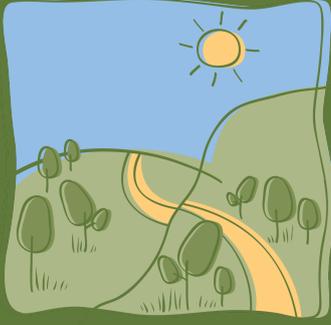


G R O W



W E S T

GROW WEST

Strategic Plan 2020-25

© 2020 Peroral Park Dairy. Image courtesy of Moorabool Shire Council.

Working together to create productive and healthy landscapes in the west.

Acknowledgements

This Grow West Strategic Plan has been developed by the Grow West Implementation Committee in conjunction with the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA). The committee and the PPWCMA acknowledge the continuing support of Grow West by Melbourne Water, Moorabool Shire Council and Southern Rural Water.

Also acknowledged are the organisations, local groups and landowners that strongly support Grow West, including the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Australian Government, Friends of Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee, Victorian National Parks Association, Parks Victoria, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Moorabool Landcare Network, Bacchus Marsh Lions Club, Victorian Mobile Landcare Group and local Landcare Groups.

Acknowledgement of Country

Grow West works on the lands, waters and seas of the Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri peoples and acknowledges them as Traditional Owners. It recognises and respects the diversity of their cultures and the deep connections they have with Country. It values partnerships with their communities and organisations to improve the health of Indigenous people and Country.

Grow West and its partners pay their respects to Elders, past and present, and acknowledge and recognise the primacy of Traditional Owners' obligations, rights and responsibilities to use and care for their traditional lands, waters and seas.

Grow West Strategic Plan 2020-25

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Foreword

Grow West is an ambitious program of landscape restoration in the west of Melbourne, working with local communities for a sustainable future.

Grow West's vision is **'Working together to create productive and healthy landscapes in the West'**. The program's target is to rejuvenate 10,000 hectares of the upper Werribee Catchment, west of Melbourne by connecting large areas of public reserves; You Yangs Regional Park, Brisbane Ranges National Park, Werribee Gorge State Park, Wombat State Forest and the Lerderderg State Park, through a mosaic of restoration works on private property.

Grow West is truly a collaborative project where local communities work together with all levels of government, businesses and organisations to achieve the best outcome for the region in the most effective and sustainable way.

Grow West is continually seeking new partners and investors to continue the momentum of this ambitious program that has made and continues to make a positive change to the landscape.

Today, the Grow West Implementation Committee remains in place and oversees the ongoing work and future directions of Grow West, including keeping this Strategic Plan up to date.

The committee consists of community members and representatives from organisations that invest in and support Grow West including the Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Moorabool Shire Council, Melbourne Water, Southern Rural Water, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria and Moorabool Landcare Network.

This Grow West Strategic Plan sets the directions for continuing the success of Grow West. The long term view is to:

- Achieve thousands of hectares of revegetation, forming biolinks between the You Yangs Regional Park, Brisbane Ranges National Park, Werribee Gorge State Park, Lerderderg State Park and Wombat State Forest;
- Greatly reduce the spread of noxious weeds and pest animals by improving landholder knowledge and skills through sustainable land management;
- Protect profitable farming land, reducing erosion and improving local amenity.

This will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits for the local community and Victoria. If you are a local landowner or a potential investor, we would love you to come aboard Grow West and be part of this exciting program to create a better, greener future for Melbourne's western landscapes.

Justin Horne
Chair, Grow West
Implementation Committee



About Grow West

Introduction

Grow West is one of Australia's most ambitious programs of landscape rejuvenation, located within the middle and upper Werribee Catchment, 50 kilometres west of Melbourne.

Grow West's target is to rejuvenate up to 10,000 hectares and develop a series of vegetation connections across landscapes between the You Yangs Regional Park, Brisbane Ranges National Park, Werribee Gorge and Lerderderg State Parks.

Since its inception in 2003, Grow West has worked with hundreds of committed landowners, community representatives, project partners and investors to directly administer 2,500 hectares of revegetation and farm forestry projects, with the establishment of 1.34 million seedlings.

