



Developing a Climate Change Action Plan

Produced for the North East Greenhouse Alliance

January 2012



Tribal Frog Pty Ltd

Acknowledgements

Many Thanks to the Alpine Shire Council for openly sharing their process and information.

The *North East Victoria Adapting to a low water future* project is funded through the Australian Government *Water for the Future*.

This document has been prepared with the assistance of people from a range of organisations. Thanks go to the Project Manager of the North East Greenhouse Alliance, the Steering Group for the project and staff of the Alpine Shire Council. All errors, of course, remain the responsibility of the author.

Disclaimer

While every attempt has been made to make this information as accurate as possible, the North East Greenhouse Alliance and its members and contributing organisations and the author assume no legal responsibility for decisions based on the contents of this document.

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1. Introduction

The North East Greenhouse Alliance (NEGHA) received funding from the Australian Government through *Water for the Future*. The steering group for the project, *North East Victoria Adapting to a Low Water Future* identified the need to pull together in a user friendly way the variety of recommendations arising from this and related projects. Alpine Shire Council offered to develop a Climate Change Action Plan as a model for other municipalities in the project. *The Alpine Shire Council Climate Change Draft Action Plan* was the outcome.

In addition to developing the Climate Change Action Plan (hereafter referred to as *Action Plan*), the author, Tribal Frog, was required to produce a template to assist other municipalities interested in developing a Climate Change Action Plan. This work was overseen by the Alpine Shire Steering Committee, in consultation with the Project Manager for the NEGHA.

Alpine Shire Council recorded every step that they undertook in developing their *Action Plan*. These steps have been incorporated into this document with the purpose of assisting other Councils and organisations to develop their own Climate Change Action Plan.

2. Context

2.1 Climate Change Context

The impacts of climate change and the resulting water issues and extreme natural events represent a significant challenge to Council's business, operations and service delivery. Climate Change will increase stress on local communities (bushfires, drought, floods) and the impacts will fall in a disproportionate manner on those that are disadvantaged or under financial stress. Climate change is likely to have a significant impact on the well-being of the North East region by undermining the local economies, ecosystem viability and affecting the community's health and viability.

A range of climate change projections have been researched for North East Victoria. These projections have been forecasted for both 2030 and 2070. Detailed information on the 2030 and 2070 projections can be found in the 2011 document *Historical climate, climate change and water availability*¹.

The Alpine Shire Steering Committee discussed the forecasted projections and the importance of inclusion within the Action Plan. The Committee agreed that it was important for the Alpine Shire Action Plan to reference and align to a forecasted projection.

¹ Beverly, Craig and Hocking, Mark, *Historical climate, climate change and water availability. North East Victoria Adapting to a Low Water Future: Project Context Setting - Deliverable 1* for the North East Greenhouse Alliance.

There are a range of scenarios for 2030 and 2070 and current results are showing that North East Victoria is aligning to the high emission scenario. Alpine Shire Council developed their Action Plan based on the 2030 high emissions projection and scenario.

2.2 *Alpine Shire Context*

The Alpine Shire is situated in the North East of Victoria and the majority of the Shire is public land, comprising approximately 92% which includes Mt Buffalo National Park and some areas of the Alpine National Park. The Shire consists of three main towns: Bright, Myrtleford and Mt Beauty. Each of these towns proudly respects its own heritage and individuality. The main industries in the Alpine Shire are: tourism; accommodation and food services; agriculture and forestry; manufacturing; retail trade; health care and assistance.

2.3 *Context for developing an Action Plan*

Since 2005 Alpine Shire Council has been proactive with its commitment to understand the impacts that climate change will have on the communities and the natural environment within Alpine Shire. Alpine Shire Council has:

- Been an active member of the North East Greenhouse Alliance;
- Instigated and participated in local and regional climate change research and preparation of management documents; and
- Delivered many community climate change projects including the very successful deliberative democracy *Local Voices Shaping Our Future* and *Youth Council Climate Change Forum*.

