

Rural drainage in Victoria

Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy- Factsheet 1

There are estimated to be up to 130 rural drainage systems across Victoria, covering over 1.5 million hectares of agricultural land. The majority occur in the south of the state.

These systems play an important role in maintaining agricultural productivity, particularly during the wetter months.

Drainage moves water more quickly off the land after local rainfall events, preventing soil from waterlogging.

There are many different types of drainage systems, from those constructed by individual landholders through to formal drainage schemes established under legislation. Drains can be designed to remove water from the surface of the land, or from underground at the root zone. Drainage systems may include roadside table drains, canals and natural streams. Rural drainage generally does not include drainage in irrigation or urban areas.

Current management and status

Management of Victoria's rural drainage systems varies. Some systems have clearly defined management arrangements for maintenance and operation, while others are ad-hoc and ineffective.

Most drainage systems were constructed in the early part of the twentieth century and there is a general lack of information on their condition.

The Millennium Drought, changes to regulations and legislation, and a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities over the past few decades have resulted in a lack of maintenance on many rural drainage systems.

Due to their age and ongoing lack of management, many rural drainage systems are in need of significant repair work and/or upgrades.

www.delwp.vic.gov.au



Condah drainage scheme: Source DELWP

Potential impacts

Drainage systems are important for agricultural productivity, particularly in areas prone to seasonal inundation. However, the drainage of land can also have negative impacts on private and public assets such as roads, waterways and wetlands.

Rural drainage can increase the flow of water downstream, which may cause erosion, damage to infrastructure, and impact on other landholders. The water carried by drains can also be high in salt, nutrients, sediment and agricultural and commercial chemicals, all of which can have a detrimental effect on receiving waters.

Ways forward

The roles, responsibilities and regulations around rural drainage are poorly understood. It remains one of the last water sector issues to be reviewed and clarified (after water allocation, irrigation drainage, waterway management and floodplain management).

The current lack of clarity around the management and condition of Victoria's rural drainage systems is having an impact on agricultural productivity, and contributing to environmental degradation of our land and waterways.

It is the role of the Victorian Government to provide clear policy and guidance in relation to rural drainage management. The Department of Environment, Land,

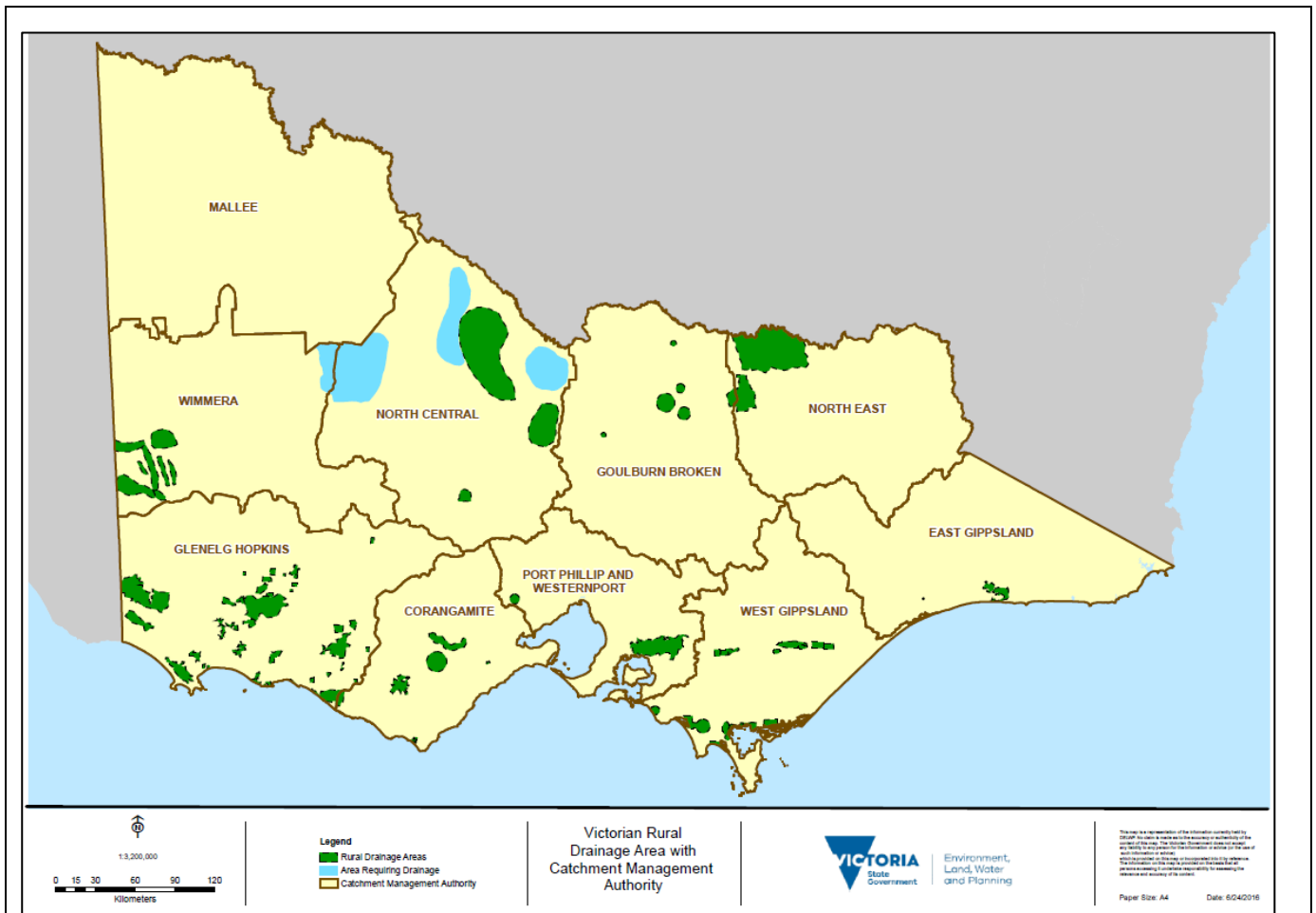
Rural Drainage In Victoria

Water and Planning is working with stakeholders and the community to develop the Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy. The Strategy will establish the policy and framework for managing Victoria's rural drainage systems. It will clarify the institutional arrangements for the management of rural drainage in Victoria.

A draft strategy will be released for public comment in the first half of 2017.

More information

For information or to find out how you can become involved, please contact: Rural Drainage Team on vrds.enquiry@delwp.vic.gov.au or 03 9637 9769.



Rural drainage schemes across Victoria source DELWP

© The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2016



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone DELWP Customer Service Centre 136 186, email customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au or vrds.enquiry@delwp.vic.gov.au, via the National Relay Service on 133 677 www.relayservice.com.au. This document is also available on the internet at www.delwp.vic.gov.au