

4. Community Engagement

4.1 Significance of threats to assets perceived by various managers in the Corangamite region

The SHS aims to guide investment in a range of actions that will enhance natural and built assets in the Corangamite region and protect them from a number of soil-based threats or threatening processes.

The Corangamite CMA recognises the importance of working in partnership with asset managers to help address the threats and risks to various categories of publicly and privately-owned assets.

The principal asset managers with whom the Corangamite CMA is most likely to work with in partnerships during the implementation of the SHS, the important public and private assets they manage and perceived threats to those assets are outlined in *Table 4.1*. The perception of importance of threats was assessed by conducting semi-structured interviews and workshops with these asset managers. Results are found in the Community Engagement Background Report (DPI 2007).

Asset manager	Assets the Corangamite community perceives as 'of importance'	Corangamite community perception of the 5 greatest threats to assets (community's subjective perception)
Private landholders	1. agricultural production	1. waterlogging 2. soil structure decline 3. soil nutrient decline 4. soil acidification 5. soil organic carbon decline
Local Government	1. built infrastructure 2. biodiversity 3. water quality	1. landslides 2. gully/tunnel erosion 3. secondary salinity 4. acid sulphate soils 5. sheet/rill erosion
State Government	1. water quality 2. biodiversity 3. cultural heritage sites 4. built infrastructure 5. agricultural (forestry) production	1. landslides 2. gully/tunnel erosion 3. sheet/rill erosion 4. secondary salinity 5. acid sulphate soils
Water authorities	1. water quality (reservoirs) 2. built infrastructure	1. landslides 2. gully/tunnel erosion 3. sheet/rill erosion 4. secondary salinity 5. acid sulphate soils

Table 4.1: Asset managers, assets and threats

4.2 Community engagement processes in the development of the Corangamite Soil Health Strategy

Very early in the development of the Soil Health Strategy, it became apparent that important public and private assets that could be or are currently under threat from various processes, were in the care of a diverse range of private and public sector managers.

It was also clear that in the implementation of the Soil Health Strategy, the Corangamite CMA would need to create and foster partnerships with these asset managers, working together to understand and respond to the threats.

In particular, the common objective of these partnerships was likely to be about addressing a range of risks to assets through specific, targeted and prioritised actions. Consequently, it was considered important that these asset managers were involved with the development of the strategy, creating a base of understanding and the potential responses among a broader base in the community.

A Soil Health Strategy Steering Committee was established, which comprised community and agency members charged with helping to guide the development of the strategy and its components. The committee was responsible for ensuring that the strategy would meet the community needs and that processes used to prioritise actions and potential investments were soundly based and justifiable.

At various times through the development of the strategy, other asset managers likely to be involved with the implementation of the SHS were informed and invited to take part in various activities. Since the development of the strategy has been taking place over several years, many asset managers from the public and private sectors have already been actively involved.

Workshops have been held with the community to gauge perceptions of various threats including 'greatest risk' to assets in different parts of the Corangamite region. In some cases, such as the development of Erosion Management Overlays (EMO) for local government planning schemes, work has already been started and some overlays delivered.

4.3 Community engagement to identify technology needs, attitudes and capacity of asset managers to address high risks

The strategy team believed that direct, targeted consultations should be held with asset managers to inform the steering committee of their attitudes, capacity, treatment options and perceived technology gaps/needs in regard to various actions that would be required to protect assets from threats.

Semi-structured interviews were set up and conducted with asset managers. Questions were targeted towards only those soil-related threatening processes identified as high risk in their locality (e.g. local government officer) or on a wider, regional basis (e.g. highway or transmission cable managers).

Asset managers interviewed included farmers, staff from local and state governments, and employees from infrastructure and water authority organisations.

Once the Soil Health Strategy has been endorsed for implementation, more intensive and targeted community engagement will be conducted to ensure community input into detailed action plans.

Processes and results from the targeted community engagement process are illustrated in *Appendix E*.

