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**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

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.

**Overview**

The Buloke Shire Council faces environmental challenges such as wind erosion, salinity and flooding. These challenges cause environmental degradation and impact on natural resources including agricultural land as well as impacting on life, property and community infrastructure. The need to plan appropriately for the environmental management of risks is critical to the ability of council to respond to emerging impacts.

The natural environment of the Buloke Shire is highly modified as a result of settlement and agriculture. The environment has many aspects of significance which need to be protected, for example remnant vegetation along roadsides, watercourses and rivers, and significant wetlands such as Lake Buloke, Lake Tyrrell and the Wooroonook Lakes.

**Key issues**

- Protecting biodiversity, native vegetation and natural landscape values in the municipality.
- Minimising environmental degradation and reversing its effects.
- Adapting to climate change and mitigating its risks.

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**Agriculture**

**Objective**

- 1.0 To protect productive farming land and maintain land use patterns of large, viable lots for broad acre cropping.

**Strategies**

- 1.1 Encourage farmers to create farm plans to support sustainable farming outcomes integrating natural resource management, production objectives and economics.
- 1.2 Encourage the use of sustainable farming techniques such as crop rotation.
- 1.3 Consider surrounding land use patterns before removing land from agricultural use.
- 1.4 Limit the fragmentation of productive agricultural land to maintain sustainable holdings.
- 1.5 Ensure that new development does not limit the viability of surrounding enterprises and reflects the optimum use of the land.
- 1.6 Support research into farming efficiency and diversification, particularly by the Birchip Cropping Group and other agricultural research and development enterprises.

**Objective**

- 2.0 To support, promote and facilitate sustainable, diverse and viable agriculture to provide for the long-term economic, social and environmental health of the municipality.

**Strategies**

- 2.1 Develop a Rural Land Use Strategy to set out the long term vision for the municipality's rural areas.
- 2.2 Encourage and support innovative agricultural opportunities arising from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline water supply.
- 2.3 Encourage and support innovative agriculture that aims to respond and adapt to climate change.
- 2.4 Encourage the revegetation of areas that are vulnerable to wind erosion.
- 2.5 Investigate where soil structure decline is significant within the municipality.
- 2.6 Actively encourage track rationalisation for hoofed animals in areas of soil structure decline.
- 2.7 Encourage and support agricultural diversification and sustainable farm practices.

**Implementation**

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

**Policy guidelines**

- When deciding on applications for use and development that may impact on agriculture, considering, as appropriate:
  - The use of any relevant Catchment Management Strategy to promote integrated farm management and environmental protection.
  - The need for land management, vegetation and habitat enhancement, appropriate water use and the protection of waterways.
  - Using any relevant Rural Land Use Strategy to promote farm practices that are sustainable and use water and soil in a sustainable and effective way.
  - The need to require a detailed site analysis to assess environmental impacts and land suitability.
- When deciding on applications for agricultural, commercial and industrial use and development, considering, as appropriate:
  - The use of any relevant Rural Land Use Policy to provide guidance for subdivision, value adding production and intensive agriculture.
  - Requiring detailed site analysis, where appropriate, in support of industrial and processing applications in rural areas.
  - Preventing the loss of important cultural and natural landscapes and heritage places that contribute to the tourism product of the municipality.

**Application of zones and overlays**

- Applying the Farming Zone (FZ) to agricultural land that needs to be protected.
- Applying the Environmental Significance Overlay (Schedules 1 & 2) to protect the environmental values of waterways and channels.

**Further strategic work**

- Developing a Rural Land Use Strategy.
- Contributing to the work of the Birchip Cropping Group and other sustainable agriculture initiatives.

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**Conservation of environmental values**

**Objective**

- 1.0 To conserve remnant native vegetation and protect biodiversity throughout the municipality.

**Strategies**

- 1.1 Discourage native vegetation removal and promote native revegetation where practicable.
- 1.2 Protect remnant native vegetation and habitat along roadsides and waterways.
- 1.3 Encourage the protection and enhancement of remnant native vegetation as a condition of land use and development approvals, where appropriate, and through the development of linkages between existing areas of native vegetation.
- 1.4 Manage road works and other activity within road reserves to minimise impacts on remnant native vegetation.

**Objective**

- 2.0 To conserve the environmental values of waterways and wetlands, including Lake Buloke, Lake Tyrrell and the Wooroonook Lakes.

### Strategies

- 2.1 Prevent inappropriate vegetation removal and waste water disposal and earthworks that detrimentally affect waterways and wetlands.
- 2.2 Promote the use of existing serviced areas for new development, and discourage expansion into areas of environmental sensitivity.
- 2.3 Discourage the removal of native vegetation from waterways.
- 2.4 Incorporate catchment management authority strategies that mitigate adverse impacts on waterways and wetlands into statutory and strategic planning considerations.

