

Healthier land, healthier people **Information sheet**

What is the study?

Working together on natural resource management (NRM) projects can improve the health and wellbeing of those involved¹ as well as improving the health of land. When this happens, landholders build resilience that increases their capacity to continue to care for their land and community. Increasingly, therefore, NRM project managers are asked to work to enhance the social as well as the ecological resilience of the communities they work with². This is often easier said than done and is even harder to measure. This is because little is known about when and why health benefits occur, or how to design NRM projects to achieve these linked benefits.

The *Healthier land, healthier people* study is designed to answer some of these questions in one of Australia's largest and most sensitive natural features: the Murray-Darling Basin. This 'natural experiment' project, which runs from 2012 to 2014, will help reveal when and how NRM projects in the Basin can improve the health of people as well as the health of land. It asks questions such as:

- What are the features of communities that undertake successful NRM projects?
- Can NRM projects strengthen community connectedness and capacity?
- Which aspects of health benefit from successful NRM projects?
- Could governments support NRM projects to help improve some aspects of health?
- What are the pitfalls of NRM projects and how can they be avoided?

We are looking for case study NRM projects

Are you currently developing or starting a new NRM project? Does it involve multiple landholders or other stakeholders working together to address an environmental problem? If so, it may be suitable for inclusion in the study. We are seeking projects that:

- Are located in the Murray-Darling Basin
- Are starting in 2012 (those involved may have worked together on previous projects)
- Are likely to achieve some milestones by 2014, even if they are not finalised by then (for example, revegetation of an area or improved water quality)
- Involve multiple participants working together to benefit the land
- Involve multiple properties, ideally encompassing whole communities or landscapes.

¹ Greater Southern Area Health Service. 2010. *Farm family health and landscape health: A Health Impact Assessment of the Extension Component of the Sustainable Native Pastures Project*. GSAHS, Queanbeyan,

² See for example Natural Resources Commission (2011) *Framework for assessing and recommending upgraded catchment action plans*. NRC, Sydney.

Who is funding the project?

The project has been funded as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Collaborative Research Network led by the University of Canberra. The Network involves researchers from many different areas of expertise working on projects focused around the critical task of enhancing resilience in the Basin. You are not asked to contribute any funding.

How will the project benefit participants?

We will ask you to help us design and implement a research project to supplement your NRM project. Working together will ensure the research provides you with the information you need and generally benefits NRM management in your region. As part of the project, we will:

- Work with you to improve the processes used to engage participants as the NRM project progresses, and staff skills in engagement.
- Develop tools, such as mapping environmental and social characteristics of local communities, to help participants plan for the future of their local landscapes.

How will the project benefit NRM in the Murray Darling Basin?

The project will be used to develop practical advice on how to design NRM projects so they improve participants' health and wellbeing as well as the health of land. We will investigate whether this, in turn, increases the resilience of rural communities.

What will be asked of you if you get involved in the project?

We will ask NRM staff, project participants and community representatives or stakeholders to work with us throughout the project. You may take part in interviews, complete surveys or participate in other mutually agreed ways. Our researchers will also attend key events and activities in the NRM project.

Who is undertaking the research?

The study is being undertaken by researchers led by Professor Helen Berry at the Centre for Research and Action in Public Health at the University of Canberra.

Interested?

If you are interested in participating, please contact:

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