The reports and documents relating to climate change include:

Date	Document	Author	Produced for	Abbreviated reference
2006	Greenhouse Local Action Plan	Alpine Shire Council	Alpine Shire Council	GLAP
2010	Report for Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Planning	GHD Consulting	Alpine Shire and Towong Shire Councils	CCRAAP
2010	Local Voices Shaping Our Future Action Plan	Alpine Shire Council	Alpine Shire Council	LVSOFF
2011	Adapting to a Low Water Future: Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan	Marsden Jacob Associates	North East Greenhouse Alliance	ALWF
2011	North East Victoria – Adapting to a low water future: review of municipal documents	Two Hemispheres Environmental Consulting	North East Greenhouse Alliance	RMD
2011	A Framework based on the Youth Climate Change Forum	Pat Easterbrook	Alpine Shire Council	YCCF

Each of these documents and reports provide a range of recommendations, actions and suggestions. Climate Change is also referenced within the Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities, Council's 2030 vision, Council Plan and Council's Liveability Plan.

All combined there are over 260 climate change actions listed within these documents. Having the information and actions separately located within these different documents makes it hard for Council to be proactive in prioritising, implementing and evaluating the actions.

Internal discussions within Alpine Shire Council were held to determine how all of this climate change information and actions could be incorporated within core council business. These discussions involved a range of key staff from across the relevant Council departments, including directors, managers and officers.

The outcome was that the relevant information and actions from all the documents needed to be collated. This collation was to be an Action Plan specific to Council operations and service delivery. The Action Plan was to be aligned to core Council business and be a practical document that all staff, community and Councillors could understand, advocate and implement.

The following clearly defined deliverables became the brief for the development of the Action Plan:

- To research and compile all the actions from the existing documents (referred to as Parent Documents) into a database;
- Develop an *Action Plan* from these actions;
- *The Action Plan* is to be the overarching document for all of Council's climate change related activities;
- All actions within the *Action Plan* are to be traceable back to the Parent Documents;
- Staff from all three Directorates were to be involved in the discussion and prioritisation of actions;
- No new actions were to be created;
- Actions from Parent Documents were reviewed and any action completed or in progress of completion were recorded;
- Information from the Parent Documents is to be referred to in the Action Plan but not duplicated; and
- Document is to be simple and easy to implement.

Alpine Shire Council had good momentum in relation to climate change awareness. The Councillors, Community and staff had been proactive and involved with the deliberative democracy and Youth Council climate change projects. Over the past 12 months Councillors, Directors and Managers had participated in a minimum of three presentations and discussions about 'what climate change is and what is Council's role?' There had also been good coverage of climate change awareness both internally and within the community. Recent drought, bushfire and flood events had also increased awareness of how a changing climate will lead to more extreme weather events.

Council's 2009 Liveability Plan was developed internally and staff had good opportunity to be involved in the development of this plan. Climate change and sustainability feature strongly in the Liveability Plan. The Climate Change Action Plan is a natural progression from the Liveability Plan. Due to their involvement with previous climate change projects and the Liveability Plan, staff were ready to be involved in the Climate Change Action Plan. The recent internal restructure provided a good opportunity for the Action Plan to be aligned to the 3 directorates.

The purpose of engagement is to capture ideas, have two way communication and to create ownership of the end result. Climate change community and staff engagement had already occurred through previous projects and document development, so the decision was made to not undertake a full engagement process. Council's Steering Committee understood that ideas had already been captured, there was two way communication and there would be ownership of the Action Plan.

The engagement process undertaken to develop this Action Plan aligned where possible with existing commitments. Engagement with Councillors occurred through the Council briefing process and engagement with Directors occurred at the regular Director meetings. Three 2-hour discussions were scheduled (one for each Directorate) and the format of the discussions was:

- Setting the scene;
- Sharing the 260 actions and asking each person to list the 5-10 that related to their role and were the most important to their role;
- Working in pairs or a group to share their choices and then to agree on the top 5-10 as a group;
- Sharing of all chosen actions and having discussion about their choices and the reasons for their choices; and
- Outline of the next steps.

Council's Steering Committee invited relevant and key staff to participate in the discussions. All staff who participated in the discussions are involved in the delivery of the council programs, services and operations covered by the 260 actions from the variety of documents. Staff responded positively and shared openly based on their experience and knowledge.

The process outlined above worked very well as the Steering Committee had established good relationships with all involved. The process was clearly explained and was logical and aligned to core Council business. The Steering Committee also involved and informed all participants throughout the project.

2.4 Context for developing Climate Change Commitment

To successfully adapt to climate change Alpine Shire Council needed to incorporate climate change understanding and actions across Council's operations and service delivery. This need was identified in four of the Parent Documents:

- Council should recognise that dealing with climate change is a core activity that cuts across and impacts all elements of council business²;
- Ensure sustainability is embedded in all council policy and strategic directions to ensure Council is promoting, acting and leading on climate change³;
- Include climate change considerations in capital works decisions, policies, strategies and long and short term planning will enable adaptation responses to be incorporated into mainstream decision making⁴ and
- To successfully adapt to climate change and its predicted impacts, it is important for Alpine Shire Council to develop an agreed position in relation to climate change impacts and risks, and to communicate this position throughout Council and the community⁵.

The development of a Commitment to Climate Change would:

- Allow Council to align adaption actions with the long-term vision and strategy for Alpine Shire Council's direct areas of responsibility;
- Demonstrate leadership through the uptake of practical and financially prudent measures;
- Provide an opportunity for the community to engage with Council on adaptation planning;
- Provide a basis for seeking Victorian and Australian Government support through policy and regulatory changes, grants and education/ information programs; and
- Provide an opportunity to liaise with other government agencies, organisations and relevant community groups.

² Review of Municipal Documents: Opportunities for Change Action 1

³ Local Voices: Shaping Our Future Action 8.3.1

⁴ Climate Change Adaptation Framework Page 7-4

⁵ Report for Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Planning Alpine Shire and Towong Shire P53

Alpine Shire Commitment to Climate Change Case Study

The environmental conditions that society is faced with due to climate change will require changes in thinking and innovative adaptations in order to prosper. It is vital that Council ensures that the ecological future of our shire is protected and that residents are equipped to adapt to changes as they occur (Liveability Plan 2009 Alpine Shire Council).

Alpine Shire Council is committed to adapting to Climate Change by:

1. Leading by example;
2. Managing the impact of climate change on council assets, infrastructure, operations and service delivery;
3. Focusing on climate change actions relating to Council operations and service delivery;
4. Planning for healthy communities by focusing on how to survive, maintain and enhance liveability in a world of changing environmental circumstances;
5. Increasing community resilience;
6. Working in partnership with community;
7. Managing the impact of climate change on community, visitors, local businesses and tourism activities;
8. Working in partnership with relevant government agencies and organisations;
9. Being a leader in sustainability activities, climate change adaptation, reduction in water and energy use; and
10. Participating, facilitating and driving sustainable change management activities across the municipality and North East Victoria.

3. Conclusion

The following key steps contributed to the successful development of Alpine Shire's Climate Change Action Plan:

- Establishment of a Steering Committee that focused on good relationships and communication;
- The Steering Committee meeting/ communicating regularly and having defined tasks and outcomes;
- Ensuring the Steering Committee members had available time to implement their tasks;
- Total organisation involvement;
- Involving staff and Councillors through existing processes and meeting schedules;
- Keeping project to timeframe and achieving the project's deliverables;
- Building on existing work and continuing the momentum and relationships already established;
- Providing good two way communication and sharing of documents and resources;

- Having a good understanding of the steps required to achieve the deliverables and implementing these steps in order;
- Having a good understanding of where the organisation, its staff and community are positioned in relation to climate change and each individual's role in relation to climate change;
- Acknowledgement and celebration of climate change achievements so far;
- Creating staff, community and Councillor ownership of the Action Plan;
- Being committed to implementing the Action Plan;
- Understanding the organisation and community capacity to implement the Action Plan;
- Being realistic in what can be achieved and delivered; and
- Incorporating climate change within Council's governance structure, operations and service delivery.

Appendix 1 Description of Alpine's Climate Change Documents

Date	Parent Document	Author	Prepared for:	Abbreviated reference	Description
2006	Greenhouse Local Action Plan	Alpine Shire Council	Alpine Shire Council	GLAP	A Plan to help Council succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality, while increasing energy efficiency and creating better living environments for our community.
2007	Understanding Climate Change Impacts – A Climate Change Adaptation Framework Final Report	URS in association with CSIRO and ISI	North East Greenhouse Alliance	UCCI	The Alliance commissioned this study as the first step in developing the communities understanding of expected change in climate affecting North East Victoria and to assess the likely impacts of climate change and the capacity of the regional community to adapt. The study provides an understanding of the threats and opportunities posed by climate change as well as the responses that could be undertaken.
2010	Report for Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Planning	GHD Consulting	Alpine Shire and Towong Shire Councils	CCRAAP	This document evaluates the risks associated with climate change for Alpine and Towong Shires. The document establishes the context for the risk assessment process; the risk assessment process and the adaptation planning.
2010	Local Voices Shaping Our Future Action Plan	Alpine Shire Council	Alpine Shire Council	LVSOFF	The aim of the Local Voices Shaping our Future project was to build capacity in Council and the community to work together to respond more effectively to the challenge of a varying climate. Council convened a citizen's jury based on deliberative democracy processes with the focus on 'How can we work together to respond to a varying climate'. This document is the action plan created from the jury's recommendations.
2011	Adapting to a Low Water Future: Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan	Marsden Jacob Associates	North East Greenhouse Alliance	ALWF	The risk assessment explores the full range of potential risks posed by low water availability and increased rainfall variability and prioritises those risks for NEGHA member and partner organisations for the regional community as a whole.
2011	North East Victoria – Adapting to a low water future: review of municipal documents	Two Hemispheres Environmental Consulting	North East Greenhouse Alliance	RMD	This report looks at work already undertaken by the five municipalities within the North East Greenhouse Alliance in the context of the risks and adaptation measures identified. The brief was to examine existing reports, analyse reports; identify whether climate change has been addresses as part of the assumptions; and make recommendations in consultation with the municipalities.
2011	A Framework based on the Youth Climate Change Forum	Easterbrook, Pat	Alpine Shire Council	YCCF	This Framework is based on the aims, procedures, outcomes and recommendations developed at the Alpine Shire Youth Climate Change Forum held 6 April 2011. This Framework has been commissioned by the Alpine Shire in their response to the Youth Forum together with a heightened sense of urgency about environmental sustainability and climate change.
2011	Historical climate, climate change and water availability	Beverly, Craig and Hocking, Mark	North East Greenhouse Alliance	HCCCWA	This study reviewed and analysed historical climate, climate change and water availability within the North East CMA region.

Appendix 2 Developing an *Action Plan*

The following table outlines the steps Alpine Shire Council undertook to develop their *Action Plan*.

Step No	Step	Deliverables
1	Project Brief written to identify the key deliverables for the <i>Action Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To research and compile all the actions from the existing documents (referred to as Parent Documents) into a database; • Develop an <i>Action Plan</i> from these actions; • <i>The Action Plan</i> is to be the overarching document for all of Council's climate change related activities; • All actions within the <i>Action Plan</i> are to be traceable back to the Parent Documents; • Staff from all three Directorates were to be involved in the discussion and prioritisation of actions; • No new actions were to be created; • Actions from Parent Documents were reviewed and any action completed or in progress of completion were recorded; • Information from the Parent Documents is to be referred to in the Action Plan but not duplicated; and • Document is to be simple and easy to implement.
2	Additional deliverables included in project brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Council's Commitment to Climate Change; and • Develop of this document.
3	Engaging Consultant	Consultant engaged and contract awarded. 174 hours for consultant to deliver step 1 and 2.

