

Saltwatch Week

Teacher's Notes

AusVELS Domain and (Level): Science (F-6), Humanities, Geography (F-6), Civics and Citizenship (F-6)

Equipment: A clean jar, a label for your sample, an Electrical Conductivity (EC) meter

Duration: One hour

Setting: Classroom

Saltwatch Week

Saltwatch Week has been an important part of the North Central CMA's Waterwatch program since 1997. It provides an invaluable snapshot of salinity across the region in a particular week each year. Water samples can be collected from water sources; such as rivers, creeks, bores, channels, drains, dams and wetlands, and then tested with an Electrical Conductivity (EC) meter to determine salt content.

Salinity is a significant threatening process, which should be considered and understood in all areas of river health. Historically over half of all the deep-rooted native trees and shrubs that once grew in Victoria have been cleared. As the land was cleared, the water balance was altered. Irrigation and rising groundwater levels have brought salt ever closer to the surface. *For more information on how salinity occurs see Part 2 Water Science section.*

As a starting point, it is important to understand that there has been considerable effort over the past decades by farmers, community groups and governments to reduce the salinity impacts resulting from the land management practices of the past. The re-establishment of deep-rooted trees, shrubs and grasses has been a focus of Landcare and other groups over the past 30 years, groundwater pumping has lowered watertables in some areas and the ongoing raising of awareness around salinity has had a tangible effect on the enormous salinity problem. Your students can have an impact through engaging in Saltwatch Week and helping to develop and maintain an up-to-date picture of salinity in your area whilst increasing their understanding of salinity as they undertake the activity.

River Detectives in Saltwatch Week

Each year in May, Waterwatch will ask our **River Detectives** to take a salinity snapshot. Your class will be asked to bring a water sample from your local waterway to school to test for salt. Students can bring multiple samples in separate jars and have them tested.

What your students will need:

- a clean jar/bottle to collect a water sample in (samples can be taken from a dam, river, water tank, channel, bore, etc.)
 - ask students to label the sample with the location address
- an Electrical Conductivity meter

Students can bring
in as many samples
as they like!