



UMCCC Forum, October 2010 **The Upper Murrumbidgee – Helping it Work**

“The catchment is more than a river” (Peter Duffy)

“The catchment is where we live” (Tanya Noakes)

“We are the ancestors of the future” (Auntie Jeanette Phillips)

Record of Outcomes



The Murrumbidgee at Weetangera Elioth Gruner, 1937
Oil on Canvas, Art Gallery of NSW

ActewAGL





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1. Introduction

The UMCCC Forum comprised eleven presentations followed by a workshop session where participants split into three groups for discussion. The final program is at [UMCCC Forum 2010 Program](#)

The speakers and workshop groups were asked to address the following questions:

1. What does the catchment actually mean to you and what values does it embody?
2. What does the catchment do well?
3. What would you like to see the catchment do better or differently?
4. What needs to change for this to happen?
5. What are the top three priorities for change? (workshop groups only).

Copies of the speaker presentations are available from the UMCCC secretariat. Notes made by workshop groups 1, 2 and 3 are at [Attachment 2](#), [Attachment 3](#) and [Attachment 4](#) (respectively).

This report focuses on the outcomes of questions 3, 4 and 5. The report

- summarises the main suggestions made by the invited speakers on what needs to change or be done better or differently in the future, and
- provides a statement of key actions for the future based on the priorities identified by the three workshop groups.

2. What needs to change? – guest speaker perceptions

The following key suggestions for change, grouped below under themes, emerged from the presentations of the guest speakers.

Landscape

- Re-establish (or move closer to restoring) natural landforms, ecosystems and processes. These include landforms such as chain-of-ponds (instead of incised stream beds), ecosystems including native grassland and grassy woodlands on the cleared lower slopes and flats, and processes such as fire regimes (that may have been used as part of traditional Aboriginal management in the region).

People

- For those living in the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment, establish or re-establish cultural connections with the catchment, and improve their sense of identity with it and their ownership of its environmental problems and the associated management needs.
- Improve the involvement of local Aboriginal communities in the management of the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment. This includes tapping into, respecting and using Aboriginal knowledge.
- Improve the links between upstream and downstream communities in the catchment.
- Make more use of volunteers and the passion they bring.

Communication and education

- Improve communication with the general community (especially those in the cities, urban centres and peri-urban areas) to make them more aware of the issues in the catchment, what needs to be done to address the issues, and to get them involved in the management of their local environment.
- Coordinate educational activities, keep them locally relevant and 'grounded', and use 'smart' information tools (e.g. that easily allow material to be kept current and provide quick access).
- Ensure farmers have access to the information they need to manage their land appropriately.

Governance

- Develop a groundswell of support for water and catchment management to be accepted and treated as national security issues, and actively participate in the debate.
- Improve the governance arrangements within and applying to the catchment to overcome the current fragmentation and cross-border issues. This includes arrangements within and between government departments; between departments and authorities in the ACT, NSW and local governments; between the wide range of non-government groups involved or interested in management of the catchment; and between on-ground owners and/or land managers.

Planning and on-ground action

- Better integrate planning and on-ground work, including by developing an integrated strategic plan for the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment.
- Use a longer time-frame for planning (e.g. one that takes account of events less frequent than the annual or triennial planning and funding cycles, such as major floods, wild fires, droughts, and the predicted progressive impacts of climate change).
- Ensure catchment management decisions are rational and evidence-based, and made within an actively used adaptive management framework.
- Ensure catchment planning is done within the context of key documents such as the new Murray Darling Basin Plan and the NSW Government's water sharing plans.
- Improve planning for urban and rural residential growth in relation to their impact on the catchment.

Funding / resourcing

- Integrate funding needs and prioritisation.
- Look at using different business models, and seek funds from a wider range of sources (government and non-government).
- Support a strong facilitation role that encourages partnerships and respects the resilience of local communities and their capacity to participate.

Data / information

- Improve data collection to fill known or identified gaps (including benchmark data required to measure change).
- Bring together and integrate data from across the wide range of disparate sources.
- Ensure an effective one-stop-shop source for community access to catchment data.

