

Molonglo Conservation Group strategy

Our purpose and direction

The Molonglo Conservation Group seeks to achieve a healthy, resilient, and productive landscape with diverse, interconnected ecosystems and communities. Our holistic approach recognises the importance of ecological health and resilience that is interdependent with diverse social perspectives, values, and connections.

We broker cooperative management and stewardship of natural resources and climate adaptation across the Southern Tablelands of the ACT and NSW through effectively bringing together Natural Resource Management and Landcare. We do this by facilitating strategic collaborative partnerships and implementing programs that enhance landscape health and resilience, connect the region's landscape management stakeholders and partners, and build knowledge and stakeholder capabilities.

Our aim is to improve understanding of how all the social and ecological assets work together in a landscape and how we can collectively best manage the landscape for long-term socio-ecological sustainability. Our stakeholder network includes Landcare and Park care groups, rural landholders, government and non-government agencies, the local Aboriginal communities and other individuals and institutions concerned with the land and natural resource management in the region.

Formerly called Molonglo Catchment Group we are one of three catchment groups operating in the ACT, but recently changed our name to reflect our conservation focus, our cross-border location and involvement in the broader NSW Southern Tablelands landscape surrounding and affecting the Molonglo and Queanbeyan river system.

General approach

In the Molonglo Catchment Strategy 2015-2030, we moved away from the 2004-2024 asset management approach, where land, water, biodiversity and community assets are accounted for separately. We now use an inter-connected approach consistent with the thinking behind the South East Catchment Action Plan 2014 (South East Local Land Services, 2014), the Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan (CAP) 2013 (Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority, 2013) ACT Water Strategy 2014-44: Striking the Balance (ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate) and, natural resource management of the ACT. The 2015-2030 Strategy document acts as a technical reference with which to guide our programs for the catchment region. The aim of the 2015-2030 Catchment Strategy is to adopt a more holistic understanding of how all these resources work together in a landscape and how we can influence that landscape for better or for worse. We count this Catchment Strategy as one of our proudest achievements. Refer to 2015-2030 Strategy diagram and Table A, below.

Historically, 'command-and-control' management systems have assumed a static model of the environment and addressed individual problems without considering feedbacks and interactions. By contrast, the holistic understanding of an inter-connected approach accepts that natural resource

management involves consideration of ecological and social aspects that are interrelated, as an interconnected system. An inter-connected approach analyses the factors influencing the whole socio-ecological system at different scales in space and time and assumes continuous change. It also acknowledges the level of uncertainty in our knowledge, understanding and, of future conditions.

Transforming the 2015-2030 Catchment Strategy into the Corporate Plan and strategic approach is our response to the continuing uncertainty and change associated with climate adaptation, especially concerning environmental and economic viability, and the implications of these challenges for environmental and social resilience. In seeking sustainable, long-term outcomes we have expanded the holistic (inter-connected) Catchment-wide focus of the 2015-2030 Strategy for the cooperative management of the Southern Tablelands regional landscape. We broker cooperative management partnerships beyond the Molonglo catchment boundaries so that our member groups and other key stakeholders may benefit from connections made through collaborative regional projects in support of our program delivery.

Coordination of member group projects initially drove the work on catchment management of the Molonglo Catchment Group. Now our approach has evolved into management of landscape scale ecological/biodiversity corridors and sustainable rural landscapes. In the interests of influencing behavioural change in the wider community, across the Southern Tablelands region, Molonglo Conservation Group is coordinating on-ground projects including revegetation, erosion control, weed control, vegetation monitoring, water quality and hydrogeology and catchment management. All our projects encourage stewardship through education, community engagement activities and/or extension work.

We have refined the scope of our landscape-scale programs by developing **an inter-connected landscape management framework (ILM)** to enhance our programs through the introduction of ecology, soils-hydrogeology, mapping, and Aboriginal cultural land management, research and technology for climate adaptation (refer to Interconnected Landscape Management model diagram, below). We aim to tailor our inter-connected approach, environmental assessments and project design and planning. We also aim to strengthen collaborative stewardship by contributing diverse specialist knowledge and providing for a greater geographical range of program delivery. The scale of socio-ecological outcomes will increase as connections between neighbouring regions strengthen, relationships with regional stakeholders evolve, and collaborative partnerships between public and private landholders and managers are realised.

