

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

I. Background

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This report provides a resource inventory of an area which is viewed as the Middle Reaches of the Goulburn River Catchment. The area involves a significant proportion (75%) of the Alexandra Region as delineated by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (figure 1.1).

The study is conducted under the auspices of the National Soil Conservation Programme (specifically NSCP 10), and is jointly funded by the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry and the Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. The programme broadly reviews three parcels of land incorporating some 20,000 sq km of the Victorian Northern Slopes (figure 1.1). The Northern Slopes is regarded as that land north of the Great Dividing Range extending to the Riverine Plains along the Murray River.

Specifically the NSCP programme involves the following studies:

- (i) an area of approximately 6,000 sq km incorporating the Wimmera Systems and Rocklands proclaimed catchments (White et al.);
- (ii) 8,300 sq km of the Loddon River Catchment (Schoknecht 1988); and
- (iii) the present study involving about 6,700 sq km of the Goulburn River Catchment that lies mainly west of the Eildon Reservoir.

The study area

Much of the study area is regarded as having a land degradation problem with particular concern for water erosion (on cleared land), dryland salinity and protection of water supply catchments.

The area is of varying topography, generally undulating to hilly in the west becoming mountainous to the east. A number of eruption points and old volcanic cones are found near Kilmore.

The catchment is bounded and highly influenced by the granitic intrusions of the area which form dissected plateaux with associated escarpments. These include the Strathbogie, Black Range and Mount Disappointment plateaux.

Eildon Reservoir in the far east is a major Victorian water storage providing irrigation water for agricultural pursuits along the Goulburn River valley and diverted via channels to the Wimmera and Mallee regions. The Goulburn River and its tributaries extend from Eildon through the townships of Alexandra, Yea and Seymour. Minor branches of the alluvial network also extend south to Maryville, Goulburn and Strath Creek. These alluvial deposits are host to most pastoral, cropping and horticultural pursuits of the district.

Much of the hilly and mountainous land south of the Goulburn Valley Highway (between Seymour and Eildon) and east of the Hume Highway (between Seymour and Kilmore) is public land. This area incorporates extensive forest reserves and, together with the Eildon Reservoir is seen as a principal venue for year round recreation.

On the private cleared upland terrain sheep and to a lesser extent cattle are the chief pastoral concerns.

Project aims

The main aim of this study is to present basic land resource information on the catchment which would be of use to regional planners in Local and State Government bodies.

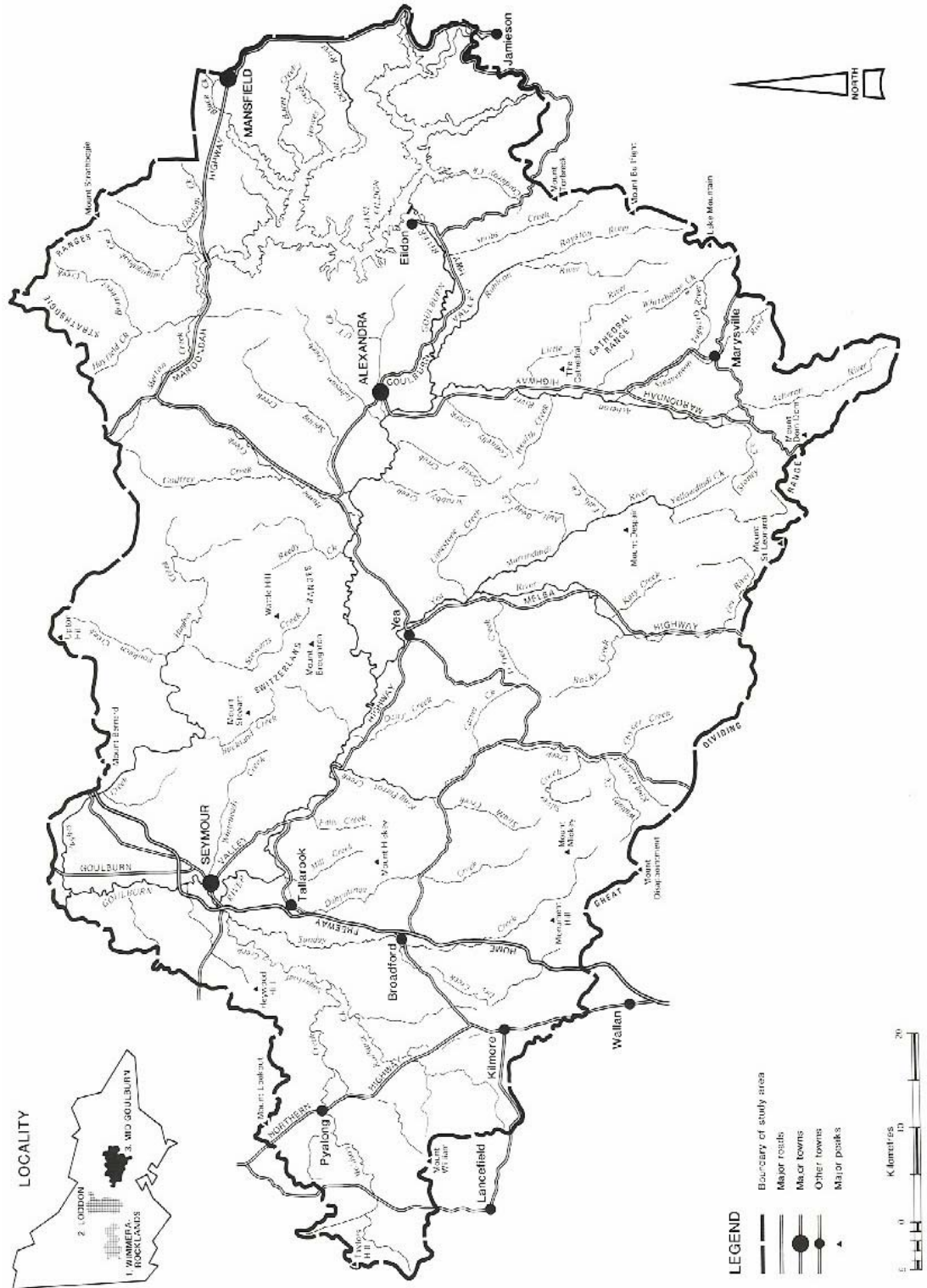


Figure 1.1 – Map showing the mid Goulburn catchment study area, together with other associated NSCP – 10 Land Inventory studies (see insert).

In doing so the report is specifically aimed at:

- (i) indicating those areas which are susceptible to land degradation, and which could require special management practices when being developed;
- (ii) highlighting areas which will be important for regional planning needs; and
- (iii) providing a framework for subsequent more detailed investigations.

Report presentation

The report is presented in the form of chapters outlining specific catchment resources. Each chapter has been prepared under individual authorship. This method of inventory assessment has been chosen to give a wider cross-sectional approach to the report. It should be stressed that the report presents a 'first approximation' view of the study area. If more detailed information is required, direct contact with the author/s should be made.

The sections of the report are as follows:

- Section A: Introduction – background and history.
- Section B: The landscape – discussing in separate chapters: climate, water resources, native vegetation, soil conservation, and geology and geomorphology.
- Section C: Land use – discussing in separate chapters: agriculture, forestry, mining, residential development and conservation and recreation.
- Section D: Land inventory and assessment – includes land unit mapping and land unit descriptions.

It is stressed that the assessment and interpretation in this report is presented with particular scales in mind, and is made at a regional level. Any enlargement of the resource mapping for further interpretation is inadvisable, and it is recommended that this should not be undertaken without consultation with the author concerned.