

Stormwater Tender is coming back!

- More funding has been secured from Melbourne Water, to continue our research into reducing the impact of stormwater run-off.
- Rebates will again be offered to eligible property owners for the installation of rainwater tanks and rain-gardens.
- This round of Stormwater Tender to be simpler, easier to understand and easier to participate in.
- Stay tuned! More information will be available soon.

Would you like a free rain-garden?

Turn over to find out more.



Above: One of four hydrological sampling points installed in the catchment, that record how much water flows down the creek. **Inset:** measuring staff used to measure water depth.

Keeping a eye on the creek

"Is the creek getting better?" That is a question that many people have asked us since the first round of Stormwater Tender finished. It's a very good question to ask, but one we can only answer with "not yet, but watch this space".

Our work in the first round of Stormwater Tender succeeded in disconnecting around 10% of the roofs and paving that we think need to be disconnected before we will begin to see a marked improvement in the health of the creek. With our new round of funding we are well placed to work with the community and council to treat runoff from enough of the catchment's roofs and roads in the next two years to see improvements

in the creek. We are also well placed to demonstrate any improvement, because we have been monitoring the ecology of the creek and other creeks of the Dandenongs (water quality, algal growth, small animal life) for 8 years, and now have funding to continue monitoring for at least another 4 years. This year we also installed flow gauges to measure changes in the flow patterns of the creek as we hold back more and more stormwater. If you see people out taking samples from the creek in the pouring rain – that will most likely be us!

Only by closely watching the health of the creek can we know if we are making a difference.

So if the creek improves we will definitely know about it, and when it does, we will definitely be singing about it from the (unconnected) rooftops.

What else is happening?

In addition to working with the community to reduce the stormwater from private properties going into the creek, we are also working with the Shire of Yarra Ranges (again with support from Melbourne Water) to deal with runoff from roads and other impervious surfaces in

public open spaces. For example, the Shire is looking to construct a rain-garden on Hereford Road, and looking at opportunities to harvest stormwater for irrigating the sports grounds at Morrison Reserve (and Pembroke Secondary College).

These projects will help improve urban amenity and public facilities, whilst protecting Little Stringybark Creek. More details can be found on our website.





Would you like a free rain-garden?

We will again be holding a rain-garden open day as part of our promotion of Round 2 of Stormwater Tender. The day will provide local residents the opportunity to see a rain-garden being constructed and learn more about how they work to provide a wonderful "green oasis" in your garden, whilst also protecting the Little Stringybark Creek.

But first, we need somewhere to build one!

We are looking for a property that is 'connected' to the drainage system (ie. stormwater runoff goes into pipes which go into the Council drainage system, which discharges to the creek), has some spare space in the garden,

good vehicle access and owners willing to open their garden on the day to the local community (up to 100 people) and allow some ongoing monitoring. We will cover the full cost of the design and construction of the basic raingarden, including consultation with you on the design.

If you are interested, then please contact Darren Bos (preferably by email - dbos@unimelb.edu.au or on 8344 9248). The 'winner' will be selected at random from a short list of suitable properties.

Right: Some examples of raingardens, including the one built as part of our first open day, in May 2008 (top right).

Send an email to dbos@unimelb.edu.au if you would rather receive future updates via email, or be removed from our mailing list.



Are you 'connected'?

Spend a few minutes reading our webpage or any other document linked to this project (including this one) and you will hear us talk about being 'connected' to the creek. But what exactly does that mean?

Being 'connected' relates to how the stormwater leaving your property enters Little Stringybark Creek. If you dropped a cork in one of your down pipes and it could travel all the way to Little Stringybark Creek in pipes (both big and small) and/or along a sealed gutter (concrete or asphalt), then you

are 'connected'. The length of that journey does not matter, only the pathway along which it travels, because if it is pipe and sealed drain all the way to the creek, then the cork (and more importantly, all the pollutants in stormwater) will be discharged straight into the creek next time it rains. It only takes a few millimetres of rain to wash stormwater and all these pollutants down the drain.

In contrast, if the cork pops out of one of your pipes onto some vegetated land (say your garden, or into a roadside swale or a rain-garden), then it (and most of the stormwater and its pollutants) is

unlikely to make it to the creek for a long time (unless the distance between the pipe and the stream is very short). If it was to get to the creek at all, it would probably take a very big flood, which of course, only happens rarely. So, if your pipes empty into vegetated land, your property is unconnected: a good thing, because your property is having much less of an impact on Little Stringybark Creek.

There are approximately 1,000 properties in the catchment of Little Stringybark Creek. We believe that around 750 of those are 'connected'. For some though, we just do not know, because there is no clear indication of how the stormwater leaves the property or where it goes (and how it gets there).

Why does it matter.....?

The most important criterion for participating in Stormwater Tender is how 'connected' your property is. Any house which is connected to the 'creek' via pipes (even if it's only for part of the roof area, for example), will be eligible for funding.

Left: A map showing the areas in which properties are more likely to be connected to the creek, which equate to 'the highest' priority for this research project. The areas distinguished by different shading are indicative only.

