

FACT SHEET: WERRIBEE RIVER BIOLINK ACTION PLAN PROJECT



WHAT IS THE WERRIBEE RIVER BIOLINK ACTION PLAN PROJECT?

The Werribee River Biolink Action Plan Project aims to provide a long-term plan for the Werribee River as a regional biolink.

The project area extends along the Werribee River and adjacent lands between the State Forest at Korweinguboorra and the river mouth.

Information about the current situation within the study area and of potential changes in land use and development patterns will be used to develop a Biolink Action Plan.

A Biolink Action Plan describes how separate biodiversity features could become a large-scale biolink.

Defining the meaning of term 'biolink' as it would apply in Melbourne's west is an aspect of the project, but broadly it refers to identified parts of the landscape where the functional ecological connectivity for biodiversity is enhanced and/or restored to provide space for species (and consequently ecological communities) to self adapt their distributions and abundances under changing climates through natural processes.

The Werribee River Biolink Action Plan will identify key environmental assets and threats to those assets in a predominantly modified and fragmented landscape.

A major thrust of the project will be the development of priority management program to protect, enhance and restore these assets along the Werribee River to increase connectivity, ecological function and long term resilience.

WHY?

It is important that the community understands why the Werribee River Biolink Action Plan Project is being undertaken.

The Werribee River is the largest river system to the west of Melbourne and this project aims to provide a long-term plan for the Werribee River as a regional biolink. It will investigate the nature of aquatic, riparian and terrestrial corridors required for a regional biolink and develop an action plan, listing

potential projects to enhance the biodiversity and other natural values of the river.

The project will deliver on the Werribee Plains Regional Environmental Sustainability Framework by providing a biodiversity corridor from the coast to the ranges. This is a priority, developed in consultation with the community, of the natural environment pillar of the Framework and accords with the priorities under the third stage of the implementation of the Port Phillip and Westernport Regional Catchment Strategy.



WHEN?

The Werribee River Biolink Action Plan Project commenced in May 2011 with the signing of a Funding Deed between the Department of Sustainability and Environment and LeadWest. From that starting point the project involves seven further steps.

The first step was to seek and engage an appropriate consultant with expertise in ecology and land use planning. This was achieved in July 2011.

The second step, which is currently in progress, is to develop a report that:

- Defines the biolink
- Maps biodiversity assets
- Identifies existing and complementary projects
- Documents the existing land use planning context
- Prepares a preliminary gap analysis identifying opportunities and constraints

The third step, planned for November 2011, is to hold a workshop with stakeholders to review the report.

The fourth step, planned to start in December 2011, is to prepare a draft of the Werribee River Biolink Action Plan.

The fifth step, planned to start in February 2012, is to hold a workshop with stakeholders to review the draft Werribee River Biolink Action Plan.

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The sixth step, planned to start in March 2012, is to finalise the Werribee River Biolink Action Plan.

The final step, planned to occur in June 2012, is to present the finalised Werribee River Biolink Action Plan at a Community Forum.



WHO?

The Werribee River Biolink Action Plan Project is being managed by LeadWest.

LeadWest is a regional organisation for Melbourne's west. It is governed by a ten-member Board of Directors comprising five local government representatives (one each from the cities of Brimbank, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham), four elected by the corporate members and an independent chairperson.

LeadWest's objective is to foster and undertake actions that will support sustainable growth and development of the region. We aim to build on the region's social, economic and environmental capacity and to plan and create a sustainable future for the wellbeing of its communities.

Under the direction of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change the Department of Sustainability and Environment has made available a grant to LeadWest to prepare the Biolinks Action Plan. The funds were made available under the Victorian Government's Vision for Werribee Plains initiative.

The Vision for Werribee Plains aims to achieve sustainable development, generate new economic and employment opportunities and secure the region's future as an internationally focused, innovative and attractive place to live, work and invest.

LeadWest is partnering in this project with:

- Melbourne Water
- The City of Wyndham
- The Shire of Melton
- The Shire of Moorabool
- Werribee River Association

The project team has also identified numerous organisations that are 'stakeholders' in the project, such as:

- Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and Arts
- Department of Planning and Community Development
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Department of Transport
- Growth Area Authority
- Landcare and 'Friends of' and similar groups throughout the region
- Landholders (private and corporate)
- Parks Victoria
- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority
- Regional Rail Link Authority
- Southern Rural Water
- Western Water
- VicRoads
- VicTrack

LeadWest has engaged KBR as a consultant on the Werribee River Biolink Action Plan Project. KBR is a global consulting company. KBR has been recognised around the globe for its commitment to the environment and a sustainable future. KBR's Melbourne-based Environment and Planning team is lead by Ms Shelly Herron who has been involved in Natural Resource Management for over 20 years.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Werribee River Biolink Action Plan Project please refer to LeadWest's website www.leadwest.com.au or contact Mr Alan Thatcher on 0417 387 678 .