Inter-connecting natural resource management initiatives

The 2015-2030 Catchment Strategy facilitates a connection between all levels of government and the community, thus promoting inter-connected natural resource management. The strategy has been guided by relevant policies and initiatives, which local, state and federal governments have committed to and are obligated to implement. The strategy compiled a comprehensive list of such policies and initiatives and our members and other affiliates including the Ngunawal Aboriginal community guide the nature in which we facilitate this connection.

The strategy is necessarily linked to the needs and aspirations of our members and key stakeholders and is driven by a combination of community interest and personal passion. The Group aims to provide purpose and a creative, supported environment in which members and partners, key stakeholders, Board, staff and volunteers can interact in the facilitation of management initiatives.

Governance in the Molonglo catchment began as an indigenous system that, although not written down, was codified within Aboriginal cultural practice and law/lore.

The present-day Molonglo, Queanbeyan and Yass Rivers formed the headwaters of the ancient Murrumbidgee River catchment system. Flowing across the Southern Tablelands from east to west these rivers shaped an immense corridor beginning in the Tinderry and Gourock ranges and joining the present Murrumbidgee near Yass. Aboriginal people used the Murrumbidgee corridor to cross the region from at least 25,000 years ago, linking sites of cultural and resource significance along pathways that had various levels of meaning and purpose. However, until 2,000 years ago there wasn't enough reliable food and water to support intensive occupation. Aboriginal people learned to manage a food supply and a healthy ecosystem, maintaining Country as a living cultural landscape.

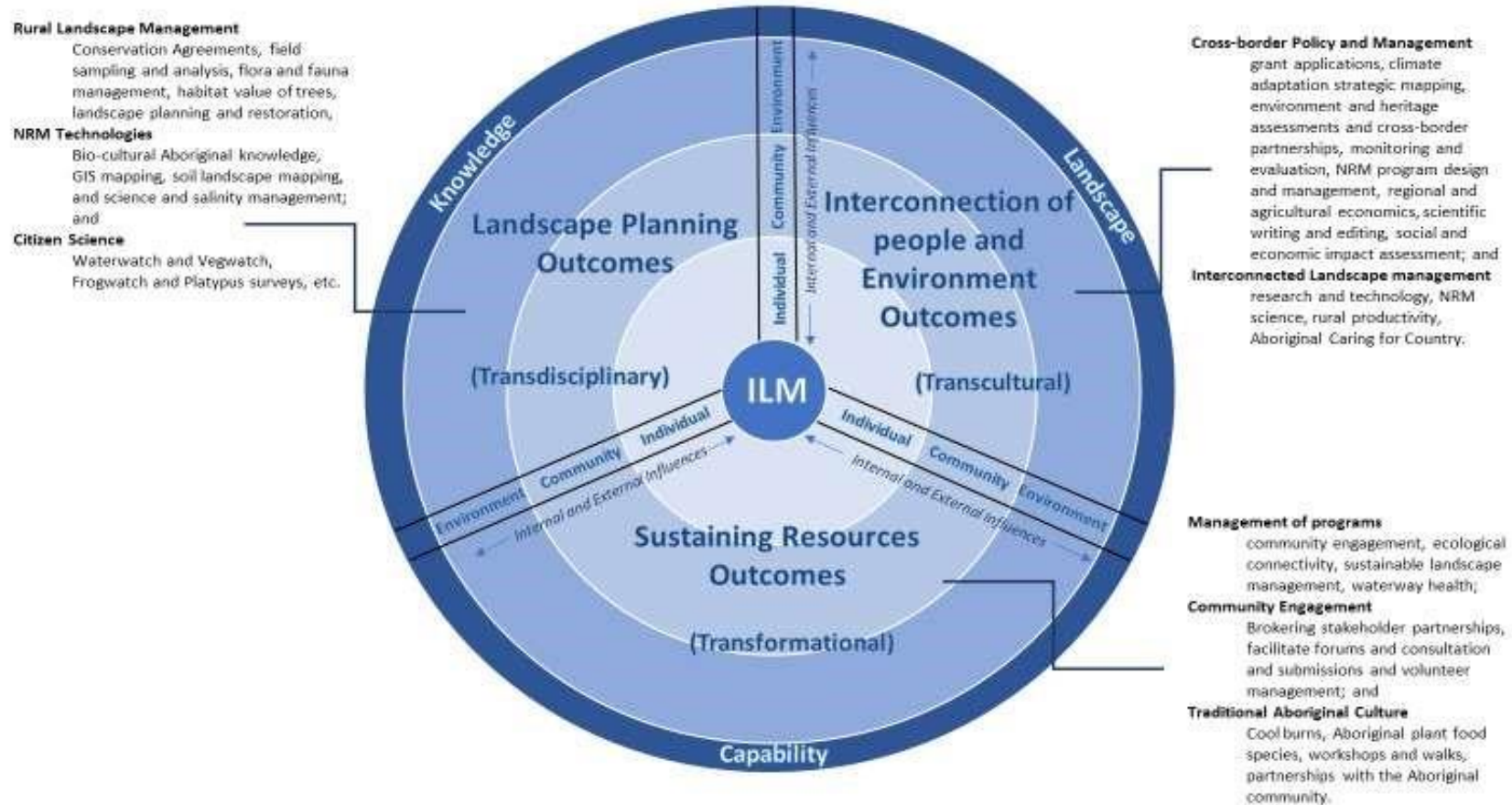
Since that time, European immigrants to this region introduced foreign farming methods and large numbers of people into the landscape, precipitating a vast amount of environmental damage. Today, our leading land managers are researching and applying innovative land management techniques that seek to re-establish the underlying ecological processes and are, in both tangible and intangible ways, inspired by previous Aboriginal practices. While Aboriginal consultation in cultural and some peripheral areas of landscape management has been acknowledged for some time by governments and natural resource managers, generally, society is yet to realise the potential for creating new shared knowledge through cooperation that places this knowledge as a central tenet in natural resource management.

