



## NatureWatch 2021-24

### Master Plan



The Werribee River Naturewatch project will provide a platform from which the Werribee River Association (WRA) will work towards a healthy Werribee River, and other waterways within the catchment, by 2070. The project will build a foundation to achieve long-term goals and align with the outcomes of various strategies, including the Healthy Waterways Strategy.

29 November 2021

The work undertaken through the project will cover the importance and benefits of green spaces for humans, healthy waterways being vital for nature, and facilitate collective action to meet the challenges ahead. A key focus will be involving the community in the goals of improving the function and biodiversity of the Werribee River, with a net gain in cultural, economic, environmental, and social values.

The project's delivery themes will include Education & Engagement, Water Quality & Recreation, Advocacy for Access & Amenity, and Regeneration. Delivery will involve community members, CALD communities, local groups and stakeholders in existing and new strategic partnerships, communications, promotions, citizen science and practical work.

One of the key benefits of the project will strengthen the capacity of WRA, as a community environmental organisation, to build active relationships with previously uninvolved landowners and managers in ways Melbourne Water, as a statutory authority, cannot.

## Education & Engagement

### *Enabling participation and environmental stewardship across the catchment*

The WRA has built resources, skills, knowledge, expertise, and well-developed community networks over many years, which enables education and engagement to occur across the catchment.

Through NatureWatch, WRA will continue to deliver education and engagement programs and continue to expand within this space. Reporting outcomes will be provided for the following Healthy Waterways Strategy Regional Performance Objectives:

RPO 6. Partnerships are fostered between Traditional Owner groups and research groups, and Traditional Owner groups and community groups.

RPO 20. The amenity, community connection and recreation values of wetlands are better understood. Performance objectives are developed to enhance these values.

RPO 37. To increase participation rates on education, capacity building, incentives programs and citizen science activities and enable greater levels of environmental stewardship for our waterways.

RPO 38. Key messages, stories and resources for waterways and waterway health are collaboratively developed and broadly distributed, increasing community knowledge and engagement around waterways.

RPO 39. Expand systems and pathways to share knowledge and information between communities and stakeholders to empower communities to participate and influence waterway management.

RPO 40. The profile of waterways is lifted, local connections to waterways are increased and leaders in waterway management are celebrated and fostered.

## Additional Initiatives and Strategies Supported

- Protecting the Waterways of the West.  
Key Direction 5; Connecting, celebrating, and valuing the landscape.
- Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy.  
Education & Engagement will provide opportunities for multiple themes within this strategy, to be communicated to a wide audience, so the goal of conserving the regions waters, lands and biodiversity can be understood and supported.

- Environment and Sustainability Strategy, Wyndham City Council.  
Broad theme; Sustainable City- Target 1.7. Community Engagement.
- Coastal and Marine Management Plan: Wyndham City Council.  
Themes; 7.1.1. Cultural Values and 7.2.3. Community Awareness & Participation.
- Integrated Water Management Plan: Melton City Council.  
Objective 3. Valued landscapes that are connected and accessible.
- Greening the West Strategy.  
Intended Outcomes; Improve community education and participation.

## **Water Quality & Recreational**

*Using science, research, direct action, and enhancing recreational opportunities*

Through NatureWatch, WRA will continue to undertake research of water quality and pollution at several locations, which have impacts upon terrestrial and aquatic species and their habitat, along with human health and liveability.

WRA will provide opportunities to leverage citizen science and advocate for upstream litter management, achieving greater community outreach.

Opportunities for on waterway activities will be researched and developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Through NatureWatch, WRA will provide reporting outcomes for the following Healthy Waterways Strategy Regional Performance Objectives:

RPO 23. The potential impacts of emerging contaminants of concern such as microplastics, pesticides and pharmaceuticals, and toxic chemicals are better understood and mechanisms to respond collaboratively developed.

RPO 26. Methods are in place to assess volume and source of litter to inform and promote litter reduction programs.

RPO 27. Incidence of littering and illegal dumping is reduced through raised community awareness and knowledge, infrastructure, and enforcement.

## **Additional Strategies & Initiatives Supported**

- Protecting the Waterways of the West.  
Key Direction 2. Protecting water quality and waterway health.
- Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy.  
Themes relating to water.
- Environment and Sustainability Strategy: Wyndham City Council.  
Broad theme; Valuing Nature - Target 2. 4. Litter and Target 2.5. Waterways.
- Coastal and Marine Management Plan: Wyndham City Council.  
Themes; 7.3. Use and access and 7.4.4. Environmental management.
- Integrated Water Management Plan: Melton City Council.  
Objective 2. Healthy waterways and wetlands.

## **Advocacy for Access & Amenity**

### *Involving our diverse community and stakeholders in decision making*

WRA has a 40-year history of advocacy work and collaborating with a long-standing network of partnerships, across the catchment and wider region, to deliver positive environmental outcomes. Included in this is a successful track record of engaging with Environment Justice Australia and others on advocacy programs, with outcomes such as the Waterways of the West initiative and the Lower Werribee Amenity Action Plan.

