

River Red Gum Forests Investigation

INFORMATION SHEET

Domestic stock grazing

VEAC has recommended grazing of stock cease on public land in the investigation area on some 88 000 hectares of public land, including grazing of public land water frontages along the River Murray and the major river systems, and broad acre grazing of state forests along the Murray.

VEAC's recommendations are that:

- for national and other parks and state forest, stock grazing is to cease immediately
- for public land water frontages, a five year phase-out period will apply
- a detailed implementation process will be required to establish fencing along many frontages and to ensure off-stream watering points are installed, where required by farms
- new voluntary Riparian Conservation Licences may be issued to provide for stewardship of public land water frontages in the absence of grazing
- grazing licences may continue over unused roads within largely cleared freehold land and where there are no significant ecological values.

VEAC has recommended that land managers may use limited grazing as a targeted management tool, to address a particular environmental or management problem. Such uses may include controlling particular weed infestations or maintaining a specific grassy habitat structure.

Grazing is to be removed to ensure long-term protection of significant biodiversity assets. Waterways and adjoining riparian vegetation play an important role in biodiversity conservation by providing habitat corridors for movement of fauna. This will become increasingly important with the impacts of climate change.

Stock grazing affects water quality and nature conservation values by spreading weeds and causing soil erosion, and can spoil enjoyment for visitors, particularly at camp sites along waterways and adjoining wetlands.

VEAC is seeking to build on and expand the successful current program of fencing of water frontages and removal of grazing which has been overseen by the catchment management authorities (CMAs), guided by the Victorian River Health Strategy and Commonwealth programs. Many adjoining landowners have taken part in these programs.

VEAC has recommended that CMAs implement programs, in co-operation with landholders, to gradually restore frontages through fencing works, installation of off-stream water points where required, and the continuation of pest control works. These programs may include incentives to prioritise the works in the most vulnerable and sensitive areas.

Ceasing domestic stock grazing on public land in the investigation area will result in an estimated economic cost of \$0.9 million per annum, and fencing, watering points and pest control costs will add another \$0.9 million per annum. However VEAC's economic consultants estimate that the benefits from riparian protection are \$2.3 million per annum.