

River Detectives is an exciting education initiative of Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's) inspiring teachers and students to understand, appreciate and care for their local waterway through engaging, cross-curricular, citizen-science activities.

Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) are responsible for the integrated planning and coordination of land, water and biodiversity management in each catchment and land protection regions.

Each Catchment Management Authority is structured to maximise community involvement in decision-making.

Victoria is divided into 10 catchment and land protection regions. Each CMA website showcases the work undertaken in the region to support waterway management, the environment, biodiversity and landcare.

You can find further information about the important projects and daily work they are undertaking with the community by visiting their websites.



Currently five CMA's offer the program to schools and youth groups in their region;

- North Central CMA
- Corangamite CMA
- North East CMA
- Wimmera CMA
- Melbourne Water

## River Detectives - what's involved;

- the program is FREE
- registered schools/groups are supported by a regional River Detectives facilitator
- participants 'adopt' a site on a local waterway
- water Quality Monitoring Kit provided with equipment for monthly testing
- PD sessions provided by regional facilitators to support implementation the program
- students test water quality each month and enter results/observations online at our website
- class webinars offered on a range of topics
- access to website full of ideas, inspiration and resources
  - videos, posters, activity sheets, fact sheets, maps and links
- notifications/updates distributed through the Billabong Banter section of the website
- connect and share with River Detectives schools/colleagues in your region or across the state
- invitations to special events

## **River Detectives - extremely flexible;**

- suitable for primary/secondary, small groups/whole class, one class/many classes
- suitable for classroom setting, home schooling, after school care, sustainability leaders, extension programs, camp facilities, scouts/guides
- can be facilitated by a teacher, parent, landcare / community member (with current Working With Children's check and adhering to requirements of school/group)
- adopted waterway does not need to be within walking distance of your school
- waterway can be a river, stream, wetland, lake, urban/rural, permanent/ephemeral
- testing can be done onsite at your waterway or at school with a sample collected from your waterway
- can be implemented as little or as much as you like - ie. at the bare minimum you can test water quality once a month (or when you can) but at the other end of the spectrum you can test as often as you like and value add to the program with habitat surveys and waterbug sampling.
- water quality testing can be a springboard for further learning and you can use resources on the website to explore a variety of waterway-related topics. These activities will add meaning to your monthly data and illustrate how everything in nature/life is linked.
- the program can sit within science/sustainability studies or general classroom time with many cross-curricular links

## **River Detectives - many valuable learning opportunities;**

- skills and knowledge in science, maths, literacy, humanities, sustainability, art . . .
- monthly testing for pH, electrical conductivity (salinity), turbidity, reactive phosphorus and temperature
- learn about river health, waterways, catchments, water science, flora, fauna, urban stormwater, litter, erosion, land management, life/water cycles, ecosystems, Aboriginal cultures . . .
- provides real-life contexts for learning using real data from your local environment
- provides opportunities for your students to become environmental leaders / custodians / change-makers and educate your school / wider community about the importance of waterway health
- fantastic opportunities to link with community groups and participate in hands-on environmental rehabilitation work at your waterway or within your catchment
- lends itself strongly to strengthening community links ie. get involved with your local Landcare group/council/landholders to revegetate your waterway, learn about the history of your waterway, hear stories from older residents about the life and times of your waterway (droughts, floods, recreation), connect with traditional owner groups to learn about cultural practices
- ties in well with other initiatives such as Clean Up Australia Day, National Tree Day, Science Week, Water Week, ResourceSmart, etc

In summary, the River Detectives is an engaging, citizen-science, community/sustainability program that will help your students value waterways as the life-blood of the land - a very important value in these times of environmental change.

Take a look at the website <https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/> to get a feel for the program and if you're interested in finding out more / getting involved please get in touch with us using the 'contact us' link on the home page of the website to chat about how the program could work for you.