegetation on private land.
Strategy 1.3	Encourage the establishment of native vegetation on private land for use as stock shelter belts, creek and stream protection, soil stabilisation in areas prone to land slip and soil erosion and for production of sustainable wood products.
Strategy 1.4	Encourage and provide leadership for the protection or recruitment of stands of native vegetation on private land to service new and emerging environmental markets (e.g., BushBroker, Bush Tender, Eco Tender, carbon offsetting).

### Objective 2

To protect and manage native flora, fauna and habitats across the Shire.

Strategy 2.1	Assist with the conservation of threatened species, habitats and communities identified under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.
Strategy 2.2	Address potentially Threatening Processes identified under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.
Strategy 2.3	Encourage the protection of native fauna on private land, with emphasis on threatened species, habitats and communities.
Strategy 2.4	Improve and maintain the condition of key Council reserves, with emphasis on threatened species, habitats and communities.
Strategy 2.5	Encourage and facilitate the development of biolinks or wildlife corridors across the Shire.
Strategy 2.6	Prepare an integrated biodiversity and native vegetation framework.

### Implementation

- Apply guidelines contained in Victoria's Native Vegetation Management – A Framework For Action (Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 2002).
  - Apply any Strategy, relevant Governor-in-Council orders and Action Statements prepared under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.
  - Apply planning scheme strategies to inform use and development in areas containing biodiversity assets, including revision or preparation of Environmental Significance and Vegetation Protection Overlays, land use zones, Structure Plans, Biodiversity Management Plans and Native Vegetation Precinct Plans.
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**Reference Documents**

- ‘BawBaw 2050 – Community Vision 2010’, Baw Baw Shire Council

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**Natural Resource Base**

**Context**

The long term ecologically sustainable management of the environment, including the maintenance of a high quality natural resource base, is the most important factor influencing the economy, lifestyle and recreational choices in the Shire.

**Objective 1**

To ensure development proposals demonstrate a positive contribution to the environment in terms of soil stability, erosion, flood and drainage management and the retention of native vegetation.

Strategy 1.1	Protect the high quality productive land within the Shire from unplanned urban encroachment.
Strategy 1.2	Recognise the high quality attributes of the natural environment and its significant link with every urban and rural area in the Shire.
Strategy 1.3	Ensure environmental quality and that expert advice is obtained on the potential impact of developments or land uses on the environment.
Strategy 1.4	Minimise the impact of pest plants and pest animals on environmental values.
Strategy 1.5	Encourage ecologically sustainable land uses and natural resource management practices.
Strategy 1.6	Encourage the involvement of the whole community in caring for the environment.
Strategy 1.7	Protect heritage places and environmentally sensitive areas from inappropriate development.

**Actions**

Establish partnerships with:

- Department of Environment and Primary Industries
- Environment Protection Authority.
- Catchment Management Authorities.
- Minister for Planning and Local Government and the Alpine Resorts Management Board and community groups, such as Landcare.

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**Water Catchments**

**Context**

Most of Baw Baw Shire is in the headwaters of the Latrobe River system, forming part of the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Authority area. It is critical that water quality in streams be maintained through the management of runoff from urban, forest and rural areas. A smaller area on the western edge of the Shire lies in the Westernport Bay catchment area which is covered by the Port Phillip and Westernport Bay Regional Catchment Strategy. The Shire also takes in parts of the Tarwin Catchment on its southern edge.

**Objective 1**

To protect water catchments from inappropriate development.

Strategy 1.1	Prevent sediment loss from construction sites to minimise the impact of development on water quality in local waterways by facilitating the adoption of practices outlined in Construction Techniques for Sediment Pollution Control (EPA, 1991) and Environmental Guidelines for Major Construction Sites (EPA, 1995).
Strategy 1.2	Ensure development does not detrimentally affect the water quality or riparian environment of stream systems.
Strategy 1.3	Ensure erosion is managed and reduced through appropriate measures.

**Other Actions**

- Support the development of improved sewage treatment solutions for unsewered towns and land uses producing inappropriately managed waste .
- Develop initiatives and gain government support for the more efficient use of water resources.
- Ensure the Shire’s public convenience facilities are maintained to prevent poor water quality outcomes.

**Reference documents**

- Planning Permit Applications In Open, Potable Water Supply Catchment Areas' - DSE Publication November 2012
- Environmental Guidelines for Major Construction Sites (EPA, 1995).
- Port Phillip and Westernport Bay Regional Catchment Strategy
- West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy

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**Farmland and Soil Quality**

**Context**

A strong emphasis is on the protection of the Shire’s agricultural base and the retention of the high quality productive agricultural land. The protection of the productive capacity and the minimisation of land use conflicts with continued agricultural production is of strategic significance at the local and regional level.

The Shire’s soil resources, particularly highly productive soils identified in the Assessment of Agricultural Quality in Gippsland (Swan and Volum, 1984), are a major natural resource which should be protected and managed.

The Baw Baw Environmental Planning Study (2001) assessment of the characteristics and suitability of the Shire’s land resources for a range of agricultural enterprises was a refinement of the earlier, broader scale land assessment study by Swan and Volum (1984).

