



Wetlands 'clean up' stormwater for Port Phillip Bay

With more than \$414,000 in funding over six years from the Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust, a regional Waterwatch Coordinator is helping Melbourne Water improve the quality of stormwater flowing into Port Phillip Bay.

Ending a helping hand, the Friends of Braeside Park (FOBP) for the past five years have been monitoring Braeside Park wetlands as part of the very successful Waterwatch program.

The Boonerwung South Waterwatch program in Melbourne's south-east is a partnership with the Commonwealth Government and the local councils of Bayside, Kingston, Frankston, Casey, Cardinia, Melbourne, Port Phillip and the local waterway manager, Melbourne Water.

Braeside Park wetlands, developed by Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria, are a purpose-built system which acts as a filter for stormwater from local residential properties and an adjacent 18-hole golf course. Water then passes into the Mordialloc Creek before entering Port Phillip Bay at Mordialloc beach.

The wetlands remove much of the nutrient and sediment load which would have once flowed straight into Port Phillip Bay, and in the process supports a diverse and flourishing ecosystem which the FOBP assist to maintain – not only through their Waterwatch efforts, but by planting days, seed collecting, and weed removal.

Waterwatch Coordinator for the Boonerwung South region, Ben Scullin, says the FOBP are one of the most successful and 'longest-lived' monitoring groups in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Volunteers from the group monitor five sites within the park every month, checking the quality of water which flows through the chain of wetlands and into Port Phillip Bay.

Regardless of the fact that the wetlands were developed to 'clean up' stormwater, thanks to the trust funding the local community has helped to develop Braeside Park into a showpiece, and in the process an excellent relationship has also developed between the FOBP, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water.

Ben has assisted the FOBP for the last four years and says the project is one of the best examples he's seen of government and community groups working together to find a viable environmental solution.



"It's a thrill to see people working so closely together to conserve a wetland which they've propagated with plants and animals, creating a natural way of filtering man-made pollutants out of our water systems," Ben says.

So successful are the wetlands, that Melbourne Water has chosen them as a site for reintroduction of a native fish, the Dwarf Galaxias, which is considered threatened due to loss of floodplain habitat and competition from introduced fish species.

The Dwarf Galaxias, which were collected from Devilbend Creek (upstream of the Devilbend Reservoir), were introduced into a small pond in Braeside Park as part of continuing efforts to help conserve this species in urban wetlands in the Melbourne region. It is envisaged that breeding populations will be established that can be used to assist in their reintroduction to other wetlands around Melbourne.



Above: The Braeside Parks wetlands have been so successful, that Melbourne Water has chosen them as a site for reintroduction of a native fish, the Dwarf Galaxias.

Top: Bill Jackson and Bev Bancroft at Dingley Drain, Lower Dandenong Road in Braeside, monitoring the quality of water which flows through the chain of wetlands and into Port Phillip Bay.