Through NatureWatch, WRA will continue to build on these community and stakeholder relationships to advocate for access and amenity programs and will provide reporting outcomes for the following Healthy Waterways Strategy Regional Performance Objectives:

RPO 6. Partnerships are fostered between Traditional Owner groups and research groups, and Traditional Owner groups and community groups.

RPO 19. Options to transform modified waterways by creating more natural, community-loved spaces are identified and implemented.

RPO 20. The amenity, community connection and recreation values of wetlands are better understood. Performance objectives are developed to enhance these values.

RPO 39 Expand systems and pathways to share knowledge and information between communities and stakeholders to empower communities to participate and influence waterway management.

RPO 40 The profile of waterways is lifted, local connections to waterways are increased and leaders in waterway management are celebrated and fostered.

## **Additional Strategies & Initiatives Supported**

- Protecting the Waterways of the West.  
Key Direction 4. Enhancing and activating waterways as open space.
- Lower Werribee Waterway Amenity Action Plan
- Coastal and Marine Management Plan: Wyndham City Council.  
Themes; 7.1.3. Enhanced amenity and 7.3. Use and access.
- Integrated Water Management Plan: Melton City Council.  
Objective 3. Valued landscapes that are connected and accessible.

## Regeneration

### *Increasing vegetation extent and quality for healthier functioning ecosystems*

Through NatureWatch, WRA will continue and expand upon regeneration work which improves and creates corridors and habitat for wildlife, while enhancing liveability outcomes for the growing human population of the west.

NatureWatch will facilitate the WRA to seek opportunities to achieve a net gain in the extent and functioning of native ecosystems, protect threatened species and communities and build waterway resilience to climate change. Works undertaken within this space will have a strong focus on community and stakeholder partnerships to encourage regeneration at a landscape level. Reporting outcomes will be provided for the following Healthy Waterways Strategy Regional Performance Objectives:

RPO 19. Options to transform modified waterways by creating more natural, community-loved spaces are identified and implemented.

RPO 22. Cooler, greener and more liveable urban environments are created through revegetation and as part of managing excess stormwater.

RPO 30. Climate change resilient revegetation management practices are understood and implemented by selecting plant species, provenances and vegetation communities that are suited to projected future climatic conditions

RPO 32. Programs are in place to protect and enhance sites of biodiversity significance associated with the region's waterways, such as through Melbourne Water's Sites of Biodiversity Significance Strategy.

## Additional Strategies & Initiatives Supported

- Protecting the Waterways of the West. Key Direction 6.  
Improving the resilience of coastal wetlands and estuaries.
- Werribee River Biolink Action Plan.  
50-year vision to work towards a resilient, biodiverse and healthy catchment, encouraging rehabilitation works to link fragmented habitat, create corridors and mitigate threatening processes.
- Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy.  
Multiple themes across the strategy.

- Environment and Sustainability Strategy: Wyndham City Council.  
Broad theme; Sustainable City- Target 1.5. Urban Ecology. Broad theme; Valuing nature –Target 2.1. Coast, Target 2.2. Land Management and Target 2.3. Biodiversity.
- City Forest and Habitat Strategy: Wyndham City Council.  
Multiple objectives for the Werribee River, City Connectivity and Parks & Reserves.
- Coastal and Marine Management Plan: Wyndham City Council.  
Themes; 7.1.2. Marine and coastal ecosystems, native vegetation, habitat values and biodiversity and 7.4.1. Climate Change and Adaptation.
- Integrated Water Management Plan: Melton City Council.  
Objective 2. Healthy waterways and wetlands and Objective 3. Valued landscapes that are connected and accessible.
- Greening the West Strategy.  
Intended Outcomes; Maximise urban greening and Increase climate adaption, urban cooling, liveability, and health.
- More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West. Planting trees in urban areas with low tree canopy cover.

## Stakeholders & Partnerships

Collaborating with the WRA's existing network of stakeholders, and building new partnerships, will be vital in the delivery of NatureWatch.

Key partners and stakeholders include:

- Melbourne Water
- Port Phillip and Western Port CMA
- Traditional Owners
- Parks Victoria
- Werribee Open Range Zoo
- Grow West
- Environment Justice Australia
- Wyndham City Council
- Moorabool Shire Council
- Melton City Council
- Moorabool Landcare Network
- NatureWest (Landcare Network)
- Platypus Alliance Bacchus Marsh
- Southern Rural Water
- Greater Western Water
- Multiple Friends Of Groups
- EPA Victoria
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Alta Project Space
- Holcim

Through the life of the NatureWatch project, Melbourne Water and WRA will explore opportunities for transitioning the project from its current format into a program partnership agreement.

This type of partnership would enable the delivery of multiple projects and assist Melbourne Water in engaging with the wider community and network of stakeholders, by addressing gaps in the activities that they are able to carry out.

