

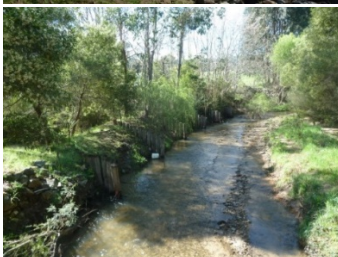
# Natural Disaster Recovery for Waterways in Victoria

## How are waterways affected by natural disasters?

Natural disasters are rapid onset events such as flooding, bushfire, storm, landslides etc. and can cause many impacts on waterways and the land alongside them (riparian land).

Common impacts to waterways and riparian land from natural disasters include erosion of the bed and banks of waterways, build up of large wood and debris, damage or loss of waterway assets (such as riparian fencing and erosion control structures), poor water quality, impacts to habitat and native plants and animals and subsequent spread of pest plants and animals.

Important on-ground work such as planting trees and fencing off river banks by catchment management authorities (CMAs) and partners helps to improve the long-term resilience of waterways to some disasters. For example, waterways that don't have good native vegetation buffers are more at risk of erosion and channel change when flood events occur (see pics below).



*Black Range Creek, North East Victoria. The site with bare banks (top) experienced widespread erosion while the revegetated site (bottom) incurred only minor channel change in the same flood event. Photos - Alluvium*

## How is damage to waterways assessed?

FFMVic (Forest Fire Management Victoria) can deploy Rapid Risk Assessment Teams during emergencies to identify and prioritise risk treatment options and activities to undertake as part of recovery on public land.

CMAs may also undertake specific impact assessments focused on waterway health, riparian land, waterway assets and relevant essential public assets.

Damage is only assessed once it is safe to do so, and approximate costs of recovery actions are determined.

**CMAs do not have a role in assessing or remediating impacts to private land or private assets.**

## What funding is available for natural disaster recovery for waterways?

Victorian Government agencies including DELWP, Parks Victoria, CMAs and local councils may be eligible to receive funding for natural disaster recovery for waterways.

At the Commonwealth level, there are formal Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) that have applied from 1 November 2018 for eligible events occurring on or after that date.

At the State level, Victoria's Natural Disaster Financial Assistance scheme is aligned with the Commonwealth's DRFA.

## What type of waterway works can be funded?

Under DRFA, only restoration of **essential public assets** damaged as a direct result of a natural disaster are eligible for funding. This includes the repair of roads and bridges, levees, local government-owned buildings and storm water infrastructure. An essential public asset must be either a transport or public infrastructure asset.

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For works that are determined by Emergency Management Victoria as ineligible for funding under DRFA, the Victorian Government may identify other pathways for funding subject to standard State Budget processes. Sites and works will be prioritised by CMAs in accordance with regional waterway strategies and other state government guidance.

## How are waterway recovery programs delivered?

CMAs may lead and/or co-ordinate delivery of some natural disaster recovery programs that are funded by governments. Work programs may include the use of private contractors and CMAs may also work in partnership with landholders and community/Landcare groups to deliver activities such as fencing repair, revegetation and weed control.

## What can landholders do?

Landholders can undertake works and activities in, or on, waterways following a natural disaster, if they have a Works on Waterways Permit. Works might include bed and bank stabilisation works.

Works on Waterways Permits are obtained through the relevant CMA. The purpose of the permit is to protect the rivers and creeks from adverse effects from the activities undertaken.

Failure to obtain a permit or failure to observe the given conditions may constitute an offence under the *Water Act 1989* or the CMA's Waterways Protection By-law.

[Goulburn Broken CMA works on waterways information.](#)

## What about damaged riparian fencing?

Depending on regional priorities, funding availability and extent of the disaster, the Victorian Government may repair or replace damaged riparian fences (i.e. fences along waterways) if the fence was erected with government funds. Landholders remain responsible for internal fences on private land.

## What about bank erosion?

Bank erosion is a common problem in high rainfall and flood events on waterways that are not well vegetated with diverse native vegetation or have old and collapsing willows. Depending on regional priorities, funding availability and the extent of the disaster, bank erosion

and revegetation support may be provided following a natural disaster.

## What about impacts to native fish and water quality?

Immediate waterway consequences from natural disasters (e.g. fish death events or blue-green algae blooms) may be managed as part of the broader emergency management response.

The Victorian Government may also undertake emergency actions such as salvage or translocation of highly threatened species.

Public reports of fish deaths at any time should be made to EPA's Pollution Hotline on 1300 372 842 (1300 EPA VIC).

## Where can I get more information?

### For emergencies:

For life-threatening emergencies call Triple Zero (000).

Call **132 500** from anywhere in Victoria for flood, storm, tsunami and earthquake emergency.

Current emergency information is available by calling the VicEmergency Hotline on **1800 226 226**.

<https://www.ses.vic.gov.au/warnings/emergency-contacts>

### More detailed information and guidance material on DRFA is found at:

[www.disasterassist.gov.au/Pages/related-links/disaster-recovery-funding-arrangements-2018.aspx](http://www.disasterassist.gov.au/Pages/related-links/disaster-recovery-funding-arrangements-2018.aspx)

### Information on a range of relevant topics for waterways and riparian land and erosion:

<https://www.water.vic.gov.au/waterways-and-catchments/riparian-land/riparian-land/technical-information-and-reports>