Climate Change *“Dry weather is here to stay” (Leigh Crocker)*

- Plan for how to address the predicted impacts of human-induced climate change on the catchment, including impacts from changed weather (including changed precipitation patterns and levels) and fire regimes on water quality and yield, species and ecosystems, and human resource needs.

3. Priorities for the Future — ‘Working Smarter; Increasing Connectivity’

The priority actions for the future identified by the workshop groups at the Forum are summarised below.

1. Use a holistic, landscape approach for the management of the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment to ensure that the land, water, habitats, species and ecosystems and their inter-relationships are addressed seamlessly.
2. Educate the community (including school children, landholders, and politicians) about the management needs in the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment, gain their support for priority actions, get them involved in the catchment’s management, and get them to accept a stewardship role for other organisms (native plants and animals) that live in or use the catchment.
3. Improve the collation, sharing, integration, and availability of existing knowledge and data in and about the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment, and make the information readily accessible to everyone there to get better management outcomes.
4. Improve relationships and cooperation between the ACT and NSW, within and between all levels of government, between non-government organisations, and between government authorities and non-government organisations.
5. Prioritise management issues and on-ground projects across the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment, and improve national and state government funding programs (including their targets and business plans) to ensure they provide a more suitable framework to address the issues, projects and appropriate planning time-frames.
6. Plan and implement projects with practical outcomes, and improve integration at the project level.



UMCCC Forum 2010 Program

When: Friday, October 29th, 8.30am–4.30pm

Where: The Common Room, University House, ANU

Facilitator: Mr Paul van Reyk

Scribe: Rosemary Purdie

8.30	Peter Duffy Auntie Jeanette Phillips	Chair, UMCCC. Opening and introductions. Ngunnawal Elder; Welcome to Country
9.00	Peter Hairsine	Deputy Chief, CSIRO Land and Water. Setting the scene – the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment.
9.30	Adrian Brown	Aboriginal Liaison Officer, ACT Parks and Conservation Service.
10.00	Greg Northover	President, Yass Area Network Landcare & beef producer, Yass.
10.15	Question Time	
10:30	Morning Tea	
11.00	Michael Ross	ACT Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water
11.15	Leigh Crocker	Manager Water Services, ACTEW Corporation
11.30	Simon Holloway	Environmental Services Coordinator, Palerang Council
11.45	Bill McCormick	Deputy Chair, ACT NRM Council
12.00	Tanya Noakes	ACT Waterwatch Facilitator
12.15	Question Time	
12.30	Lunch	
1.00	Greg Bugden	General Manager, Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority
1.15	Frank Walker	Acting General Manager Water Planning, Murray Darling Basin Authority
1.45	David Harriss	Commissioner, NSW Office of Water
2.00	Question Time	
2.15	Rosemary Purdie	Scribe: summary of key future actions raised by speakers
2.15	Workshop session (including Afternoon Tea)	
4.00	Paul van Reyk	Facilitated report back from workshop groups
4.25	Peter Duffy	Chair, UMCCC: Closing comments
4.30	Drinks	

Sponsors:

- ACT Natural Resource Management Council
- ActewAGL

Notes from Workshop Group 1

Top three priorities

1. Education (community, schools, politicians), [including/focusing] on stewardship and recognizing the use of the catchment by other species (plants and animals)
2. Working smarter (with data, governments, funding systems, planning, integration/cooperation)
3. Increase connectivity (within the environment/landscape; between communities; help address climate change)

Values

- Individual / personal meaning
- Water quality for drinking water
- Clean/clear water for social/recreational use
- Water quality for all uses (including recreation)
- Stewardship
- Important ecosystems, including riparian
- Healthy soils
- Connectivity between water and the community
- Whole of landscape view / stewardship
- Sustainable use of the landscape
- Corridors
- Ecosystems
- Wool / wine / waterways give community resilience
- Waterways are a tool for connecting people / reconnecting with nature
- Rural connectivity
- Responsibility

What should change?