To assist in addressing this gap, the Group uses the ILM framework to structure our strategic projects and our service delivery in a way that is inclusive of social, cultural and environmental outcomes. ILM provides an over-arching framework for water and land management and research with a view to long-term sustainability. The framework can be used to facilitate knowledge exchange and deeper connections between landholders, land carers and Traditional Custodians, with the land and waterways. ILM weaves Aboriginal caring for Country into biodiversity, NRM science, marketable productivity, research and technology outcomes for landholders and land managers.

The ILM framework provides an innovative method for assessing and managing landscapes while providing an opportunity to build connections and understanding between landholders and Aboriginal custodians for inclusive stewardship outcomes. Traditional Aboriginal culture is integrated into the framework, firstly by using the traditional Ngunawal territorial area to define our understanding of regional landscape boundaries. Secondly, Aboriginal land custodianship and land management practices inform our NRM approaches. The framework facilitates knowledge exchange and enables sustainable 'caring for country' on public and private property. Recognising that statutory boundaries may overlap with traditional boundaries, we ensure that professionally engaged Traditional Custodians, Aboriginal Land Councils and Registered Aboriginal Organisations, appropriate to the location, will assist in the coordination of on-ground workshops and outreach work. The exchange of knowledge and practice is part of a process that is facilitated by cultural site

assessments, and cultural awareness activities in association with ecology/biodiversity, soils/hydrogeology, cultural assessments, property planning and catchment monitoring. ILM can be used to facilitate deeper connections between landholders, land carers and Traditional Custodians, with the land and waterways. ILM provides an over-arching framework for water and land management and research, with conservation outcomes.

Interconnected Landscape Management model



The strategic objectives

The 2015-2030 Catchment Strategy adopted a vision for “A healthy and sustainable environment treasured by the entire catchment community”. Four aspirational goals were then prioritised under this overall vision:

1. community that understands and values the local and broader environment
2. natural resource management which integrates western science and Aboriginal knowledge
3. a connected, diverse, healthy landscape and sustainable food supply
4. a healthy Lake Burley Griffin.