### Implementation

The strategies in relation to conservation of environmental values will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

### Policy guidelines

- When deciding on a planning application that may impact on the conservation of environmental values, considering, as appropriate:
  - The need for a detailed site analysis to assess environmental impacts and the suitability of the land for the proposal.
  - Incorporating measures to minimise the impact on remnant vegetation, including dead and hollow bearing trees.
  - The provision of areas of open space directly adjacent to existing vegetation or areas of public land.
  - Avoiding the clearance of high value remnant vegetation, including any broad vegetation type, ecological vegetation class of floristic community or sub-community which is classified as depleted, rare or endangered.
  - The advice of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and the relevant catchment management authority where the land includes remnant vegetation, including grasslands and wetlands.
  - Consistency with applicable regional vegetation plans and the recommendations of catchment-based strategies in relation to vegetation and habitat.
  - Where the land has been identified as containing the habitat of a Victorian Rare and Threatened Flora or Fauna species, the advice of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to determine whether, and under what conditions, the proposal should proceed.
  - The importance of retaining remnant vegetation and habitat corridors in areas identified as habitat for Victorian Rare and Threatened Flora or Fauna species.
  - The benefits of requiring the fencing pockets of remnant vegetation or the provision of vegetation corridors between pockets of remnant vegetation as conditions of approval.
  - Any relevant catchment management strategy, to promote integrated farm management, environmental protection, vegetation and habitat enhancement, appropriate water use and the protection of waterways.

### Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO1) to waterways to prevent inappropriate vegetation removal, waste water disposal and earthworks.
- Applying the Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO1) to roadsides and other corridors of remnant native vegetation to protect habitat and vegetation linkages.

### Further strategic work

- Removing sections of the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO2) from the Buloke Planning Scheme as a consequence of the decommissioning of channels.
- Implementing the Buloke Shire Roadside Management Guidelines to minimise disturbance to roadside vegetation.
- Establishing appropriate stock routes that minimise environmental impacts.

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### Waterways and floodplains

#### Objective

- 1.0 To recognise the contribution that healthy waterways, along with natural flora and fauna, make to the economy, and to ensure that new uses and developments do not compromise catchment health and the function of floodplains.

#### Strategies

- 1.1 Manage use and development on floodplains to maintain natural flows.
- 1.2 Maintain natural conditions within waterways where possible.

#### Policy guidelines

- When deciding on applications that may impact on flooding, considering, as appropriate:
  - The need to prevent earthworks that result in inappropriate concentrations of floodwater, or direct water from a natural path to an area that would not otherwise experience flooding.

#### Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) to areas identified as being subject to flooding to prevent inappropriate rural, residential or industrial development that may have impacts on water quality.
- Applying the Floodway Overlay (FO) to areas identified as being highly subject to flooding to prevent inappropriate rural, residential or industrial development that may have impact on water quality and flows.
- Applying the Urban Floodway Zone (UFZ) to areas identified as being highly subject to flooding to prevent any development and protect lives and infrastructure.

### Further strategic work

- In conjunction with adjoining local governments, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and catchment management authorities, identify areas subject to flooding.
- Develop and implement coordinated land use and development strategies to manage floodplains.
- Educate the community about the economic benefits of healthy waterways and controls relating to floodplain management.

#### Reference documents

Charlton Flood and Drainage Management Plan, 2013

Donald Flood and Drainage Management Plan, May 2014

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### Wildfire protection

#### Objective

- 1.0 To identify areas of wildfire risk and address risk to development from wildfire.

**Strategies**

- 1.1 Require development applications to meet Country Fire Authority guidelines.
- 1.2 Require that native and remnant vegetation removal is within the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning guidelines for permissible volume or offsets are set.
- 1.3 Minimise the threat and potential impact of wildfire throughout the municipality through land use management.

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**Salinity**

**Objective**

- 1.0 To reduce the impact of salinity on development, rivers, soil, groundwater and areas of environmental significance.

**Strategies**

- 1.1 Discourage development in areas identified as subject to high levels of salinity unless a salinity management plan is prepared.
- 1.2 Manage identified high recharge areas in the municipality including by encouraging vegetation retention and salinity tolerant vegetation in new developments.

**Further strategic work**

- In conjunction with adjoining local governments, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and catchment management authorities, identify areas subject to salinity, saline discharge and groundwater recharge areas.
- Educate the community about reducing the impacts of salinity by providing information on best practice land management.

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**Extractive industry**

**Objective**

- 1.0 To ensure that extractive industry is carried out in an environmentally sensitive manner including the site rehabilitation.

**Strategies**

- 1.1 Ensure applications are within the relevant guidelines for rehabilitation of sites.
- 1.2 Encourage the controlled development of mining and extractive industries, ensuring regard for community and environmental values and appropriate rehabilitation.
- 1.3 That proposed site operation be considered against the economic benefits and surrounding amenity.