

## 6.8 Community and agency engagement

Although salinity can have significant environmental, social and economic consequences, the effects can often be subtle and gradual. There is a strong need for a community education program on the effects, causes and solutions to salinity. Such a program should ideally be integrated with education programs on other issues such as water quality, river health, soil erosion and biodiversity. There are currently a number of community education programs either directly targeting salinity or related to salinity including:

- **Waterwatch:** A community based program for the collection and distribution of water quality information (including salinity) for key rivers and wetlands. Part of the Waterwatch program is a community awareness program for water quality issues including visits to schools, Landcare groups and other community groups.
- **Saltwatch:** A program run by Waterwatch specifically focussed on raising awareness of salinity issues in the community. The key activity of Saltwatch is “Saltwatch Week” in the second week of May where a variety of community groups monitor salinity in a larger number of sites than the usual Waterwatch monitoring. In West Gippsland, the program is mainly undertaken by school groups.
- **Landcare:** Landcare Coordinators and Facilitators increase community awareness of salinity issues and aid landowners to remediate salinity (where possible).

This plan strongly supports the continuation of the above programs. In addition, there are a number of existing and proposed extension programs as discussed in Sections 6.4 and 6.5 to raise awareness of the salinity issue and help the community address the problem.

In addition to the current community education programs and the proposed and current extension programs, this plan recommends that:

- All research and investigation projects, any significant strategic planning activities and significant on-ground activities have a communication strategy to ensure the results are communicated to Landcare Coordinators and Facilitators, extension officers, Waterwatch/Saltwatch officers and the broader community (eg brochures, press statements, seminars etc);
- The successes of the program be more widely publicised, especially the outcomes of the groundwater pumping program in and around the Macalister Irrigation District;
- Staff involved in the on-site assessment of salinity projects (through Landcare and other incentive projects) be trained to enable the most effective remediation projects to be developed in conjunction with landholders. Training should also include the identification and selection of salt tolerant species;
- Field days in the region be undertaken to look at local examples of work to address salinity;
- Educational resources be made available for both staff and landholder reference to encourage and support on-site remediation work. There are many resources currently available through the National Dryland Salinity Program such as salinity kits with educational information for both agency staff and landholders. The majority of this information is available via the NDSP website and landholders and agency staff should be alerted to this.

A communications strategy should be developed to ensure the key messages from this plan are communicated to the appropriate stakeholders and stakeholders are aware of the progress towards the plan's implementation. Such a strategy could include some of the following activities:

- The inclusion of the plan on the West Gippsland CMA website;
- Fliers of the key messages from the plan distributed to key stakeholders including Landcare groups and agencies;
- A formal launch of the plan accompanied by an appropriate press statement; and
- An annual report compiled and distributed on the achievements of the previous 12 months towards the targets set in the plan and any departure from the management actions stated in the plan.

A Local Government Authority (LGA) engagement plan should also be developed to ensure LGAs are involved in the salinity planning process. This plan proposes the development of the engagement plan in 2005/06 to enable the LGAs to participate in the salinity planning and mitigation process. It is proposed that the engagement plan outline educational pathways to provide information on salinity in West Gippsland, particularly in relation to infrastructure and buildings. Unofficial salinity and depth to watertable overlays may be provided to LGAs to assist in the planning process, however it is not recommended that these be 'official' overlays due to the limitations of the depth to watertable map accuracy. The engagement plan will be developed by the WGCMA as part of their coordination role. The management options for community and agency engagement are shown in Table 58.

▪ **Table 58: Community and agency engagement management options**

Management options	Potential future actions	Type of project	Benefit-risk score	Overall priority	5 year management actions					5 year Management Action Targets	WGCMA partners	
					2004-2005 <sup>^</sup>	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009			2009-2010
<b>CA1</b> LGA engagement plan	Develop a Local Government Authority engagement plan	Community and agency engagement	Not assessed	Priority 1							<b>MAT CA1:</b> Local Government Authority engagement plan completed and implemented	WGCMA only
<b>CA2</b> Community education	Integrate community education on salinity with existing programs such as Landcare, Saltwatch and Waterwatch and field days as well as through the Whole Farm Planning and Irrigation Farm Planning processes	Community and agency engagement	Not assessed	Priority 1							<b>MAT CA2:</b> Community education on salinity integrated into existing programs and on-going education on salinity provided through field days and the Farm Planning process	DPI, Landcare, Waterwatch, Saltwatch

Management options	Potential future actions	Type of project	Benefit-risk score	Overall priority	5 year management actions						5 year Management Action Targets	WGCMA partners
					2004-2005^	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010		
<b>CA3</b> Project communications strategies	Ensure all research and investigation projects, any significant strategic planning activities and significant on-ground activities have a communication strategy to ensure the results are communicated to the community	Community and agency engagement	Not assessed	Priority 1							<b>MAT CA3.1:</b> All R&I projects, significant strategic planning activities and significant on-ground activities have a communication strategy and results communicated to the community	DPI, Landcare, DSE, SRW, Waterwatch, Saltwatch
	Publicise successes of the Salinity Program more widely, especially the outcomes of the Groundwater Pumping Program in and around the MID	Community and agency engagement	Not assessed	Priority 1							<b>MAT CA3.2:</b> Successes of the Salinity Program publicised more widely	WGCMA only
<b>CA4</b> SMP communications strategy	Develop a communications strategy to ensure the key messages from this plan are communicated to appropriate stakeholders and stakeholders are aware of the progress towards the plan's implementation	Community and agency engagement	Not assessed	Priority 1							<b>MAT CA4:</b> Communications strategy developed and implemented	WGCMA only
<b>CA5</b> Field days	Run field days looking at local examples of work undertaken to address salinity	Community and agency engagement	Not assessed	Priority 1							<b>MAT CA5:</b> 1 field day run each year looking at local examples of work undertaken to address salinity	DPI, Landcare
<b>CA6</b> Educational resources	Make educational resources available for agency staff and landholders about salinity causes, processes and management.	Community and agency engagement	Not assessed	Priority 1							<b>MAT CA6:</b> Agency staff and landowners alerted to the information available on the NDSP website and additional information relevant to the local setting available	DPI, DSE, SRW, Landcare