The 2015-2030 Molonglo Catchment Strategy

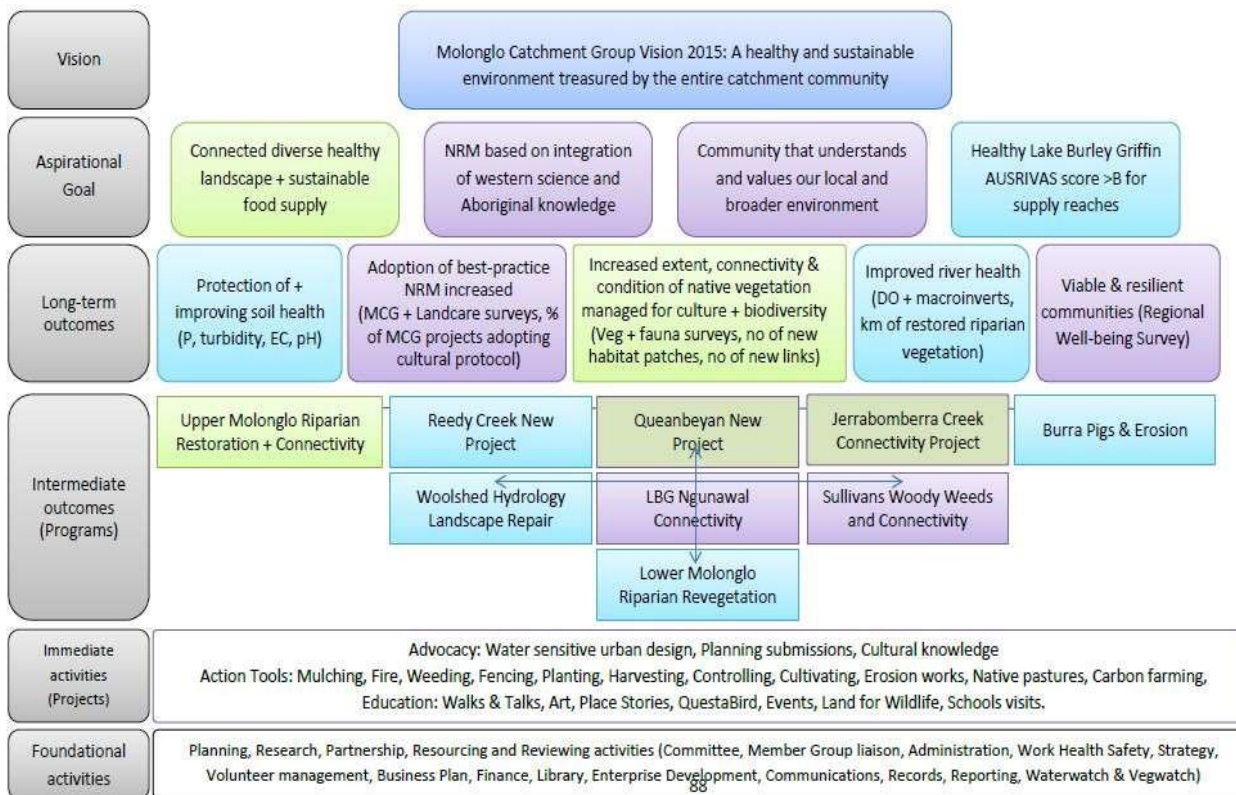


TABLE A Delivery of Molonglo Catchment Strategy 2014-2018

2014-2018 Program Summary (including new 2019 members)			Regions		Members
Landscapes	Knowledge	Capability			
River management (Manage native vegetation) Fish & instream habitats Threatened species management Erosion control Feral animal control Catchment management	Feral animal surveys Land for Wildlife Vegwatch, waterwatch & Frogwatch sites Baseline surveys Research (fencing riparian zone)	Upskilling using extension service and HGL tools Engage with QPRC and SE LLS Aboriginal awareness activities	Tablelands	Rural Tablelands	Carwoola Landcare Captains Flat and District Landcare Burra Landcare Royalla Landcare Wandiyali Restoration Trust (2019)
Riparian management Threatened species management Vegetation wildlife corridors Pest and weed control Management of conservation Lands Fish & stream habitats Water quality and flow	Baseline surveys Identify high conservation areas Habitat assessment Frogwatch, Vegwatch & Waterwatch sites Wetlands magement Uni of C. and ANU research projects	Landholder and QPRC, NSW NPWS engagement Resources for education material Funding for fencing Aboriginal awareness activities CF&D landcare upskilling		National Parks and Reserves	Captains Flat and District Landcare
Catchment Management Conservation Connectivity for flora and fauna Erosion control Pest and weed control Revegetation Riparian management Threatened species management	Vegwatch Weed recognition	Plant recognition Aboriginal awareness activities Community engagement in conservation monitoring and management		Nature Reserves	Mt Ainslie Weeders Friends of Mt Majura Friends of Black Mountain Friends of Aranda Mulanggang Traditional Aboriginal Land Care Group

