

21.03 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY

14/01/2010
C62

21.03-1 Council Vision

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

- To promote the responsible and sustainable care of our natural environment for the use and enjoyment of the people who make up the vibrant community of Latrobe Valley.
- To responsibly manage the natural environment, to ensure its sustainability and diversity for the community.

21.03-2 Environmental Sustainability Overview

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Latrobe enjoys one of Australia's most beautiful natural environments. Environmental management is rapidly emerging as a major socio-political and economic issue in Australia. Latrobe's biodiversity, water and air quality must continue to remain of the highest quality. Latrobe Valley will therefore strive to increase and maintain natural vegetation, improve air and water quality, reduce and reuse waste, encourage energy-efficient technologies, educate the community and industry in better waste management and environmental protection. The aim will be to achieve community recognition of Latrobe's natural environment as the region's most valuable asset. Council is committed to managing its resources to meet current needs, consistent with the national interests while protecting the opportunity for future generations to meet their needs and expectations for air quality; water quality and quantity; biodiversity; and waste management.

Latrobe City has two major policies directing its approach to natural environment sustainability. It has an overarching policy on 'Ecologically Sustainable Development' which is based on the National Ecologically Sustainable Development Policy (1992) adapted to suit local circumstances, and a Local 'Agenda 21' policy which is based on the Agenda 21 principles developed at the 1992 UN World Environment Summit.

The West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) describes the water, land and biodiversity assets of the region and provides a planning framework for the protection and enhancement of these natural assets. The RCS is an overarching strategy that sits above secondary level regional strategies and action plans including West Gippsland Regional Native Vegetation Plan; West Gippsland Regional River Health Strategy; Water Quality Action Plan; West Gippsland Wetlands Plan; Draft West Gippsland Soil Erosion Management Plan; West Gippsland Salinity Management Plan; West Gippsland Floodplain Plan; and West Gippsland Rural Drainage Plan. Four Declared Water Supply Catchments fall within the Latrobe City boundary being Walkleys Creek, Tyers River, Tanjil River and Merrimans Creek.

Objective 1 - Environmental Sustainability

- To maintain and improve the ecological integrity of natural and artificial systems such as agriculture, forestry and urban areas.

Strategies

- Adopt precautionary behaviour where there are possible or identified threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage.
- Protect environmental assets as the top priority, enhance as the second priority, and consider replacement as a last resort.
- Facilitate co-operative neighbourhood environment improvement plans between industries, agencies and the community.
- Seek effective integration of policies for ecologically sustainable development with Federal, State and Local government programs and West Gippsland CMA.

21.03-3 Native Vegetation and Biodiversity Overview14/01/2010
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The Strzelecki Bioregion is one of Victoria's most fragmented bioregions. The foothills of the southern fall have been heavily logged and have lost their old growth; but they have never been entirely cleared and are still predominantly native forest. Most of the Latrobe Valley has been cleared and remaining native vegetation continues to decline due to urban development, mine expansion, incremental clearing and dieback of paddock trees. Remaining habitat is being degraded by weeds, firewood collection, grazing by domestic stock and in some cases, inappropriate fuel reduction burning. The Strzelecki Ranges have been logged and extensively cleared for agriculture; but have always retained a good cover of regenerated native vegetation. As a result they still hold important stands of Cool Temperate Rain Forest and unique biodiversity assets such as the locally endemic Strzelecki Koala.

Latrobe Valley supports 680 species of native plants and 257 species of native fauna. Many more animals, especially invertebrates, probably remain to be identified. Four plant species, one plant community and three of the animal species are listed under the Federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, two plants and ten animals are listed under the state *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1998*, and seven species of animals are listed under international treaties. Altogether 30 of the plant species and 24 of the animal species are rare or threatened in Victoria. Over 23 different classes of native vegetation can be found and there is a great deal of variation within those classes. Plant communities specially protected under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1998* include Central Gippsland Plains Grassland, Cool Temperate Rainforest, which is found in the Strzelecki's, Forest Red Gum Grassy Woodland, which occurs from Traralgon eastward, and Plains Grassland, which occurs in small pockets from Boolarra north to Moe, Morwell and Traralgon.

The vegetation classes of Latrobe in 1750 indicated a significant covering of damp forest and rainforest in the gullies of the Strzelecki Ranges. A notable feature of the current (2003) ecological vegetation classes occurring within Latrobe is the reduction of damp forest and rainforest and the increase in plantation timber. The current level of native vegetation in Latrobe Valley is 22% in comparison to 1750. This is a relatively high coverage in comparison to other regional cities. The College Creek catchment is of national significance for biodiversity. It lies in the high Strzelecki Ranges, bordering the Grand Ridge Road. The Council assessment in 2001 found College Creek to have higher biodiversity value than the nearby Tarra Bulga National Park. It contains significant stands of Cool Temperate Rainforest and a number of rare and threatened species of state and national significance. College Creek is the section of the 'Cores and Links' situated within the Latrobe City municipality. The 'Cores & Links' identifies core biodiversity sub-catchments and linking corridors across the Strzelecki's requiring protection. An 'agreement' between Hancock Victorian Plantations and the state government requires the protection of the College Creek catchment following an initial 'one off' harvesting of the plantation within it.