Step No	Step	Deliverables
4	Inception meeting between consultant and steering committee	Meeting included 3 council representatives, consultant and NEGHA Officer. Purpose of meeting was to confirm timeline, responsibilities and deliverables.
5	Attending Climate Change Workshop	As part of Stage 2 of the Adapting to a Low Water Future project, a workshop had already been organised with senior Alpine staff. Workshop was delivered by Regional Development Company. Focus of workshop was Stakeholder behaviour and analysis session. Consultant was invited to attend workshop.
6	Project Plan and Methodology	Outcomes from the Inception Meeting were written into a project plan and included the methodology for the project.
7	Develop Action Matrix	Copies of relevant documents were given to consultant. Consultant reviewed all actions listed within documents. As part of action matrix the progress of action implementation was also recorded.
8	Council Successes	To record which actions had been completed or are in progress. Actions no longer relevant were identified and deleted from being included in final Action Plan.
9	Staff workshops	3x 1.5hour workshops were held to with relevant staff from all three Council Directorates. Staff identified all important actions relating to their roles/ roles of their staff. Actions were further reduced to Council related actions and actions Council could implement in the next 4-5 years.
10	Presentation to Council briefing session	An hour long "For Information" Briefing was given at Council Briefing. Presentation included background documents and Council's achievements/ efforts since 2006. Presentation also included information on this Project's process and timeline. There was also question time.

Step No	Step	Deliverables
11	Collocation of actions	<p>Results from Staff workshops and feedback from Council Briefing was collated. This step was time consuming and included grouping similar actions together and developing an action that was inclusive of all parent document related actions. The grouping process reduced the 104 actions identified by staff down to 45 actions.</p> <p>The exact wording for each action was taken from the parent document and then, where needed, was reworded into correct context and to suit the audience. An extra column was included in the actions table for more information. The original wording of the action has been included in this 'more information' column.</p>
12	Sorting of actions	<p>The three themes Education and Awareness; Council Business; and Advocacy were developed by staff through their discussions at the staff workshops. The consultant then sorted the 45 actions into one of the three themes.</p>
13	Prioritisation of actions	<p>The consultant worked with Alpine's Council Officer to give each action a High, Medium or Low priority.</p>
14	Action Plan drafted, including Council Commitment	<p>The consultant then drafted the action plan including the wording for Council's commitment to climate change. The wording for council's commitment to climate change came from references found throughout the <i>Parent Documents</i> and Council's strategic documents.</p>
15	Review Draft	<p>A 1.5 hour workshop with Council's Senior Management and the Steering Committee for the project was held. Each action was reviewed for wording; ensuring it related to parent document action; confirming it was included in correct theme and had the correct priority.</p> <p>The workshop also reviewed the Council Commitment and suggested some changes.</p>

Step No	Step	Deliverables
16	Final Draft	<p>The comments from the Senior Management and Steering Committee workshop were incorporated into the document and a final draft was prepared. The final draft plan included the Action Plan and the supporting database.</p> <p>The supporting database includes all the actions from the parent documents, the raw data from the staff workshops, the action plan actions and the list of completed actions.</p>
17	Developing a Climate Change Action Plan Document	<p>A draft document was drafted to outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context for a need for a Council Climate Change Action Plan; • The context of Alpine Shire and • How Alpine Shire developed their <i>Action Plan</i>. <p>Comments were received from the North East Greenhouse Alliance and these comments were incorporated into a final draft of the document.</p>
18	Internal process for Council Adoption	<p>The draft <i>Action Plan</i> then went through internal council processes for adoption.</p>
19	Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two progress reports were submitted to the North East Greenhouse Alliance Steering Committee during this project. These reports related to the deliverables for the Federal Government Funding requirements. • Regular email and phone progress updates were held between consultant and Alpine Shire Officer. These updates related to the project plan and associated timelines. •