

21.03

12/11/2015
C30

ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES

This Clause provides local content to support Clause 12 (Environmental and Landscape Values) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

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Native vegetation

Overview

The indigenous remnant vegetation of the municipality has been greatly reduced in area and quality since European settlement, to such an extent that all remaining remnant native vegetation is significant. Remnant vegetation on roadsides, public and private lands form a vital network of wildlife corridors and habitat for the high number of threatened fauna in the municipality. Council aims to protect native vegetation and habitat, including the understorey of shrubs, groundcover and grasses, and to facilitate natural revegetation.

The continued viability of diverse plant and animal populations is dependent upon the maintenance and enhancement of remnant vegetation, as well as sustainable development and land management practices. The management of resources is central to the municipality's economic base and the social well-being of the community.

Key issues

- Protecting and enhancing native vegetation.
- Planting additional native vegetation for habitat, salinity control, erosion control and landscape enhancement.

Objective 1

To protect and enhance remnant native vegetation and native flora and fauna habitat and promote development of linkages between areas containing remnant vegetation.

Strategies

- Avoid clearing remnant vegetation consisting of a high value ecological vegetation class or a floristic community or sub-community classified as depleted, rare, vulnerable or endangered.
- Place particularly high priority on retaining remnant vegetation and habitat corridors in areas identified as habitat for species that are EPBC listed or identified as Rare or Threatened Flora or Fauna Species under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.
- Encourage land owners to protect, maintain and enhance indigenous vegetation.
- Recognise native grassland areas and, where possible, restrict their use to grazing and other farming which is compatible with their preservation and maintenance.
- Retain and re-establish vegetation as a means of managing salinity risk, repairing salt-damaged land, lowering watertables and reducing erosion.
- Encourage proposals for land use and development to incorporate measures to avoid impact on remnant vegetation, including dead and hollow-bearing trees.
- Encourage the provision of areas of open space directly adjacent to existing vegetation or areas of public land.
- Encourage the maintenance and development of links between existing remnant vegetation.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to native vegetation will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Public Conservation and Resource Zone to public land reserves including areas of native vegetation.
- Applying the Vegetation Protection Overlay to land which contains significant vegetation including roadsides and wildlife corridors.

Policy guidelines

- Encouraging and, where practicable, requiring native vegetation to be maintained and enhanced, and additional native vegetation to be planted, as conditions of planning permits for use, development and subdivision.

Further strategic work

- Re-examining and re-mapping of areas of significant remnant indigenous vegetation including grasslands in order to reassess the extent of the Vegetation Protection Overlay in the planning scheme.

Note: Translation of the Ecological Vegetation Class mapping should be done on a state-wide basis. In Gannawarra Shire, this proposed strategic work will complement the state-wide translation and apply it through the planning scheme.

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Natural assets

Overview

Many of the wetlands in the Kerang lakes area and Gunbower Forest have significant conservation value for native flora and fauna and are of national and international significance (under the Ramsar convention). Many are also listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (1996) or on the Register of the National Estate. The importance of these wetlands as breeding grounds for birdlife has been recognised by listing under JAMBA (Japanese and Australian Migratory Bird Agreement) and CAMBA (Chinese and Australian Migratory Bird Agreement). The Northern Plains Grasslands are recognised as of particular significance.

Some wetlands that provide important breeding grounds for threatened bird species are located on private land. These wetlands on freehold land need to be identified, evaluated and protected as they make an important contribution to the maintenance of biodiversity. Management is a challenge for the community, council and government authorities.

The natural landscape of the municipality is characterised by the openness of irrigated and dryland farming areas. Areas of high landscape quality are generally found along vegetated streams and waterways, the Kerang lakes area, Gunbower State Forest, the Murray River environs and other state parks and reserves.

Key issues

- Recognising the international significance of rivers, lakes and wetlands in Gannawarra Shire.
- Protecting and enhancing native vegetation, especially in and around rivers, lakes and wetlands.
- Protecting and maintaining soil and water quality, which is essential for farming and ecological health.
- Ensuring that natural assets are maintained and improved as a result of any development.

Objective 1

To protect and maintain natural assets including soil and water for farming, landscape values and amenity while facilitating sensitive development.

Strategies

- Balance development and conservation objectives by implementing appropriate controls.
- Encourage the use of whole farm planning and improved land management techniques.
- Prepare design guidelines that promote the sensitive development of waterfront land alongside rivers, lakes and wetlands.

Objective 2

To protect and enhance areas of public land, including forests, stream environs, lakesides and reserves.

Strategies

- Manage public land (including State Forests and Parks, river and stream environs, wetlands and lakes) so as to provide for a range of activities including nature conservation, recreation and tourism.
- Minimise adverse impacts of land use and development activities on freehold land on adjacent public land.
- Promote drainage works and schemes which encourage on-farm drainage re-use, consistent with approved surface drainage schemes and management plans for the protection and improvement of wetlands, streams and forests.
- Implement local and regional roadside conservation strategies.

Objective 3

To recognise the important functions of rivers, lakes and wetland areas, including flora and fauna habitat, recreation, landscape, water supply, water filtration, water storage and drainage.

Strategies

- Investigate improved wastewater management systems for unsewered townships and land surrounding lakes and watercourses.
- Ensure that the habitat significance and recreational opportunities of wetlands are protected by best practice nutrient management and drainage of adjacent land, and the provision of riparian buffers.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to natural assets will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy guidelines

- When deciding on applications for use and development that may impact on environmental and landscape values, considering, as appropriate:
 - Whether to require more information about a proposal, including a site and area analysis which sets out:
 - a natural resource profile, including watercourses, wetlands, soil type, groundwater, vegetation and habitat area;
 - an assessment of physical limitations;
 - an assessment of environmental hazards;
 - the location and type of buildings and works, infrastructure, adjoining uses and development and access; and
 - measures to be taken to address natural resource management issues, physical limitations and environmental hazards, particularly in relation to wetlands.

- Whether to include on planning permits for use, development and subdivision conditions to require, where practicable, that soil and water assets be maintained and enhanced.
- The advice of relevant public authorities on a proposal, particularly if a wetland or vegetation community on or near the subject site contains the habitat of a Victorian rare or threatened flora or fauna species.

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Public Conservation and Resource Zone to public land reserves.
- Applying the Environmental Significance Overlay to watercourse environs and lake environs.
- Applying the Vegetation Protection Overlay to land which contains significant vegetation, including roadsides and wildlife corridors.

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Murray River environs

Overview

The municipality has a significant frontage to the Murray River. The Murray River and its environment are a vital and fragile ecosystem. The River Murray Reserve performs an important role in protecting the Murray River from erosion and maintaining flora and fauna habitats. Activities that have altered the quality of its character include clearing of vegetation, irrigation practices, cultivation of adjacent land, access roads, recreation activity, firewood collection, grazing by livestock and water diversion infrastructure.

Consistent and co-ordinated land use planning and development needs to be promoted along the Murray River corridor with the major aims of protecting important environmental and cultural values; promoting opportunities for tourism and recreation; and ensuring maintenance of the quality and quantity of water for downstream users.

The river serves a variety of environmental, economic, social, recreational and tourist functions. A uniform planning policy is needed to provide a consistent performance-based approach to the use and development of land in the Murray River corridor and environs in Victoria. Such a policy could reflect the principles of the Regional Environment Plan No. 2, which applies along the Murray River corridor in New South Wales.

Key issues

- Recognising the national importance of the Murray River corridor for nature conservation, flooding, recreation and tourism.
- Promoting consistent planning and management along the river corridor by councils, government agencies and community organisations.
- Managing the quality, quantity and environmental use of water in the Murray River.

Objective 1

To manage the Murray River corridor's environmental values and resource capacity.

Strategies

- Ensure that land use activity and development adjacent to the Murray River Reserve protects the environmental, visual and landscape values of the river and environs.
- Prevent the loss of riparian flora and fauna habitat and wetland environments in the Murray River corridor.
- Protect the Murray River Reserve's role as a buffer for nutrients and other pollutants.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to relating to the Murray River environs will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy guidelines

- When deciding on applications for use and development that may impact on the Murray River environs, considering, as appropriate:
 - The *Murray Regional Environment Plan 2 – Riverine Land (REP2)* (NSW) in the assessment of land use and development proposals that may affect the functions and environmental integrity of the Murray River corridor.

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Public Conservation and Resource Zone to public land reserves.
- Applying the Environmental Significance Overlay to the Murray River environs.

Further strategic work

- Participating in any project or joint task force involving municipal councils and relevant statutory authorities in relation to the Murray River corridor.