Objective 1 - Native Vegetation and Biodiversity

- To protect native flora and fauna species and their habitat across the municipality.

Strategies

- Encourage the protection of remnant native vegetation on private land.
- Enhance the quality and quantity of remnant vegetation by controlling threatening processes, developing plans, providing incentives and encouraging community involvement.
- Enhance the condition and quantity of native vegetation.
- Encourage the protection of native fauna species and their habitat on private land with an emphasis on protecting threatened species.
- Maintain the natural asset value of Council road reserves.

Objective 2 - Native Vegetation and Biodiversity

- To increase the extent and quality of native vegetation and biodiversity across the municipality.

Strategies

- Encourage the development of wildlife corridors and links across the municipality.
- Develop and operate a native vegetation offset bank based on parks and reserves to address offset requirements.

Objective 3 - Native Vegetation and Biodiversity

- To support the maintenance of bushland reserves.

Strategies

- Connect native vegetation to reduce fragmentation.
- Support the implementation of the 'Cores and Links' agreement and the reservation of College Creek.
- Increase the protected area of public and private bushland to at least 15% of the pre-European extent of each type, including the Strzelecki Cores and Links.
- Encourage more bushland reserves on public and private land.

21.03-414/01/2010
C62**Greenhouse and Climate Change Overview**

Current predictions are that there will be significant global climate change. Compared to many areas, changes in Gippsland are expected to be comparatively small, but still significant. The period since 1994 has been dry in Gippsland. Climate change is expected to impact on agricultural production and cropping practices, on water supply, and on domestic energy demand. There are likely to be health impacts such as increased cases of heat stress. Extreme weather events pose a danger to life, property and infrastructure as well as disruption of activities. Studies undertaken by CSIRO on behalf of the state government in 2004 predicted that future climate in the West Gippsland region is expected to be warmer and drier than it is presently.

In 2001 the community of Latrobe produced approximately 1.2m tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂-e). The Industrial sector contributed the largest proportion of emissions, while the residential, commercial and transportation sectors were other major contributors. Forecasts indicate that emissions will grow to over 3m tonnes (CO₂-e) in 2010.

Objective 1 - Greenhouse and climate change

- To reduce pollution from local domestic, transport and industry sources.

Strategies

- Support the development and implementation of new technology designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reduce community emissions (excluding power stations) by 20% compared with 1996 levels.
- Encourage the reduction of pollution from Council activities as well as local domestic, transport and business sources.

Objective 2 - Greenhouse and climate change

- To promote walking, cycling and public transport use.

Strategies

- Support the Australian Greenhouse Office by promoting walking, cycling and public transport use.

Objective 3 - Greenhouse and climate change

- To promote energy efficient building design.

Strategies

- Support the incorporation of energy efficiency provisions into the Building Code of Australia.

21.03-514/01/2010
C62**Water Quality and Quantity Overview**

The Latrobe Basin water yield, which is defined as the mean annual run-off for the Latrobe Basin, is 887,000 megalitres per annum. The Latrobe floodplain basin and wetlands has as its major tributaries Tanjil, Tyers, Moe and Morwell Rivers and Traralgon Creek which drain into the Gippsland Lakes and contribute to water quality. Water quality within the Latrobe River varies greatly but the condition of the overall Latrobe River has been rated as 'poor' in the West Gippsland Regional River Health Strategy.

Objective 1 - Water Quality and quantity

- To protect and improve water quality and river health.

Strategies

- Improve the balance between multiple uses of groundwater and surface water.
- Provide buffers to waterways to maintain water quality.
- Encourage Water Sensitive Urban Design principles in all developments.
- Maintain community wetlands and infrastructure (such as gross pollutant traps) in urban areas.

Objective 2 - Water Quality and quantity

- To reduce corporate and community water use.

Strategies

- Promote water re-use, water conservation and similar actions to maximise the amount of water available for river health and human use.
- Promote the use of recycled water for industrial, agricultural and domestic use.
- Assess the risk of landslip in the Strzelecki Ranges.
- Review road drainage systems and maintenance regimes in the Strzelecki Ranges and other hilly areas.
- Investigate innovative waste water disposal strategies in Tyers township.

