

21.03 ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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This Clause provides local content to support Clause 12 Environmental and landscape values, Clause 13 Environmental risks and Clause 14 Natural Resource Management of the State Planning Policy Framework.

Context and issues

The environment is a key factor influencing the economy, lifestyle and recreational choices in the Shire.

Key challenges facing the Shire include:

- Managing threatening processes acting on the natural environment
- Balancing native vegetation conservation with development pressures, land use change and protecting people from wildfire
- Supporting the sustainable management of land and water resources
- Minimising and managing the effects of flooding.

21.03-1 Biodiversity

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Context and issues

The municipality is home to a wealth of flora and fauna, including rare and threatened species and communities, major waterways and freshwater wetlands.

Many of the municipality's significant natural environments are protected by international, national and state agreements and legislation.

Remnant native vegetation across the municipality is modelled to be approximately 25% of that which existed pre-European settlement. However, the quality of much of these remnants is degraded. While remnant native vegetation is contained on private land, some of the Shire's most significant native vegetation occurs on roadsides.

Rapid urban and rural growth and change in land use such as grazing and cropping has impacted on the municipality's natural environments. There is a need to protect and enhance the natural environment to protect ecological processes whilst providing for continued land use change.

The effects of climate change are having a significant impact on the natural environment placing already stressed native flora and fauna assets at higher risk. The municipality is at risk of climate change with projected increased temperatures and reduced precipitation affecting natural systems with flow on effects on the community and economy.

Furthermore, projected changes in climate with increased temperatures and decreased precipitation will also have wider impacts across environmental, social and economic aspects of the Shire.

The quality and quantity of native vegetation, flora and fauna across the municipality is threatened by development, land use change and poor land management practices.

Objectives and strategies

Objective 1 To encourage the protection of significant habitats, remnant vegetation and maintain bio-diversity.

Strategy 1.1 Protect significant habitats and remnant vegetation from encroachment by development.

Strategy 1.2 Maintain bio-diversity.

Strategy 1.3 Avoid impacts on flora and fauna natural assets.

Strategy 1.4 Conserve native large old trees and scattered trees.

Implementation

The strategies for biodiversity will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Rural Conservation Zone to areas with biodiversity values that should be protected.
- Applying the Vegetation Protection Overlay to areas of identified flora and fauna importance.
- Applying the Environmental Significance Overlay to areas of identified environmental importance.

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Floodplains

Context and issues

Some areas of the Shire are subject to periodic flooding, particularly the immediate environs of Inverleigh and Shelford. Flooding can impact negatively upon land use and development, however it also has positive environmental impacts. Floodways should be retained and protected for their role in conveying floodwater. A regular wetting regime provided by land prone to flooding is critical in maintaining wetlands and improving the quality of riparian native vegetation. Planning can minimise long-term risks of damage from flooding by planning and developing properties, buildings and structures so that they are safe from potential flooding without compromising the safety of other properties.

Objectives and strategies

Objective 1 To ensure the future use and development of land prone to flooding minimises the consequences of inundation.

Strategy 1.1 Avoid use and development on land prone to flooding.

Implementation

The strategies for floodplains will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy Guidelines

- Local Planning Policy 22.11 – Floodplain Management.
- Ensuring that appropriate drainage and flood protection standards are met.

Further strategic work

- Preparing floodplain management plans to ensure that the function of floodways to convey and store floodwaters is preserved and that the environmental attributes of floodplain areas are protected.

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying a Land Subject to Inundation Overlay to areas subject to inundation.
- Applying a Floodway Overlay to areas subject to high velocity flooding.

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Salinity and soil

Context and issues

Golden Plains Shire experiences salinisation of soil and water resources and the resultant impacts on biodiversity and productive use of land and water resources can have significant negative environmental, social and economic impacts.

It is important that new development and land use change protects naturally saline waterways and wetlands and recognises and undertakes appropriate risk management strategies to mitigate damage from salinity on the natural environment and built structures and infrastructure.

Objectives and strategies

- Objective 1 To protect the quality of naturally saline waterways including wetlands from the impacts of development and subdivision.**
- Strategy 1.1 Ensure existing or potential salinity impacts are managed and mitigated in any proposals for new urban and rural residential development or re-zoning.
- Strategy 1.2 Avoid development and subdivision within or adjacent to naturally saline waterways including wetlands.
- Objective 2 To protect soil resources from erosion, contamination, compaction, salinity and other forms of degradation.**
- Strategy 2.1 Protect soil and water resources from the risk of increased salinity.