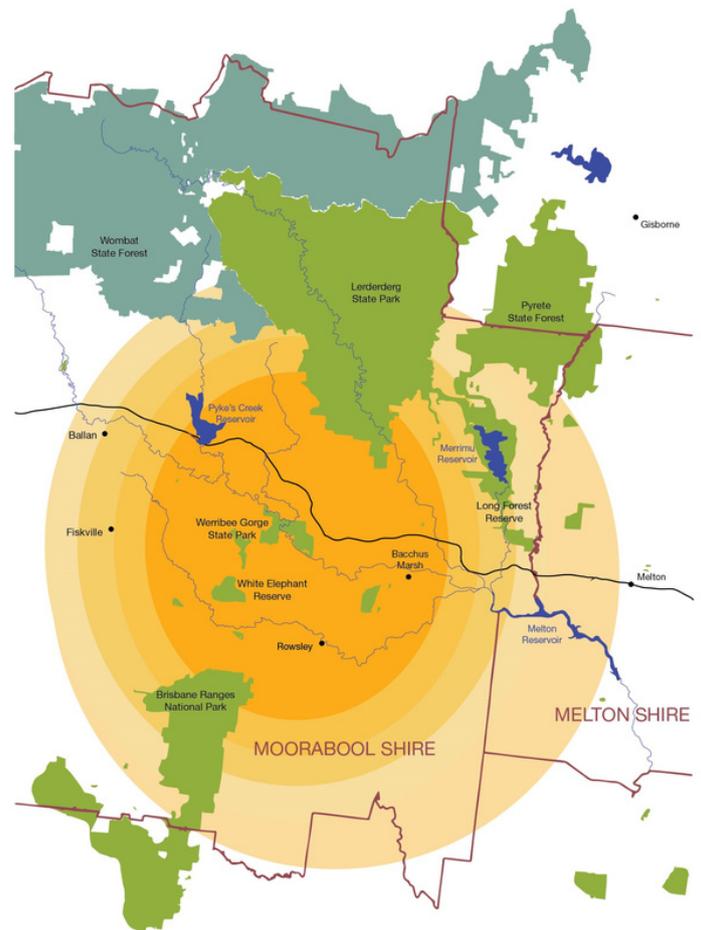
Grow West is improving the health and production of farmland, creating habitat links between the parks, reducing erosion and the amount of sediment being washed into waterways and reservoirs.

While the targets of Grow West extend across a large landscape, its success is achieved by working with landowners to design and deliver revegetation and rehabilitation projects that suit the requirements of individual properties.

Grow West secures funds and employs skilled personnel to make major works feasible, affordable and expertly delivered.

Grow West also helps farming properties and creates social and environmental benefits for the public whilst boosting green credibility for government and corporate investors.

Grow West will see Melbourne's western landscapes transformed into beautiful, productive and sustainable areas – a living space for native plants and animals alongside thriving local communities with a great future.



Grow West's 17 year highlights



Over 2500 hectares revegetated



Thriving committee with 7 organisations and 3 community representatives



1,343,000 trees planted by 48 landholders

Region

The Grow West area covers a diversity of landscapes, from alluvial river flats and rolling pastures to slight slopes to steep gorges. The fertile plains are utilised by larger landholders who generally crop while the alluvial flats are subjected to more intensive agriculture of vegetable growing and orchards, who access irrigated water from the Werribee and Lerderderg Rivers.

The drier slopes in the rural areas tend to be less arable due to accessibility and soil type hence making it more challenging to manage and very costly. While slopes in the semi-rural interface have been subdivided into smaller lifestyle properties, the knowledge and skills in natural resource management are limited or non-existent. These challenges in the landscape, unfortunately contribute to the increase population of invasive pest animals and plants, all having an impact on surrounding productive agricultural areas as well as remnant native vegetation that is scattered across public and private land.

Large areas of intact indigenous vegetation are found on public land in the You Yangs Regional Park, Brisbane Ranges National Park, Werribee Gorge State Park, White Elephant Reserve, Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve, Pyrete State Forest, Lerderderg State Park and Wombat State Forest.

12 rivers and creeks dissect the project area:

- Werribee River
- Lerderderg River
- Little River
- Parwan Creek
- Korkuperrimul Creek
- Djerriwarrah Creek
- Pykes Creek
- Dale Creek
- Myrniong Creek
- Spring Creek
- Yaloak Creek
- and Whitehorse Creek

