

ADVANCING BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LAND

overview of the project

This project, conducted by the Community Environment Network (CEN), has begun the process of reversing the decline of native vegetation and biodiversity on the Central Coast of New South Wales. