Council-Community
Carbon Drawdown Program

Private Land Planting Stream

Funding Guidelines



Council-Community Carbon Drawdown Program

Background information

Carbon storage in trees is a gradual process that takes time. As trees and shrubs grow, they accumulate carbon, making it crucial to plant trees now.

The Council-Community Carbon Drawdown Program (private land stream) encourages and supports the community (within the boundaries of Mount Alexander Shire) to plant locally indigenous trees and shrubs on private land each year to compensate for residual CO2-e emissions from Council's operations.[1] [2]

Plants will be of local provenance and contain at least 50% of the total number of plants as overstorey species (i.e. trees and large shrubs). All plants will be a minimum of 3m tall and groundcover species will not be included in this program.

Additional benefits from this program include attracting diverse wildlife, improving the aesthetic appearance of a property, reducing soil erosion, improving soil health, and enhancing water quality.

This program is overseen by **Connecting Country (Mount Alexander Region) Inc**, a not-for-profit community group that works to increase, enhance and restore biodiversity across the Mount Alexander region of central Victoria.

Eligibility

- Projects must occur on private land within the Mount Alexander Shire municipality.
- Project size must be a minimum of 0.5ha
- Minimum planting number is 100 plants per property.
- Applicants must be committed to planting, maintaining and retaining the vegetation for 25 years.
- Landowner consent is required for applications where the applicant is NOT the landowner.

Opportunities for direct seeding larger areas (greater than 2ha) can be investigated as part of this program. Enquire directly with Connecting Country.

Landholder responsibilities:

- Undertake site preparation prior to planting (site dependent)
- Pick up plants from Castlemaine or alternative agreed location by appointment
- Planting and guarding of allocated plants (or engaging contractor services) into agreed project area by July 30 2027
- Plant after care (weeding, watering and general maintenance as needed)

[1] Methodology: TUBESTOCK 1 stem = 10kg CO2/yr for 25yrs (conservative figure of 10kg to account for failure, differing sequestration rates, understorey species) E.g. 10 stems provide 2.5t CO2-e over lifetime.
[2] Methodology: DIRECT SEEDING: 1 hectare = 50t CO2-e sequestration for lifetime

This document is uncontrolled when printed or stored in any electronic format other than Council's online library.

- Exclude stock grazing from planted areas for 25 years and provide evidence for this (crash grazing may be used as part of management actions where appropriate and approved by Connecting Country)
- Retain trees/shrubs for a minimum of 25 years
- Set up and take photo points ('before' and 'after' pictures of works)

Connecting Country (as Councils representative) will:

- Engage interested landholders into the project and conduct an initial site/landholder visit
- Conduct Expression of Interest (EOI) process to shortlist suitable projects within allocated budget
- Order and supply plants to landholders (May-June 2027)
- Supply one corflute guard and two hardwood stakes per plant
- Provide landholders with planting advice as required
- Confirm planting has taken place and provide photographic evidence to Council

Important information

Project sites will be assessed and selected based on:

- The level of prior planning, site preparation and likelihood of receiving ongoing maintenance to ensure survival;
- The likelihood of improving the existing natural environment or sequestering carbon (rather than improving amenity such as creating a formal garden);
- Direct linkage to Crown Land managed by Parks Victoria, Crown Land of conservation purposes managed by DEECA, Crown Land managed by community committees of management of conservation purpose; known private land set aside for conservation purposes (such as Trust for Nature covenanted land); or private land managed with evidence of conservation intent (such as Land for Wildlife);
- The integration of access points, tracks or open space to act as fire breaks where necessary, to assist in the suppression or reduction of fire intensity
- Evidence that the proposed site will be, or is, fenced to exclude livestock damage.

- An inspection of the project site will be conducted by Connecting Country once the site has been deemed to meet initial selection criteria. This will occur by arrangement with the landowner. To further ensure integrity and provide confidence that sequestration is taking place, the following methods will be used:
  - A further inspection of the successful project site may be conducted by arrangement or request for photographs from the successful site during the project. It is expected that these will occur at a minimum at one and five years post planting to ensure plants funded have been maintained and are surviving.
  - Failure to maintain and preserve the funded planting will result in the applicant being excluded from future rounds and may result in Council seeking restitution.
  - It is expected that trees will be kept for a minimum of 25 years. Trees cannot be harvested for purposes other than ecological restoration where agreed upon with written agreement from relevant parties.

This document is uncontrolled when printed or stored in any electronic format other than Council's online library.

    - Planted trees must NOT be used to claim carbon credits or similar for any other programs in order to avoid double-counting.

- Please note, carbon credits (or similar) cannot be claimed from the planting of these trees by any other party than Mount Alexander Shire Council. By engaging in this program you confirm that you will NOT participate in any other schemes in order to avoid double-counting.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to consider bushfire safety and how the plantings may influence their personal bushfire management plan.
    - Making a Bushfire Plan will help you learn how to prepare your property for fire and understand what to do before and during the fire season each year.
    - The Country Fire Authority (CFA) provides great information to help you prepare a plan. This information can be found HERE. The Victorian Government also has an Online Fire Planner that is very useful.
    - A Bushfire Plan should address the following six questions:
        - When will you leave?
        - Where will you go?
        - How will you get there?
        - What will you take?
        - Who will you tell?
        - When will you return?

Alternative Programs

Grow Towards Zero

Grow Towards Zero aims to use local council investments in carbon offsets to restore valuable habitats through revegetation. The project team are sourcing and planting the trees and shrubs, and maintaining them for two years. Landholders won't need to provide a financial contribution to set up the sites. The project has previously sought individual sites where the combined planting area is five hectares or more. This project covered the North Central CMA region.

Find out more:

https://nccma.vic.gov.au/climate-change/grow-towards-zero/

BushBank (BB)

Bushbank is a Victorian government initiative that revegetates private land with trees and shrubs. The project preferences larger properties (minimum size 20 ha) with bare paddock restoration. It requires a Trust for Nature covenant to be placed on the title and there is opportunities for the projects to be funded through the carbon market. This program covers the whole of Vicotria.

Find out more: www.cassinia.com/bushbank/

Victorian Carbon Farming Program

This program focuses on planting woodlots, agroforestry, and shelterbelts. There is an option for timber to be harvested after 10 years. If you're interested in a carbon project that allows timber harvesting, this option might be suitable.

Find out more: www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/climate-andweather/policy-programs-action/victorian-carbonfarming-program

This document is uncontrolled when printed or stored in any electronic format other than Council's online library.