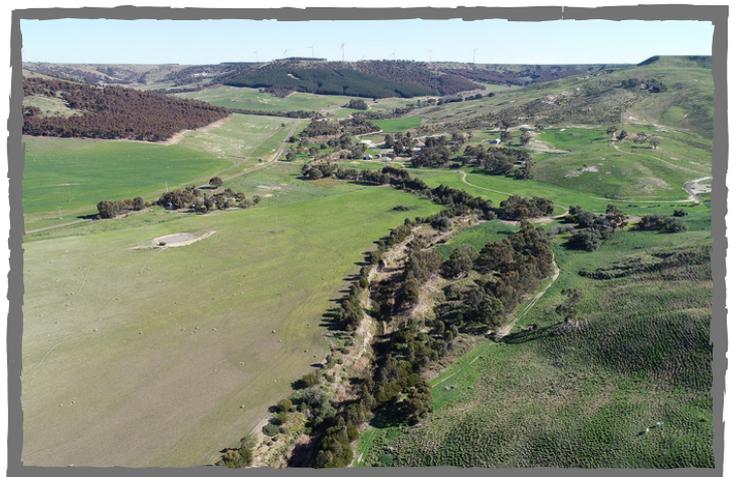
and three reservoirs - Pykes Creek, Merrimu and Melton.

The Pykes Creek and Merrimu reservoirs supply water to Myrniong, Bacchus Marsh and Melton for both domestic and agricultural purposes while Melton Reservoir supplies water for irrigated agriculture and recreation only.

The region faces other challenges, including population growth with the expansion of Melbourne along the western corridor putting pressure on communities, agricultural land and native vegetation.



Before (1970). Looking over Yaloak to Cut Hill.



After (2018). Greater Grow West community results.

History

The Grow West area was traditionally occupied by a number of Aboriginal communities, most notably the Wadawurrung in the south and west, and the Wurundjeri in the east. They are part of the five peoples of the Kulin Nation.

- Wurundjeri (Melbourne and the plains north)
- Bunurong (Port Phillip and lands east)
- Wadawurrung (western Victoria)
- Taungurong (central-east Victoria)
- Dja Dja Wurrung (central Victoria)

Wadawurrung

The entire Wadawurrung country was a mosaic of 25 clan estates, whereby intermarriage and other alliances, helped people to gain access to land and resources far beyond their own estates.

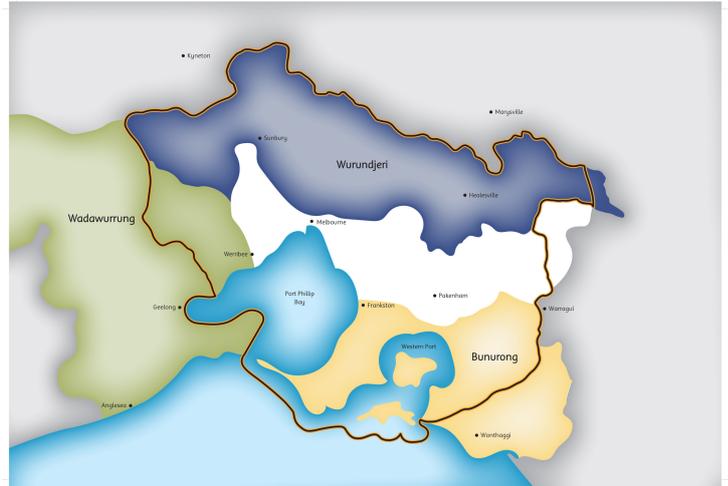
The Wadawurrung people farmed, hunted and foraged within the western plains grasslands, coast and ranges, from the Werribee River to the You Yangs and along the Port Phillip Bay. Wadawurrung country extends from Fiery Creek in the west to the Great Dividing Range in the north, the Werribee River in the east and the coastline from Werribee River to Painkalac Creek at Aireys Inlet to the south.

European Settlement

The district was settled by Europeans from the mid-1830s, shortly after Melbourne was founded. Following the discovery of gold in the 1880s the region quickly developed – including the towns of Bacchus Marsh and Ballan as stops on the route to the goldfield towns of Ballarat, Mt Egerton, and Blackwood.

This population boom led to the growth of a significant number of industries: timber industry in the north of the shire, quarries, coal mine, and agriculture (orchards, wheat, dairy farming, cattle).