<p>Hydrogeological landscape management Riparian management Pest and weed control Vegetation / wildlife corridors Revegetation Strategic planning of green and blue space for mixed use – conservation of the environment and recreation Urban waterway management</p>	<p>Strategic Plan Land for Wildlife assessments</p>	<p>Sustainable agriculture Majura Valley LC upskilling Aboriginal awareness activities</p>	<p>Peri-urban</p>	<p>Northern Rural Corridor</p>	<p>Majura Valley Landcare</p>
<p>Riparian management – connectivity, fencing, woody weed control, revegetation. Strategic planning of green and blue space for mixed use - environmental and recreation. Urban waterway management Instream habitats</p>	<p>Survey Storm Water entry points – Water sensitive design Monitor sediment & nutrient levels Monitor wetlands biodiversity and habitat Waterwatch, Frogwatch, Vegwatch</p>	<p>Foster engagement with landholders, developers and ACT LDA Community and landholder Engagement in monitoring and management activities, carp management Aboriginal awareness activities Interpretative walkways Information aid for development</p>		<p>Southern Rural Corridor</p>	<p>Friends of Molonglo Reserve (2019)</p>

<p>Biodiversity connectivity Cultural connectivity Riparian vegetation Urban waterway management Amenity & recreation Pest and weed control Revegetation Riparian woody weed control Manage riparian native vegetation</p>	<p>Vegwatch Monitor wetlands biodiversity and habitat Protocols for cultural connectivity projects</p>	<p>Community engagement in awareness, monitoring and management activities Engage with NCA and EPSDD and Developers Upskilling in Aboriginal cultural heritage recognition</p>	Lake	Lakeside	<p>Grevillea Park Care Group Woodlands & Wetlands Trust</p>
<p>Connectivity (woodlands/grasslands) Riparian woody Weed control & manage riparian native vegetation Adjacent land uses - urban waterway management Management instream and Emergent vegetation Fish & instream habitats (including Carp management) Catchment management Manage significant vegetation (snow gums forestry activities)</p>	<p>Vegwatch Platypus and Rakali monitoring Inconsistent NRM practices Multi-jurisdictional strategic environmental plan Platypus & Rakali count Map Carp hot spots</p>	<p>Educational aids for peri-urban landholder engagement. Engage with ACT & NSW Forestry Engage with NSW Environment & Heritage Community engagement in monitoring and regeneration activities Aboriginal awareness activities QLC Landcare upskilling ACT PCS</p>	Urban	Greater Queanbeyan	<p>Queanbeyan Landcare</p>
<p>Biodiversity Connectivity Riparian management Threatened species management Catchment management Amenity & Recreation</p>	<p>Platypus Count Waterwatch, Frogwatch, Vegwatch</p>	<p>Aboriginal awareness activities Community engagement in monitoring and management</p>		North Canberra Urban reserves, open space and parks)	<p>Mt Pleasant Park care (2019)</p>

Biodiversity Riparian management Connectivity Threatened species management Catchment management Amenity & recreation	Platypus Count Waterwatch, Frogwatch, Vegwatch	Aboriginal awareness activities Aboriginal awareness activities Community engagement in monitoring and management activities Engagement with Developers, ACT PCS & LDA		South Canberra Urban reserves, open space and parks)	ACT Urban Woodlands Rescue Landcare group (2019) Campbell Community Association (2019) Oaks Estate Progress Association STEP
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The table draws from the 2015-2030 Molonglo Catchment Strategy and the Molonglo River Rescue Plan 2010 and should be viewed in association with our 2014-2018 Regional Investment Strategy reporting of “Healthy Resilient Landscapes” project displayed on the Resource page of the Molonglo Conservation Group website. Table A provides a point of transition as the role of the Group evolves for delivery of our corporate plan and strategic approach.

Part of the transition has been to involve our members identifying priorities (Priorities emerging from Members’ Forums can be summarised as connectivity, conservation and biodiversity), and what needs to happen to meet the challenges ahead (reflected in MCG’s Submission from Molonglo Catchment Group to the Inquiry into the value of the natural environment to an urbanising Canberra). See Appendix 1 for details.

Our vision

Our Strategic Approach incorporates an updated, but still consistent, vision for the Molonglo catchment and Southern Tablelands landscapes of “A healthy, resilient and productive catchment”. In this vision, the term ‘catchment’ includes but is geographically broader than the Molonglo and Queanbeyan river system with all its diverse, interconnected tableland landscapes and communities.

VISION

We seek to
achieve

A healthy, resilient and productive landscape with diverse, interconnected ecosystems and
communities

The updated vision emphasises the balance between socioeconomic and environmental goals, and that healthy and resilient environments underpin productive and sustainable uses of natural resources. The updated vision highlights the underpinning philosophy of the 2015-2030 strategy—that landscapes, waterways and communities are interconnected in complex ways.