

Riparian management licences

To protect the riparian environment

What is riparian land?

Land that adjoins rivers, creeks, estuaries, lakes or wetlands is known as riparian land. It is often the only remaining area of remnant vegetation in the landscape.

Riparian land has many environmental values and healthy waterways depend on the condition of riparian land. Riparian land also has important community, social, economic and cultural heritage values.

What is Crown land?

Crown land is land owned by the government. It includes national and other parks, state forests, and public purpose reserves. It is also referred to as public land.

What is a Crown land water frontage?

- A strip of Crown land that runs alongside a river, creek or wetland. It is generally located between the waterway and the private land boundary.
- Crown land water frontage widths vary, from 20 to 100 metres, or more in some cases.
- Crown land water frontage occurs along most large streams in Victoria. Approximately 30,000 km of Victoria's 170,000 km of water frontage consists of Crown land water frontages. The remainder is generally private land, parks or state forest.

Who manages Crown land water frontages?

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) is responsible for the administration of Crown land water frontages, including licensing and ensuring compliance with licence conditions. In some cases, Parks Victoria has a management role. DELWP may issue a licence for a Crown land water frontage to the owner/occupier of the adjoining private land for riparian management or grazing purposes.

A licence over a Crown land water frontage authorises the licensee to use the land for a specified purpose and to do management works e.g. weed control. Conditions listed on the licence recognise the responsibilities of the licensee and DELWP. For more information, visit the DELWP website - <https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/land-management/crown-land-leases-licences-and-permits/crown-land-water-frontage-licensing>.

Recreational use of Crown land water frontages is regulated by the Land (Regulated Watercourse Land) Regulations 2021.

What is a riparian management licence?

A riparian management licence for a Crown land water frontage recognises that all or part of the frontage is being managed by a licensee to protect and improve the riparian environment (e.g. fenced out and supporting native

vegetation). Controlled grazing may be permitted on the riparian land, if approved by the local CMA and DELWP.

Riparian management licences are typically generated through the conversion of an existing grazing licence as part of a CMA-landholder agreement for fencing and revegetation in riparian areas.



Fenced Crown land water frontage protecting the riparian environment. Courtesy East Gippsland CMA.

The long-term management responsibilities agreed to by the landholder in the CMA agreement are incorporated as special conditions into a riparian management licence. These special conditions remain with the licence which may be transferred if the adjacent private land changes hands. Licences are generally renewed every five years.

Many projects on Crown land that include fencing to manage stock access to a waterway qualify for a riparian management licence e.g. CMA, Landcare or privately funded projects. Public access may be restricted to a frontage with a riparian management licence to protect revegetation areas. Members of the public are not permitted to camp or light fires on Crown land water frontages with a riparian management licence.

What are the benefits of riparian management licences to landholders?

- Licensees are charged a reduced rental fee when some of the Crown land water frontage is fenced to manage stock access to the waterway
- Often the fee is \$1 payable on demand, typically when the frontage is fenced to prevent stock access
- Landholders are able to obtain a take and use licence through the local water corporation to maintain their access to water, even if the frontage is fenced. If the fencing is undertaken with a CMA, you may be eligible for reduced take and use licence fees. For more information, see DELWP's 'Cutting the cost of take and use licences fact sheet'.

Riparian management licences

- Controlled grazing may be permitted on the riparian land (if approved by the local CMA and DELWP)
- In CMA priority areas, landholders may be eligible for incentives for riparian works such as fencing, revegetation and off-stream stock watering, if they agree to take out a riparian management licence. The location of the fence may be negotiated between the landholder and the CMA
- The maintenance of the riparian protection and improvement works is secured through the special conditions on the licence. This will help to ensure the long term protection of these works and the riparian area.

What are the benefits of riparian management?

Effective riparian management actions typically include fencing, revegetation, protection and enhancement of indigenous vegetation, controlled grazing, provision of off-stream watering infrastructure and weed management. These management actions provide many benefits to the community and landholders. These include:

Better stock management

- Riparian fencing prevents stock falling down banks, getting stuck in the waterway or wandering onto other properties

Enhanced farm productivity and capital value

- Stock are healthier and more productive when drinking from an off-stream trough
- Property values are increased with improvements such as fencing and off-stream watering
- Riparian vegetation acts as a windbreak which provides protection or stock
- Riparian land is important for the storage of carbon

Erosion control

- Riparian vegetation helps to stabilise stream banks and reduce erosion
- Native riparian vegetation is effective at reducing the occurrence and scale of flood related channel change

Improved river and riparian land health

- Trees on riparian land provide a supply of organic matter to waterways, including large wood, which supports aquatic biodiversity and nutrient cycling
- Vegetated riparian zones provide habitat, especially for significant birds, animals and fish
- A network of habitat in the landscape connects larger patches of remnant vegetation and provides a corridor for the movement of animals and native plants
- Riparian vegetation can help to lower the water table
- Communities can enjoy the benefits that healthy waterways provide such as for recreation, tourism or cultural heritage values

Improved water quality

- Vegetation on riparian land improves water quality in waterways by filtering out sediments, nutrients and pathogens from stock and native animals, which protects public water supplies and helps reduce algal blooms

Increased fish stocks

- Improved river and riparian land health, including shade from riparian vegetation, helps to regulate water temperature which can be important to native fish.

Further information

Visit the DELWP website for more information about Crown land water frontages -

<https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/land-management/managing-crown-land/access-to-crown-water-frontages>

To determine eligibility for incentives and where the priority areas are for riparian works contact your local CMA or Melbourne Water.

If you have completed works on Crown land water frontage and think you are eligible for a riparian management licence, contact your local DELWP regional office by calling the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136 186 to apply for a licence, or to amend your existing Crown land water frontage licence.

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