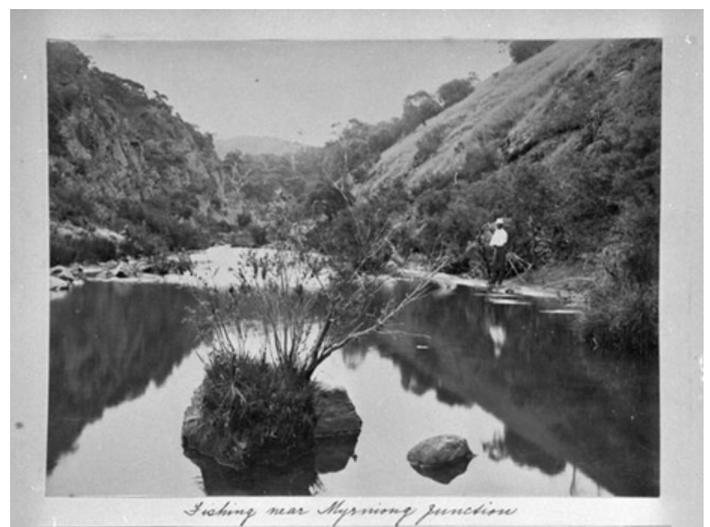
The town was connected by railway to Melbourne in 1887. The advent of motor transport, improved roads and increased rail services, which has gradually led to Bacchus Marsh to develop as a commuter community for Melbourne based workers who preferred a rural township lifestyle.



Wurundjeri

The Wurundjeri People occupied areas north of the Upper Werribee River and into the Upper reaches of the Maribyrnong and Yarra Catchments.

The Wurundjeri People take their name from the Woiwurrung language word 'wurun' meaning the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) which is common along 'Birraring' (Yarra River), and 'djeri', the grub which is found in or near the tree. Wurundjeri are the 'Witchetty Grub People' and their ancestors have lived on this land for millennia.



"WERRIBEE GORGE" November 1895 or 1896. Fishing near Myrning Junction Photographer: A.J. Campbell
Source: Museums Victoria

Role

Grow West:

- Plans, coordinates and delivers cross-tenure environmental land management projects that improves habitat links across the Grow West landscape.
- Provides opportunities to coordinate and connect works, and a forum to share collective knowledge.
- Builds connections between our community and the natural environment.
- Works with Wurundjeri and Wadawurung peoples, traditional owners, and incorporates their goals and aspirations for participation in natural resource management into Grow West activities.

Grow West has a dedicated committee to oversee governance and strategy, while Grow West staff lead and manage the daily operations. Whilst Grow West is a program involving and supported by numerous organisations and groups, the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority provides administrative support.

Partners & Supporters

Grow West is a collaboration between numerous organisations, community groups, corporates including:

- Moorabool Shire Council
- Melbourne Water
- Southern Rural Water
- Parks Victoria
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Moorabool Landcare Network
- PPWCMA
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Bacchus Marsh Lions Club
- Friends of Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee
- Local Landcare Groups
- Victorian Mobile Landcare

The PPWCMA coordinates Grow West on behalf of the partner organisations, managing the project's finances and employing project staff who lead project delivery, reporting and promotion.

Grow West Implementation Committee



Justin Horne, Chair
Moorabool Shire Council



Ryan Wilson
Southern Rural Water



Adam Barber
Melbourne Water



Cr. Tonia Dudzik
Moorabool Shire Council



Rus Hendry
Community Representative



Ruth Marnie
Community Representative



Emma Muir
Community Representative



Roger MacRaid
Community Representative



Les McLean
Port Phillip and Westernport
CMA, Board Member



Nathan MacDonald
Dept. Environment, Land,
Water & Planning



Corinne Mays
Port Phillip and
Westernport CMA



Stuart Lardner
Parks Victoria

Strategic Alignment

Over the next five years, Grow West will contribute to the implementation of many different strategies, policies, plans and actions from a local, state and global scale.

United Nations Sustainability Goals

Grow West's vision, goals and targets of this Plan will help contribute to 5 out of 17 UN Sustainability Goals (4, 6, 12, 13, 15).

Protecting Victoria's Environment - Biodiversity 2037

Grow West projects will help support the overall vision and goals of the plan.

Regional Catchment Strategy

Grow West will strengthen the region's natural environment through the development of nature links and the protection and enhancement of assets in the landscape.

Moorabool Sustainable Environment Strategy 2016

Grow West projects will help support biodiversity objectives within the Upper Werribee catchment.

Healthy Waterway Strategy 2018

Grow West projects will help support river health objectives within the Upper Werribee catchment.

Indigenous Participation Plans

Grow West is committed in providing opportunities to share Traditional Owner knowledge and meaningful engagement within its projects.

United Nations Sustainability Goals

- 4 Quality Education
- 6 Clean Water and Sanitation
- 12 Responsible Consumption and Production
- 13 Climate Action
- 15 Life on Land

Grow West's vision

Working together to create productive and healthy landscapes in the West.



Grow West's vision will be achieved by supporting and building the capacity of landowners to create nature links and habitat corridors across the landscape.