The 2001 study reported that the majority of the Shire’s agricultural land is suitable for and can support a wide range of agricultural enterprises to a high production level, with particularly well endowed areas around Ellinbank, Yarragon, Trafalgar, Neerim South, Noojee, Thorpdale, and Allambee. Practically all cleared land in the Shire is suited to high production pasture, currently supporting the major soil-based industries of dairying and beef cattle. The Shire’s farmland is strategically important to the regional economy.

**Objective 1**

To protect and maintain high quality agricultural land

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| Strategy 1.1 | Encourage agricultural activity that is environmentally sustainable.   |
| Strategy 1.2 | Encourage development which supports the protection of the primary use of the land for agricultural production.  |
| Strategy 1.3 | Discourage subdivision practices that fragment farm properties and reduce the land supply for primary industry in the rural zones. Encourage the consolidation/restructuring of existing fragmented agricultural landholdings. |
| Strategy 1.4 | Encourage soil based uses, and while encouraging non-soil based farming activities such as intensive animal husbandry and green houses, ensure soil is not blighted in the long term.  |
| Strategy 1.5 | Protect agricultural land from indiscriminate use and development unless alternative sites for the use or development cannot be identified.  |
| Strategy 1.6 | Consider the development of the land for non agricultural purposes where it is demonstrated that the land is required for the strategic extension of an urban area of a main town for residential development.                 |
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## BAW BAW PLANNING SCHEME

### Objective 2

To ensure that the future of agricultural industries are not prejudiced by the removal or degradation of soils.

- Strategy 2.1 Discourage practices that damage soil integrity, for example through inappropriate waste management or poor farm practices.
- Strategy 2.2 Soil should only be removed from the actual site of a building or works permitted pursuant to this planning scheme and where it can be demonstrated that the retention of the soil would prejudice the proper construction of the building or work.
- Strategy 2.3 For an application for a permit for the removal of soil, the responsible authority will seek the comments of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries and any relevant Drainage or Water Authority. The responsible authority will consider the comments received from such authorities prior to deciding an application.

### Implementation

Apply Clause 22.01 Rural Zones Policy

### References Document

- (1) Swan and Volum 1984, Assessment of agricultural quality of land in Gippsland, pg.22
- (2) Ibid., pg 22
- The Baw Baw Environmental Planning Study (2001)

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## Forestry Operations

### Overview

The Shire's timber resources are substantial and for most part comprises forest on public land. The Shire supports the ecologically sustainable management of those resources.

### Objective 1

To develop the timber industry on a ecologically sustainable basis particularly where it can assist with environmental rehabilitation.

- Strategy 1.1 Encourage agroforestry in sensitive environmental areas to support such environmental services as rectifying erosion and land slip and in improving water quality.
- Strategy 1.2 Encourage only those forestry practices that support habitats for the continued survival of threatened and rare flora and fauna, including the Leadbeater's Possum.

### Implementation

- Apply Clause 52.18 Timber Production when dealing with a planning application involving agroforestry or timber production.

### Other Actions

- Monitor the implementation of the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2007

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## Coal Resources

### Overview

The Gippsland coalfields are an important energy resource suitable for the generation of electricity, and having potential for alternative fuels and other products. The coal resource of the Gippsland Coalfields Policy Area affects the region shown on policy map titled Natural Resources This policy relates to that part of the regional resource which occurs in the Baw Baw Shire, namely Cloverlea and Andersons Creek.

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**Objective 1**

To protect designated coal resource areas.

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| Strategy 1.1 | Ensure uses of coal resource areas are compatible with the potential future extraction of the resources.   |
| Strategy 1.2 | Discourage the use and development of the land for urban or non coal related industrial purposes, major overburden dumps or other uses which could prejudice the winning or processing of underlying coal in all designated coal resource areas. |
| Strategy 1.3 | Consult with all relevant agencies about land use proposals which may impact on the reduction of coal resources in these areas.  |

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**Stone Resources**

**Overview**

The Trafalgar Sands deposits have been identified as a major resource of State significance and economic value and offer significant future development opportunities.

The Trafalgar Sands resource area occupies an area of approximately 31 square kilometres and contains a geological sand resource estimated to be 500 million tonnes. Within this total resource the most prospective region has an indicated sand resource of almost 200 million tonnes within an area of 850 hectares. This is a resource of State significance. The Trafalgar Sands area has the potential for development as a major sand supply region to the Melbourne Metropolitan Area and the Gippsland Region in the medium to long term.

**Objective 1**

To protect significant stone (including sand) resources to ensure an adequate supply of stone (including sand) in future years.

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| Strategy 1.1 | Ensure uses of sand resource areas are compatible with the potential future extraction of the resources                          |
| Strategy 1.2 | Consult with all relevant agencies about land use proposals which may impact on the reduction of stone resources in these areas. |
| Strategy 1.3 | Facilitate areas of sand deposits to be extracted in a manner which protects environmental and social values.                    |
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