- Expand views across the community (to include more than rivers)
- Water releases to mimic more natural events (triggers; cold water events; ecosystems; fire)
- Flows to maximize benefits / minimize harm
- Recognition of uses other than just human uses
- Stewardship moving into schools to encourage longer-term involvement / ownership
- Larger demographic involved in NRM (e.g. Gen X)
- Encourage those who can afford to offer more to do so (including \$\$)
- Better duty of care
- Remove silos: whole of catchment and whole of government
- Need more cooperation between and within governments
- Duplication of work, data collection, planning

Actions?

- Engage the silent majority in lobbying; education of the real value of water and healthy landscapes
- Educate politicians; present models for monitoring, compliance, solutions
- Find solutions then find the money / resources
- Smarter monitoring

Notes from Workshop Group 2

Top three priorities (score)

1. Landscape, holistic approach (land, water, habitats, ground cover, etc); don't separate land and water (7)
2. Data/information sharing across the whole community (6)
3. Improve relationships between ACT and NSW (5)
4. Funding targets/prioritise actions (5)

Other actions

- Ensure ability to accommodate population growth and associated needs (4)
- Snowy Hydro involvement in future Upper Murrumbidgee management (1)
- Form an Upper Murrumbidgee catchment management group that includes government, non-government and Indigenous groups) (1)
- Create opportunities for anyone to participate in forums (including the use of informal and electronic means) (1)
- Impose/collect levies on sand extraction and use the money raised for river restoration (4)
- Define roles and responsibilities for management of Upper Murrumbidgee River (1)
- Involve the urban community in rural parts of the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment (to help develop a sense of place there) (3)
- Reassess the price of resources (e.g. increase the price of water) (4)
- Expand the use of other media for education/promotion (3)

Notes from Workshop Group 3

Top three priorities

1. Education/communication (schools, landholders, community)
2. Knowledge collation/collaboration/sharing
3. Planning, with focus on practical outcomes

Other actions

- Tease out Upper Murrumbidgee values (including aesthetic/spiritual, art and wider values)
- Unlock access? (only three access points in the ACT; lost access through locked gates, including in NSW)
- Make sure the catchment doesn't focus on the river
- Connectivity:
 - Subject for spiritual connection, especially through schools
 - Use education packages now going into schools in the ACT to promote greater interaction between the education system and the NRM community
 - Could the focus of the Canberra Festival be shifted or include the Murrumbidgee and celebrate as a resource ('Tour de Murrumbidgee')
 - Huge amount of connectivity already present; restoration is not impossible
 - Connect with the landscape through connection with the river
 - Ensure compatible uses
 - A valuable resource – 'look after it'
- Evaluation / monitoring:
 - Any process needs to have evaluation/monitoring to follow up (specific examples: fewer water dragons after willow control; denuded ground after ALG control)
 - Align evaluation with scientific process to demonstrate outcomes (but how to do it within a funding cycle?)
 - Link in with education/research institutions
 - Link in with State of the Environment reporting (UMCCC could tie in with this cycle)
- What needs to be done better?
 - Collaboration (need to partner up finance, knowledge, data, skills)
 - Sharing data (problem with scale but a candidate for collaboration; tie in the Murray Darling Basin data)
 - Consistency / compatibility of data (c.f. 'knowledge')
 - Extend 'Knowledge Broker' to Upper Murrumbidgee (CMA has a knowledge broker for each asset)
 - Availability of data (\$) for all?
 - Increase emphasis on water
 - Stewardship payments for an improved environment
- Make the knowledge from today's forum known to the wider community to help promote 'bigger picture thinking' by taking local problems and justifying/supporting how decisions are made (and recognize we won't please everyone)
- Develop and use a "River advocate" (or catchment advocate? or lots of river advocates?) for education
- Use the Limestone Plains Group as a model (for style of operation, combining landowners and scientific experts); Conservation Council may be too general
- Ownership of implementing solutions to problems: encourage local participation