

17 July 2008

Climate Change Summit
Office of Climate Change - Department of Premier and Cabinet
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne
Victoria 3000



**GOULBURN
BROKEN**

**CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY**

www.gbcma.vic.gov.au

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Dear Sir / Madam,

**Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority – Climate Change
Summit Paper Submission.**

Please find attached the GBCMA's submission to the Climate Change Summit Paper. We look forward to the upcoming Green Paper on Climate Change and identifying opportunities for regional bodies such as the GBCMA to plan and participate in activities that help the region's natural assets adapt to climate change.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission.

For further information please contact the GBCMA's Climate Change Coordinator, Kate Brunt on 5820 1100 or email, katebr@gbcma.vic.gov.au.

Yours Faithfully,

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A Climate of Opportunity – Summit Paper

A submission on the discussion paper by the

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

July 2008.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Victorian Government's strategies and policies relating to Climate Change. We look forward to the release of a Green Paper in the near future, which we hope will set a concrete vision for comment. The GBCMA has also made a submission to the recent Green Paper on *Land and Biodiversity at a time of climate change*, and understands that salient points made in submissions to that process will be incorporated in strategies and policies aimed specifically at Climate Change.

This submission focuses on points of major relevance to the GBCMA, in particular 'Strategic Directions #6, #7, & #8 (P29).

Strategic Direction 6: Assisting our natural assets and ecosystems to deal with the pressures and challenges that climate change will bring.

- *Victoria's natural assets are under sustained high levels of stress, and a commensurate level of urgency in management is required if these assets are to adjust to the impacts of climate change. A state-wide analysis of land-use suitability that has links to the state-wide planning framework is required to take into account the impacts of climate change on our natural assets and identify ways of assisting the natural assets to adjust to the pressures of climate change. In particular, areas of low-intensity agriculture which provide a proportionally high level of refuge for biodiversity in fragmented landscapes should be recognised within Victoria's land-use planning framework.*
- *Increased investment into protecting and enhancing the Victoria's remnant vegetation is required to improve the resilience of natural assets in a changing climate. In many instances, climate change can be viewed as a 'stimulator of threatening process', as a direct threat to the climatic envelopes of native species. For example, climate change will exacerbate the severity and frequency of wildfire, or increase grazing pressure around water points.*
- *The Carbon Market may provide a mechanism to assist our natural assets to deal with the challenges of climate change through bio-sequestration activities. However, the level by which the bio-sequestration activity supports the natural assets will vary greatly depending on the type and standard of revegetation occurring. There is the potential for negative impacts on our natural assets as a result of bio-sequestration, and these need explicit attention.*
 - *Major gains for assisting our natural assets to deal with the pressures of climate change could also be achieved through recognising remnant vegetation within a Carbon Market; this may need to be implemented through a voluntary market. The current bio-sequestration market focuses on revegetation, however it has been long recognised that protection and enhancement of our*

natural assets should be a first priority followed by revegetation activities. The carbon market does not support this at this stage.

- *Bio-sequestration projects may not undertake bio-diverse revegetation - in many cases there are only 3 or 4 species planted with no consideration of structure or provenance. These types of plantings conflict with current government-funded best-practice standards and will offer little in helping our natural assets deal with climate change.*
 - *Some organisations are marketing their bio-sequestration project as being bio-diverse and providing multiple outcomes, although these activities are not compliant with regional or state revegetation standards for biodiversity / water quality etc. outcomes. There is therefore a strong need for consistency and standards to be applied.*
 - *In order for our natural assets to deal with climate change we need to protect and build on the existing biodiversity. Landholders who revegetate for carbon should also be revegetating for biodiversity or water quality purposes. This will increase the diversity of, and attractiveness for, investment.*
 - *There is also the potential for negative outcomes from revegetation under Carbon offsets, in particular, in native grasslands and grassy woodland environments. Revegetation of dense stands of trees and shrubs was previously avoided in these areas based on relevant EVC benchmarks, for which extension and interested community workers well trained in identifying. The motivation for the revegetation was for biodiversity or water quality therefore these sites were not compromised. The carbon market may put pressure on these sites to be revegetated and regional NRM staff may not be consulted on such activities.*
 - *Victoria should develop a process that encourages Carbon Brokers to undertake bio-sequestration that truly achieve multiple outcomes. The development of standard revegetation guidelines for Carbon Brokers is a possible tool and the marketing of Biodiverse Carbon Offset plantings as a superior product in the market, particularly in the voluntary market is needed. The development of some sort of quality assurance at the State level would help achieve this.*
 - *There needs to be resources committed to the education of the Carbon Brokers outlining the State's priorities for natural assets. Impacts of revegetation on water yield also need to be considered.*
 - *The capacity for CMAs to effectively monitor and report on activities that impact on catchment health will be substantially compromised by a laissez-faire approach to carbon offsetting activity. It is most desirable that a process be put in place that requires revegetation offsets to be planned and reported on in collaboration with CMAs.*
 - *The State should also continue to influence the development of the National Emissions Trading Scheme to encourage consideration of biodiversity, and in particular existing vegetation and revegetation standards, in bio-sequestration.*
 - *There must be significant effort committed to getting the most for the State's natural assets out of the Bio-sequestration market, through encouraging the protection and enhancement of the State's remnant vegetation and avoiding large mono-culture revegetation projects that offer little for ecosystems to adapt to climate change.*
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- *Increased training and information is required for regional bodies, Landcare Groups and agency extension staff so that the public can be well informed about the effects of climate change on the natural resources and what tools are available to help these adapt to climate change.*
 - *The State Government also needs to support the development and implementation of well planned Bio-link projects.*

- *State Government support (eg by appropriate recognition in planning schemes) is also required for projects that encourage natural regeneration as a method of creating biolinks throughout Victoria. This is a cost-effective process and in a time of climate changes a more ecologically appropriate approach to revegetation.*
- *A landscape approach to habitat management that is not a tenure sensitive is also needed. Species need to move through the landscape. The Conservation Management Network model provides a good example of how this can be done and should be supported.*

Strategic Direction 7: Increase our knowledge about climate change impacts and adaptive needs and possibilities.

- *Regional NRM organisations such as the GBCMA require a process that enables the CMA to highlight the research needs with regards to the impacts of climate change on the region's natural assets and the implications for the Regional Catchment Strategy. The research undertaken needs to have direct links to the regional strategies and decision making.*
- *A state-wide process also needs to be developed that reviews research projects, assesses their relevance to regional NRM organisations and shares results and information to assist regional decision-makers.*
- *Care needs to be taken to ensure that action is not delayed – while increasing knowledge is always desirable, it is not always essential: for securing the future of biodiversity, the basic strategy is to ensure more habitat is available and managed appropriately. Climate Change is exacerbated by the effects of fragmentation.*

Strategic Direction 8: Increasing the climate change resilience of the State's regions and communities

- *Landcare and other environmental groups will require educational support to assist with climate change adaptation. Climate Change poses new opportunities for Landcare, however regional and state support is required to help groups adapt and be resilient to the challenges of climate change. Historically, volunteerism has been relied on heavily by the NRM industry. Further reliance on volunteerism is not appropriate given the task ahead in addressing climate change adaptation. Instead, increased government investment is required to increase the resilience of our social and ecological systems.*
- *Regional NRM bodies such as CMAs also require support through the provision of tools and information required to help adapt their programs to climate change. These programs are vital in developing resilient regional communities*