

21.04 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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C25

This clause provides local content to support Clause 14 (Natural Resource Management) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

Specific references to individual towns are also included in Clause 21.10 (Local Areas).

21.04-1 Agriculture and rural land use

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The economy of the Shire is primarily built upon the agricultural sector. The fertile and arable soils of the Shire, together with a very reliable rainfall, provide a natural advantage. Agriculture is the most significant employer of people in the Shire, and is the dominant land use.

The Southern Grampians is renowned for producing fine wool, however through diversification into meat production, the Hamilton Regional Livestock Exchange (saleyards) has risen to become Victoria's third largest with an annual turnover of up to 1.2 million sheep and prime lambs and 50,000 cattle.

The Shire's primary industry base also includes a greater proportion of large-scale cropping, hay production and horticulture. Significant growth is expected to continue in agro-forestry, mining and renewable energy.

Newer industries such as viticulture, olives and agro-forestry also provide significant potential for the Shire. Processing and value adding of primary produce is also a significant and expanding sector in the Shire's economy.

Well established infrastructure services, scientific research and development, training and professional services within the Shire support the advancement of the agriculture sector.

Agriculture is dependent on and influenced by the condition of the natural resource base and the degradation of that base needs to be reversed.

Key Issues

- Maintaining the significance of agriculture in local economy.
- Providing opportunities for agricultural diversity.
- Preventing impacts on the natural resource base from soil decline, dryland salinity, water quality decline, erosion, land management practices, pest plants and animals and loss of native vegetation.

Objective 1

To support agricultural production, its further diversification and progressive shift towards sustainable land management.

Strategies

- Discourage residential development in rural areas which does not relate to or directly support the use of land for agriculture, horticulture or timber production.
- Support quality tourist uses, developments and experiences in rural areas which link to the productive base of the Shire, the agricultural economy, the sustainable natural environment and the conservation of natural features.
- Encourage sustainable land and water resource management.
- Protect areas of high agricultural quality land for farming purposes.

- Protect agricultural land in sustainable and viable parcels.
- Protect land in agricultural production from adjoining uses and development that are inconsistent with normal farming practices.
- Provide for a variety of sustainable farming activities, farm management techniques and farming technologies.
- Ensure that necessary non-agricultural development on agricultural land occupies the minimum amount of space.
- Facilitate more intensive and productive use of rural land for higher value products, including timber plantations, horticulture, intensive animal industries and agro-forestry.
- Support diversification of rural land uses that are consistent with sustainable land and water resource management.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to timber production, processing and agro-forestry will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy guidelines

When deciding on an application for agriculture and rural land use the responsible authority will consider as appropriate:

- Whether the proposed land use and development are consistent with the Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Strategy (2003-2007).
- Whether the land use and development take into account land capability.

Other actions

- Encourage the development of local employment opportunities through value adding to local product.
- Support revegetation programs, Landcare initiatives, and whole of catchment management.
- Assist in the development, implementation and promotion of sustainable land management practices.

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Timber production, processing and agro-forestry

Timber production and the subsequent processing provide significant opportunities for the Shire. There are currently 34,326 hectares of hard and softwood plantations in Southern Grampians which is approximately 16% of the 204,000 hectares in south-west Victoria.

As well as providing economic benefits such as employment, timber production has environmental benefits by assisting in arresting dry land salinity, controlling soil erosion and improving water quality.

The use of land for timber production poses challenges for the Shire. Harvesting and haulage of timber will require the use of Council infrastructure such as roads. This activity needs to be managed so that the cost is not imposed unfairly on the community.

Timber production should not prejudice the landscapes and natural features and the associated tourism. Other impacts of timber production, such as noise, haulage routes and visual impacts need to be managed to ensure they do not impact on tourist opportunities in the Shire.

Key Issues

- Maximising the economic and environmental benefits of timber production.
- Protecting roads and other infrastructure from the impacts of timber production.
- Protecting landscapes and natural features from the impacts of timber production.

Objective 1

To encourage and support the use and development of land for timber production, processing and agro-forestry.

Strategies

- Ensure timber production, processing and agro-forestry do not impact detrimentally on existing uses and development, or the character and appearance of the area.
- Coordinate the development of timber production, processing and agro-forestry with the existing and projected capacity of the road network.
- Direct road use for timber production, processing and agro-forestry away from tourist and bus routes where possible.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to timber production, processing and agro-forestry will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy guidelines

When deciding on an application for timber production, processing or agro-forestry, the responsible authority will consider as appropriate:

- Whether a financial contributions is required for the upgrade of roads so that the costs of timber -production, processing and agro-forestry are not unfairly imposed on the community.
- The need to provide a buffer around areas to be used for timber production.
- Environmental guidelines to timber production, processing and agro-forestry.

The responsible authority will have particular regard to applications for timber production:

- in landscapes of high visual quality (as nominated in the landscape policy or Significance Landscape Overlay);
- in areas of environmental significance (including any Environmental Significance Overlay);
- around national and state parks, particularly around the Grampians National Park; and
- on sites affected by the Heritage Overlay.

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Water

Rocklands Reservoir is the main water storage facility in the Shire, and is supplemented by reservoirs at Koonongwootong, Dunkeld and Glenthompson. The Glenelg River is the second longest river in Victoria and forms part of the northern boundary of the municipality. Protection of the quality of this water supply is significant to both urban residents and agricultural communities.

The Shire contains extensive ground water resources in deep and shallow aquifers that are used for stock and domestic supplies. Ground water quality tends to decrease toward the central north of the Shire, where it is saline.

Wannon Water and Grampians-Wimmera-Mallee Water are responsible for managing the declared water supply catchments in the Southern Grampians Shire. Southern Rural Water is the responsible authority for management of groundwater diversion. Council is the urban stormwater drainage authority.

Key Issues

- Retaining and improving water quality and water yield.
- Improving catchment health.
- Drainage programs that have reduced wetland areas.
- Drought conditions that have decreased the quality and quantity of water in aquifers.
- Poor water quality in Lake Hamilton, particularly associated with blue-green algal blooms.
- Poor stormwater quality in other settlements resulting from ageing drainage infrastructure and the prevalence of on-site waste water treatment systems.

Objective 1

- To protect water catchments and the quality of water in the Shire's rivers and streams.

Strategies

- Require that new land use and development do not increase net run-off, soil degradation, or effluent release to rivers and streams.
- Maintain the natural condition of watercourses.

Implementation

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

Policy guidelines

When deciding on an application that may impact on water catchments and/or water quality the responsible authority will consider as appropriate:

- Wannon Water Guidelines for planning permit applications in open, potable water supply catchment areas (May 2009)
- Any regional catchment strategies approved under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and any associated implementation plan or strategy including any regional river health and wetland strategies.
- Environment Protection Authority Code of Practice – Onsite Wastewater Management (2008)
- The impact on water quality and water yields.