Finding Weston: Considering Country

Walking, Talking, Learning and Connecting along Weston Creek

# An Invitation

Catchment Studio and Southern ACT Catchment Group are delighted to invite you to join Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians and a multi-disciplinary group of like-minded explorers for a series of curated walks and talks considering Weston Creek as Country.

*Finding Weston: Considering Country* brings together a diverse group of up to twenty people to learn about, collaboratively investigate and creatively document the cultures, histories, ecologies, values and potentials of the Weston Creek catchment and its waterways. This is a unique opportunity to discover this little-known catchment, connect with others contributing to its care and contribute to re-imagining its future as a centre for life in the area.

Guided by Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians, we’ll complete three collective walks along the largely unloved Weston Creek waterways and talk together in a series of evening online ‘yarning circles’ exploring how the concept of Country can guide caring for this creek. We’ll experiment with ways to document our experiences of the waterway, and at the end of the project you’ll be invited to share your responses through a symposium, exhibition, workshop and/or publication.

*Finding Weston: Considering Country* has been made possible by a generous ACT Government 2022-23 Environmental Grant. Anyone aged 16+ is invited to apply to participate, and we particularly encourage you to apply if you live or work in, connect regularly with the Weston Creek area or are a past resident.

Participation in the program is free, but we do ask you to commit to joining all elements of the program as far as is humanly possible.

Scroll down for more details and to apply to join the project.

What to Expect

*Finding Weston: Considering Country* is a unique opportunity to discover this little-known catchment, to celebrate its potential and contribute to re-imagining its future as a centre of life in the area. You’ll have the privilege of Traditional Custodians sharing knowledge about Country, and will hear from and connect with participants from many different backgrounds, including conservation, planning, the sciences, health, education, the arts, writing and government. You’ll bring your own expertise, whether that’s as a professional, an environmental volunteer or an interested member of the local community. We all have knowledge to contribute to understanding and caring for Weston Creek!

The walks and talks are structured to explore different areas of the Weston Creek catchment, and to learn about different perspectives on understanding the waterway’s environmental and cultural values and possibilities. We’ll move along the entire length of the creek, and quite a bit of the breadth of the catchment. Starting along the slopes of Cooleman Ridge in search of the creek’s headwaters, we’ll then trace the system of buried tributaries that lie beneath suburban streets and follow the main channel down the stormwater drain, through the filtration ponds, visit the local wetlands and continue to the Molonglo.

Along the way, we’ll learn about how Ngunnawal people know and care for this waterscape, meet remnant and restored populations of local plants, birds and animals and the community groups caring for them, understand more about historical uses of and attitudes to the waterway and the enduring legacy of colonialism, and explore scientific, volunteer and arts projects focused on regenerating the waterway.

You’ll need to be able to comfortably walk about 5 km at a leisurely pace, often on gravel or hard surfaces but also crossing some uneven grassed areas and potentially climbing into and out of the stormwater drain. We’ll be walking attentively, taking lots of opportunities to stop and investigate areas. We’ll ask you to listen respectfully to others, including those with perspectives different to yours, and to be willing to share your own experiences and insights.

Program Details

*Finding Weston: Considering Country* is an opportunity for shared learning and collaboration and we’re asking that all participants commit at the start of the project to attending the program’s three walks and four online discussions. We understand, of course, that emergencies and illnesses happen, and we’ll discuss re-scheduling as a group as the program progresses!

Each walk will take place on a Saturday morning, starting at 9.30am and finishing at about 1.30pm with a catered picnic lunch and an opportunity to share insights. Transport support can be arranged. The online discussions will take place on Wednesday evenings, from 6.30 – 8.30 pm, on Zoom, except for the third discussion when we’ll gather in person on Saturday morning to explore the wonderful Holder Wetlands.

Talk One: Wednesday, 15 March 2023: Welcome and Introductions

Walk One: Saturday, 25 March, 2023: On Country at the headwaters

Talk Two: Wednesday, 12 April 2023: Ways of walking/Reflecting on positionality

Walk Two: Saturday, 6 May 2023: Catchment Traces

Talk Three: Saturday, 27 May 2023: Exploring the wetlands

Walk Three: Saturday, 17 June 2023: Care and confluence

Talk Four: Wednesday, 28 June 2023: Reflections and next steps

Sharing Outcomes

At the completion of the *Finding Weston: Considering Country* walks program, you’ll be invited to contribute your insights and experiences to a series of activities engaging the wider community with Canberra’s waterways. These opportunities will include:

* Collaborating to create and contributing to a *Finding Weston: Considering Country* mini-festival, to be held along the waterway in November 2023. No matter your background, you’ll have the opportunity to contribute to outcomes such as installations, performances, talks and workshops sharing what you’ve discovered during the program.
* Contributing content to a *Finding Weston: Considering Country* publication that documents and shares outcomes from the program*.*

About the Organisers

Catchment Studio is an independent, non-profit creative platform transforming people’s relationships with urban waterways for ecological restoration, cultural regeneration, and social connection. Based in Ngunnawal Country (ACT), we include curator and artist Kirsten Wehner, creative producer Nicola Lambert, Indigenous water scientist Kate Harriden, writer Cameron Muir and cultural planner Tom Gray. Through diverse projects, we collaborate with Traditional Custodians, artists, scientists and community organisations to centre Indigenous practices of caring for Country, build understanding of and engagement with water systems and grow new approaches to living well with creeks and rivers.

Learn more about Catchment Studio here: <https://www.catchmentstudio.com/>

Southern ACT Catchment Group (SACTCG) is a not-for-profit organisation supporting twenty-eight community group and rural landholders. SACTCG works to improve catchment wide biodiversity and habitat connectivity, facilitating education and public awareness of natural resource management issues and supporting the community to work towards ecological sustainability.

How to Apply

If you would like to join *Finding Weston: Considering Country*, please complete the form below and return it to us at yuma@catchmentstudio.com.

Deadline for expressions of interest: Friday, 17 February, 2023, 11.59pm

We’ll let you know if you have a place by Friday, 24 February, 2023.

If you have any requirements that make you wonder whether this program will work for you, we are here to talk. Arrange a time to chat via email to yuma@catchmentstudio.com or call Kirsten Wehner on 0498 072 596.

Finding Weston: Considering Country

Expression of Interest

Name:

Email address:

Phone number(s):

Are you available Sat 25 March 2023, 9.30am – 1.30pm Y/N

 Sat 6 May 2023 9.30am – 1.30pm Y/N

 Sat 17 June 2023 10am – 1.30pm Y/N

Dietary requirement(s)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do you require transport or mobility assistance? Y/N

If yes, details: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? Y/N

**Please let us know some more about yourself, keeping each answer to less than 250 words!**

Why would you like to join *Finding Weston: Considering Country*, and what to you hope to learn or gain through participating?

How are you connected with the Weston Creek area and/or waterway?

What perspectives and skills do you feel you could bring to the program? What is your area of expertise?

Are you associated with any organisation or group connected with Weston Creek or the themes of the program?

What do you understand about Country, and have you collaborated with First Nations people before?

Anything else you’d like to share?