Implementation

The strategies for salinity and soil will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy Guidelines

- Requiring land uses, development and subdivisions that can significantly change surface water and groundwater hydrological flow in the Salinity Overlay mitigate:
 - against the degradation or loss of naturally saline lakes and wetlands, particularly from the effects of reduced surface water flows or drainage.
 - the expansion of existing areas effected by salinity or the generation of new areas effected by salinity.
- Managing impacts of development and subdivision and permitted extensions to existing development through the appropriate use of protective measures including the careful siting of development and infrastructure, selection of appropriate construction materials, site landscaping and revegetation works, watering and irrigations systems, extent of impervious surfaces and the management of surface water runoff.

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying a Salinity Management Overlay to areas identified as being subject to the effects of salinity.

21.03-4 Bushfire

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Context and issues

Fire risk, both bushfire and grassfire, is a significant issue across the municipality affecting built communities and natural systems. Implementation of measures to mitigate bushfire risk following development can have an adverse effect on the natural environment.

Planning can minimise long term risks of damage from bushfire by planning and developing communities and properties so that they minimise risk to life, property and the natural environment.

The SPPF includes policy in relation to bushfire planning and strategies which clearly prioritise the protection of human life over other policy considerations. At a local level, Golden Plains has identified vegetation conservation as a lower, but still important, priority in bushfire prone areas. The SPPF must be considered prior to the application of the local policy.

Objectives and strategies

Objective 1 To avoid development in bushfire prone areas that contain significant vegetation.

Strategy 1.1 Avoid rezoning of land that allows for settlement in areas of high bushfire risk where natural assets will be compromised.

Strategy 1.2 Minimise the impact of any bushfire protection measures on vegetation with high environmental value.

Implementation

The strategies for bushfire will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying a Bushfire Management Overlay to areas identified by the Country Fire Authority and the responsible authority as subject to fire hazard.

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Catchment management and waterways

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Context and issues

The protection and enhancement of waterways and wetlands is essential to ensure environmental values are secure and that flow on social and economic benefits of healthy rivers and streams are not lost.

Council supports the implementation of the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority Regional Catchment Strategy and Sub-Strategies.

With limited annual rainfall and extensive demand for water for both urban and rural use, many of the waterways in the municipality are in poor condition and action needs to be taken to improve the condition of our rivers and streams.

Objectives and strategies

Objective 1 To protect, maintain and enhance waterways, rivers, wetlands and groundwater.

Strategy 1.1 Use an integrated catchment management approach.

Strategy 1.2 Consider downstream effects of development and use.

Objective 2 To protect water catchments.

Strategy 2.1 Ensure the location and size of dams minimises alterations to natural drainage and natural flows of watercourses and is consistent with land capability.

Strategy 2.2 Ensure dams are constructed with appropriate dam construction and soil conservation techniques and avoid leakage to groundwater.

Objective 3 To improve water quality and reduce water pollution, particularly from unsewered urban development.

Strategy 3.1 Improve water quality and the condition of waterways by promoting infrastructure works in unsewered townships.

Strategy 3.2 Complete the supply of reticulated waste water treatment to Bannockburn.

Strategy 3.3 Manage use and development in the Moorabool River and Stony Creek Water Supply Catchment Areas in order to protect water quantity and quality.

Objective 4 To protect, maintain and enhance waterways, rivers, wetlands and groundwater.

Strategy 4.1 Protect connectivity between waterways and wetlands.

Strategy 4.2 Reduce the amount of runoff from urban development.

- Strategy 4.3 Avoid development that isolates wetlands.
- Strategy 4.4 Avoid drainage of waterways and wetlands as a result of development.
- Strategy 4.5 Require buffer setbacks and fencing to waterways and wetlands.
- Strategy 4.6 Protect groundwater catchments from surface runoff.

Implementation

The strategies for catchment management and waterways will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy Guidelines

- Considering the three Regional Catchment Strategies and their Sub-Strategies. Adopt an integrated catchment management approach to ensure use and development assessment comprehensively considers the effects on land and water resources.
- Supporting the implementation of the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority Regional Catchment Strategy and River Health Strategy.

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying an Environmental Significance Overlay to the following areas: water catchment areas, watercourses, Enfield State Park, Mt Misery Creek, two areas at Dereel, Smythesdale, Yarrowee Creek.
- Applying a Significant Landscape Overlay to various landscapes, Avenues of Honour and settings across the Golden Plains municipality which are of natural significance.

Further strategic work

- Work with Catchment Management Authorities, the Victorian State Government and the community to implement the Regional Catchment Strategies, Victoria's Native Vegetation Framework and Native Vegetation Plans.

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Reference documents

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- Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy – Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, as amended.
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority Floodplain Management Strategy, April 2002.