

TBL Summary Impacts

Directorate: Territory and Municipal Services Directorate

Title of the Submission: Government Response to Recommendations of ACT Auditor-General's Report No. 3 of 2015: Restoration of the Lower Cotter Catchment

Summary of Impacts
1. The environment of the Lower Cotter Catchment (LCC) continues to improve since the 2003 bushfires, due in part to significant rehabilitation efforts completed by Government agencies. 2. Water quality has also improved steadily due in part to rehabilitation works undertaken by ACT Government agencies led by TAMS in partnership with ICON Water and the Environment and Planning Directorate

Key to impacts: Red – negative, Amber neutral and Green Positive.

Social

Community and individual health	• The Audit Report notes the construction of the enlarged Cotter Dam activated 20 000 ha of land as new drinking water catchment for Canberra. • A subsidiary objective for this land is to promote low impact recreational opportunity not inconsistent with the protection of water quality. • A Management Plan for the Lower Cotter Catchment will outline acceptable recreational pursuits that will be supported in this area
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Economic

ACT Government Budget	• Funding to deliver the action plan was made available in the 2015-16 ACT Budget through two TAMS initiatives totalling \$7.855M over four years; a) Management of the Lower Cotter Catchment - \$2.678M over four years; and b) a component of Reducing the ACT's Vulnerability to Bushfire - \$5.177M over four years.
Productivity and innovation	• No impact.
Investment and economic impacts	• The strategic importance of the Lower Cotter Catchment increased markedly on completion of the construction works on the enlarged Cotter Dam. The Cotter Dam now contains 25% of the ACT's potable water supply and represents and investment of approximately \$410.5M. • Land management in the Lower Cotter Catchment has, as its primary aim, the protection of existing and future water supply which recognises the fundamental role water security plays to the economic prosperity of the Territory.

Environmental

Environment	• Considerable progress has been made on the recovery and rehabilitation of the Lower Cotter Catchment, since the 2003 bushfires completely destroyed the pine plantations, which were the predominant form of vegetation of this area prior to January 2003.
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- The audit report notes that further stabilisation of the catchment is needed to guard against the mobilisation of soils and nutrients. Work is being undertaken to repair existing erosion control structures to better protect water quality, to deliver further fuel management activities such as the removal of some pine trees re-growth posing increased fire hazard, to repair fire trails, control pests plants and animals.
- Current measures in place to re-habilitate the landscape back to a natural setting will need to be strengthened and monitored with a particular emphasis on identifying, managing and monitoring fire fuel loads. Unmanaged pine re-growth in the Blue Range area will be prioritised for particular attention, as will a review of the network of fire-trails.