To achieve the vision Grow West has identified six key areas in which the program will focus its efforts:

- Working with and supporting landowners
- Biodiversity and nature
- Education
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Funding and advocacy
- Leadership and strategy



Working with and supporting landowners

Grow West will work and support landowners to create and sustain productive and healthy landscapes.

Grow West will do this by:

- Sourcing grants and providing coordination and governance
- Providing on-ground advice and assistance

Measures of success by 2025:

- The number of projects delivered - (10)
- Number of land managers / landholders engaged with projects - (15)





Biodiversity and nature

Grow West seeks to improve the connectivity and resilience of the region's unique biodiversity by establishing core habitats and connecting them across the landscape in partnership with the broader community. Grow West will be a leader in biodiversity management in the region and champion and promote its protection where possible.

We will do this by:

- Establish stepping stones that provide connections from the You Yangs Regional Park to Brisbane Ranges National Park, Werribee Gorge State Park to Lerderderg State Park and Wombat State Forest.
- Seeking opportunities to deliver cross tenure land management projects that build connections across the landscape, and protect threatened plants and animals.

Measures of success by 2025:

- Onground land management change achieved - (100ha)
- Number of seedlings planted - (50,000)
- Direct seeding implemented - (15kg)
- Waterways protected - (5km)
- Number of Grow West partners delivering collaborative projects (50)



Photo by David Whelan



Education

Grow West will work with the local communities and traditional owner groups, building stronger connections to the local environment by being an advocate for best environmental land management practice.

Grow West will do this by:

- Providing opportunities for landholders to further their land management knowledge, increase their awareness and provide a platform to share collective knowledge
- Providing opportunities for the local community to connect with nature, and to increase their knowledge of the local fauna and flora via educational engagement activities
- Advocate for the best practice environmental land management across the Grow West area
- Provide opportunities to share Traditional Owner knowledge

Measures of success by 2025:

- Number of traditional owner engagement, community engagement and educational events - (15)
- Number of attendees to events - (1,000)
- Number of landholders engaged in best practice environmental land management - (25)





Partnerships and collaboration

Through its partnerships, Grow West will collaborate with landowners to deliver successful projects; through revegetation, remnant protection, soil erosion control, waterway rehabilitation, pest plant and animal control, workshops and field days.

Grow West will do this by:

- Developing collaborative partnerships between organisations and the local community
- Actively engaging with stakeholders, partners and sponsors
- Convening quarterly Grow West Implementation Committee meetings

Measures of success by 2025:

- Number of stakeholders, partners and sponsors involved with Grow West - (100)
- Number of Grow West meetings (20 / 4 per annum)
- Number of forums or committees Grow West has been involved in - (50)



Leadership and strategy

Grow West is a leader for change in sustainable environmental land management across Melbourne's outer west.

Grow West will do this by:

- Providing strategic directions for landscape scale rejuvenation
- Being innovative and revolutionary with ideas and approaches
- Being adaptable to a changing landscape with increased population and pressures of a changing climate

Measures of success by 2025:

- Number of scientific/industry forums and conferences attended by Grow West partners and staff - (50)
- Number of practical innovative on-ground initiatives taken up within project delivery - (10)





Funding and advocacy

As a collective of organisations with a shared vision, Grow West has a strong voice to advocate for investment and sustainable environmental land management practices across Melbourne's Outer West.

Grow West will do this by:

- Advocating for best-practice land management across the Grow West region
- Promoting Grow West to policy and decision-makers to seek their support for the program
- Securing government, corporate and private sector investment and in-kind support for Grow West projects
- Maintaining a high community profile for Grow West
- Promoting health and well being benefits of connecting with nature
- Raising community awareness on important land management issues.

Measures of success by 2025:

- Funding secured by Grow West to deliver projects - (\$500,000)
- Funding secured by Partner organisations to deliver projects in the Grow West region - (\$1M)
- Number of influential community figures and decision-makers offering public endorsement of the Grow West program - (15)
- Number of community awareness raising messages delivered - (60)



Monitor and Review

A process that will be conducted annually in partnership with stakeholders

How will Grow West track its progress

- Grow West will monitor its progress annually against its project goals and provide a report to the Implementation Committee. This will then inform the directions for the coming years.
- An annual snapshot will be published to highlight the collective achievements and any key advances made during the year.
- The Grow West Strategic Plan will be reviewed every 5 years.



More information on Grow West

For more information on Grow West please contact the
Grow West Program Coordinator

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