

# Riparian Management Licences

*'Recognising that Crown water frontages are being managed 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 water frontage?

- A strip of Crown land that runs alongside a river, creek or wetland. It is generally located between the top of the bank and the adjoining private land boundary.
- Crown water frontage widths vary, from 20 to 100 metres, or more in some cases.
- Crown water frontage occurs along some streams but not others. Approximately 30,000 km of Victoria's 170,000 km of water frontage consists of Crown water frontages. The remainder is generally private land.

## Who manages Crown water frontages?

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for the administration of Crown water frontages, including licensing and ensuring compliance with licence conditions. DSE may issue a licence for a Crown water frontage to the owner/occupier of the adjoining private land for riparian management or grazing purposes.

A licence over a Crown 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 DSE. Members of the public are not permitted to camp or light camp fires on licensed Crown water frontages. For more information, see DSE's 'Crown Water Frontages factsheet' at [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au).



## What is a riparian management licence?

A riparian management licence for a Crown 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).

A riparian management licence is typically generated through the conversion of an existing grazing licence as part of an agreement between a landholder and a Catchment Management Authority (CMA) for undertaking riparian protection and improvement works such as fencing and revegetation.

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.

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## What are the benefits of riparian management licences to landholders?

- Licensees are charged a fair rental fee, as some of the Crown water frontage is fenced to manage stock access to the waterway.
- In some cases, the fee is \$1 on demand, typically when the frontage is fenced to prevent stock access.
- Members of the public are not permitted to camp or light camp fires on licensed Crown water frontages.
- Landholders are able to obtain a take and use licence to maintain their access to water, even if the frontage is fenced.
- Controlled grazing may be permitted on the riparian land (if approved by the local CMA and DSE).
- In CMA priority areas, landholders may be eligible for incentives for riparian works such as fencing, revegetation and off-stream stock watering, on the Crown land 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 effective 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 into other properties.

### *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 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.

### *Enhanced farm productivity and capital value*

- Stock are healthier - through improved drinking water supplies pumped from the river to an off-stream trough.
- Riparian land is important for the storage of carbon.

### *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.

### *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.

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