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Goulburn Broken Ecosystems Undervalued

The role of ecosystems in the sustainability of the Goulburn Broken Catchment is undervalued according to leading scientists.

"Ecosystems manufacture the air we breathe, create and maintain healthy soils, break down our waste and clean our water" Mr. Bill O'Kane, Goulburn Broken CMA, CEO explained.

We depend on these services for our own welfare and economic viability, but unfortunately we either don't know enough about them, take them for granted, or we undervalue them".

Value comes from all ecosystems in the catchment, from our State Park lands to our farm lands" O'Kane added

Dr. Steven Cork of CSIRO, and leader of the Ecosystem Services Project, says the project underway in the Catchment aims to recognise the important role ecosystems play socially, culturally and economically.

"The Goulburn Broken is known as the food bowl of Australia, but what is not recognised is the key role ecosystem services play in maintaining this reputation.

Bees and other insects pollinate the fruit trees, and insects in the soil maintain a healthy environment for crops to grow - these are all services that are provided to humans by nature, free of charge, yet they aren't being recognised in economic or policy circles" Cork stated.

"Worse still, is that many of these ecosystem services are declining and actually cost us money to repair".

"The Ecosystem Services Project is attempting to address this issue by working together with scientists, economists and members of the community.

We have identified all of the ecosystem services that underpin the traditional goods produced in the catchment such dairy, horticulture, wool, beef, and crops as well as the ecosystem services that support "quality of life" industries such as recreation and tourism" Cork said.

“From here we will be looking at the affect on ecosystems of different land management uses.

Our ultimate aim is for scientists and communities to learn together on how to deliver the right information to policy developers and decision makers in an effort to move towards more sustainable land management practices” he added.

The Ecosystem Services Project is a collaborative effort between CSIRO, The Myer Foundation, Land and Water Australia, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre, The University of New England, the Cotton Cooperative Research Centre and other institutions and agencies around Australia. Six case studies around Australia, of which the Goulburn Broken is one, are aiming to describe and value Australia’s ecosystem services.

Contacts:

**Bill O’Kane, CEO, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
0417 101 426**

**Dr. Steve Cork, CSIRO, Project Leader, Ecosystem Services Project
0417 498 649**

**Lisa McKenzie, Communication Manager, Goulburn Broken CMA
0419 325 942**