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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Frogs on Farms!

The Birchip Cropping Group is undertaking an innovative project to tackle an emerging threat from changes to regional water delivery and management on farms. Development of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline will result in a change from an open water supply system of channels and farm dams to a closed system of pipes and stock troughs. This will result in significant long-term changes to regional biodiversity, particularly for water dependent animals such as frogs.

The BCG 'Frogs on Farms' project is developing techniques for maintaining and enhancing frog populations as well as general biodiversity value on farms using wildlife ponds to provide a degree of replacement habitat for wildlife that currently depend on farm dams for their water and habitat requirements.

Previous research undertaken by BCG (2004 to 2006) showed that the installation of small water points for wildlife can significantly improve the biodiversity value on farms in the Wimmera and Mallee. These 'wildlife ponds' will, in some areas, provide the only open water resource for wildlife once the channel/dam system is decommissioned. This is important at the local scale for aquatic fauna such as insects and frogs, but the ponds will also prove to be a vital resource for water dependent reptiles, birds and mammals that move throughout the landscape. The value of a healthy environment on a farm, which wildlife ponds can help nurture, will flow on through the ecosystem services that plant and animal communities provide.

A Farmer's Guide to installing a wildlife pond was produced in 2007 to promote the wildlife ponds idea and assist farmers interested in installing one on their property.

To help promote wildlife ponds on farms, two 'Sticky-beak days' are being held, an opportunity for landowners to visit a functioning pond and learn about what is a pond, where is the best place to put one, the do's and don'ts, and how much they cost. The first sticky-beak day will be held at Moor Park, Kewell (23 km north-east of Horsham) on Wednesday 19 March. The second will be held on Wednesday 16 April near Culgoa (Calder Hwy south of Sea Lake). They start at 9:00 am and will run for a couple of hours. Morning tea will be provided.

For more information and to register, RSVP Jodie Odgers at BCG on 5492 2787.

Photo:

Wildlife pond among black box timber near the Yarriambiack Creek.

**Enquires: Jonathan Starks**