

Sustainable management of groundwater

Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) plays an essential role in the sustainable management of groundwater for local communities and the environment in northern Victoria.

What is groundwater?

Water stored underground in the crevices of rocks or in spaces between grains of sand, clay, silt or gravel, is called groundwater.

A body of rock, soil or gravel that contains, or is capable of containing or transmitting water, is called an aquifer.

Groundwater can be used for agricultural, urban, domestic, stock and commercial purposes, either as a primary resource or to supplement surface water.

Groundwater management

The Minister for Water is responsible for the management of groundwater across Victoria.

In our part of northern Victoria, covering about one-third of the state, GMW issues and administers groundwater licences and develops and implements management plans on behalf of the Minister.

Groundwater licensing

Groundwater licensing is a vital part of groundwater management. Each groundwater licence is assessed and managed in accordance with the requirements of the *Water Act 1989*, as well as the relevant management plan. Key licensing considerations include safeguarding the rights of other groundwater users and the environment.

There are three types of groundwater licences (one or more may be required depending on the intended use):

- Bore Construction Licence
- Works (Operate) Licence
- Take and Use Licence

For more information about our licensing process, please refer to the Fact Sheet "Groundwater Licence Application Process".

More Information

Please visit www.gmwater.com.au/groundwater or the National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training at www.groundwater.com.au

Groundwater Management Units

Groundwater Management Units (GMUs) are defined areas where groundwater extraction is managed according to specific rules.

GMUs vary in size and are determined based on aquifer size, density of use and water corporation boundaries.

The two types of GMU are:

- **Groundwater Management Areas (GMAs)** - areas where there is already significant groundwater use or potential for further use. GMAs are determined by GMW and managed using local management plans.
- **Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPAs)** - areas that require intensive management due to risks to the resource from groundwater extraction. WSPAs are declared by the Minister and are managed using statutory groundwater management plans.

Management plans

Consultation is fundamental in developing management plans. Statutory plans are developed by a Consultative Committee of groundwater users and stakeholder agencies appointed by the Minister. Local management plans are developed by GMW in consultation with groundwater users and stakeholder agencies. Local water users and the wider community are invited to comment on a draft plan before it is implemented.

Both types of plan provide clear management rules for groundwater resources in an area. Plan functions include:

- considering environmental water requirements.
- identifying local groundwater dependent values.
- preventing intense areas of groundwater use developing.
- describing how groundwater can be traded between groundwater users.
- defining water sharing arrangements during times of water shortage.
- describing how monitoring, reporting and reviewing the plan are to be undertaken.