

MEDIA RELEASE

13 May 2010

REGIONAL FARMERS PROVIDE INSPIRATION

Farmers, landholders and interested members of the public will get the opportunity to be inspired at the launch of a new regional conservation partnership, *Slopes to Summit*, on Sunday 23 May, in an action-packed Farm and Environmental Open Day at Woomargama.

The Open Day is being held at “Annandale South”, one of the region’s most interesting properties. Visitors will have the opportunity to take a guided tour of the property and attend a wide range of talks and tours.

Specialist speakers will talk on a variety of topics from soil health to native grasses, managing native pastures, and weed and pest animal control. The Murray Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is also running a demonstration of “clayballing”, a technique for revegetating tricky areas.

“Annandale South” is a beef cattle farm run by Andrew and Anne Hicks. The Hicks have undertaken extensive revegetation work on their property, which adjoins Woomargama National Park.

According to Andrew and Anne Hicks, the Open Day presents a unique opportunity for visitors to see how conservation can sit comfortably alongside, and improve, production.

“We want to share with others what we’ve learned and learn something new ourselves by finding out what other landholders in the region are doing and sitting in on the talks on the day. We’re always open to ways we can increase productivity while also helping to preserve the amazing area in which we live,” says Andrew Hicks.

According to Alison Skinner, Facilitator for *Slopes to Summit*, the Farm and Environmental Open Day will celebrate some of the great work being done by landholders and a range of partner organisations who are working together in the upper Murray region.

“So many farmers and landholders in the region are undertaking conservation work and we want to acknowledge the vital role they play in supporting and strengthening the rich biodiversity, and the health and resilience of the region – from the soil, to the waterways and native bushland that supports a diverse array of native plants and animals,” says Skinner.

Kicking off at 9.30am, the *Slopes to Summit* Open Day will be a fun day for the whole family with everything from affordable helicopter joy rides to children’s activities, machinery displays, a bbq and native cuisine. There’ll also be a walks through Woomargama National Park led by “Ranger Dave”.

“The day is for everyone, not just farmers, and there’ll also be talks on what you can do in your own backyard to improve the environment. Everyone has a part to play,” says Skinner.

The Open Day is being held to launch the *Slopes to Summit* project, which promotes conservation in balance with sustainable agriculture.

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The project is a community partnership between major environmental management organisations, researchers, and community groups in the Murray catchment. *Slopes to Summit* complements the work already being done by the Murray CMA and Holbrook Landcare, who are both key players in this new project.

The launch of *Slopes to Summit* shines a national spotlight on the region extending from the Albury Hills along the upper Murray River to Kosciuszko National Park.

“It’s important to build and strengthen this landscape and its biodiversity, especially as climate change is creating new challenges for many of our native species whose homes are getting warmer or drier,” says Skinner.

Slopes to Summit is part of a large-scale conservation project, the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, which works to get local landholders to undertake conservation efforts in targeted areas along the mountains and slopes that extend along the ranges from the Victorian Alps to far north Queensland.

“More than ever, we need to think big, and act locally,” says Skinner.

“We invite everyone to come along and help celebrate the great conservation work being undertaken in the region, learn more about the local area and discover what you can do in your own backyard or on your own property to contribute,” says Skinner.

Arrive early in the day to be in the running for the free prize of a joyride with Bright Helicopters which will be drawn at 10.30am.

SLOPES TO SUMMIT FARM & ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN DAY

9.30 – 3.00PM, SUNDAY, 23 MAY

**“ANNANDAYLE SOUTH”, ANNANDALE ROAD, JUST NORTH OF WOOLMARGAMA
(BETWEEN ALBURY & HOLBROOK)**

For further information (and contact details to book in for the free bus from Albury - limited places available) go to www.slopestosummit.org.au or phone (02) 6051 9865.

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Images attached: Owner of “Annandayle South”, Andrew Hicks with Slopes to Summit Facilitator Alison Skinner. Photo by Alex Bonazzi. Additional regional landscape images are available via the Great Eastern Ranges Flickr site at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/12323096@N03/>

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