21.03-614/01/2010
C62**Waste Management Overview**

Council recognises that disposing of urban solid waste by means of landfill is not a sustainable waste management strategy. Across the world governments have introduced legislation which limits the amount of waste that can be directed to landfill. This factor, coupled with the development of community waste education initiatives, leads to an increase in avoidance, reuse and recycling and a move from disposal to a focus on materials recovery.

Objective 1 - Waste Management

- To advocate waste avoidance or minimization, enhance resource recovery and achieve 'final storage quality'.

Strategies

- Develop waste management facilities, techniques and technologies to advocate waste avoidance or minimisation, enhance resource recovery and achieve 'final storage quality'
- Adopt a regional approach to waste management.

Objective 2 - Waste Management

- To ensure that waste management enhances the desirability for economic development within Latrobe City.

Strategies

- Develop facilities to manage waste which enhance the desirability for economic development within Latrobe City.

Objective 3 - Waste Management

- To increase capacity to reuse and recycle waste.

Strategies

- Engage with the community on municipal waste management service provision.

21.03-7 Flooding Overview

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Flooding is a natural hazard that can severely disrupt communities and may cause extensive damage, stock loss and in extreme events loss of life. Careful planning and management of floodplains has been effective in reducing damage and costs associated with flood events. The flooding controls in the current planning scheme do not reflect actual flooding and need updating as a high priority. New flood mapping (from the Traralgon Flood Study, the Flood Data Transfer Project, the Waterhole (Morwell) and Narracan (Moe) Flood studies) is available. The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority has identified improved flood information for the Latrobe River floodplain as a priority for future studies and as a gap in existing information.

Objective 1 - Flooding

- To minimise the potential for loss of life, risk to health and damage to property.

Strategies

- Discourage urban or rural residential development on areas subject to regular flooding.
- Ensure the floodway is maintained and that the free passage and temporary storage of flood waters is not compromised.
- Discourage subdivision, other than realignment or consolidation, in a floodway.
- Discourage houses, other than replacement houses, in a floodway.
- Ensure houses are located above the 1:100 year flood level.
- Encourage any building envelopes for houses to provide an adequate effluent disposal area which is free from flooding.
- Discourage uses such as sewerage treatment and pumping works, intensive animal industries and sanitary landfill depots on flood prone land.

Objective 2 - Flooding

- To ensure that the natural function of the floodplain to convey and store flood waters is preserved.

Strategies

- Ensure the floodway is maintained and that the free passage and temporary storage of flood waters is not compromised.

21.03-8 Wildfire Overview

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Large areas of grassland, scrub and forest have been identified on the Wildfire Management Overlay. A high level of hazard has also been identified in areas of rural residential development in the vicinity of the foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges. It is important that all development and use of land have regard to fire safety measures. Planning can assist to decrease the level of risk to life and property and biodiversity and to facilitate the efforts of emergency service in event of fire.

Objective 1 - Wildfire

- To ensure that new land use and development does not increase the level of fire risk.

Strategies

- Identify areas of a high fire risk.

Objective 2 - Wildfire

- To ensure that new land use and development includes adequate fire protection measures.

Strategies

- Require adequate fire protection measures as part of permission.
- Support the implementation of fuel reduction and ecological burning programs in rural residential interface areas, undertaken by the CFA and DSE.
- Support the use of fire as a management tool to reduce fuel loads and assist in maintaining ecological diversity in appropriate vegetation communities.

21.03-914/01/2010
C62**Implementation**

The objectives and strategies identified in this Clause will be implemented by:

Using zones and overlays

- Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay – Schedule 1 Urban Buffers to provide reciprocal protection for urban areas and the mines and their associated activities.
- Apply the Land Subject to Inundation and the Floodway Overlay (with modified schedules) to floodprone areas as identified by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.
- Apply the Wildfire Management Overlay to bush fire prone areas.

Further Strategic Work

- Consider applying the Erosion Management Overlay to areas identified as being at risk from landslip.
- Assess areas with potential to apply the Significant Landscape Overlay.
- Modify the flooding schedules in consultation with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.
- Develop Environmental Significance Overlays to protect natural assets and to water supply catchments.
- Develop a Significant Tree Register.
- Assess the risk of landslip in the Strzelecki Ranges.
- Develop a Management Plan and maintain the Victory Park wetland in Traralgon.
- Implement Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Plans for all catchments.

21.03-1014/01/2010
C62**Reference Documents**

The following strategic studies have informed the preparation of this planning scheme. All relevant material has been included in the Scheme and decisions makers should use these documents for background research only.

- Latrobe 2021 (2nd edition).
- Council Plan (2007 – 2011).
- NESS (2008).
- West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS).
- West Gippsland Regional Native Vegetation Plan.
- West Gippsland Regional River Health Strategy.
- Water Quality Action Plan.
- West Gippsland Floodplain Plan.
- West Gippsland Rural Drainage Plan.
- Greening Latrobe Strategic Plan (2006-2008).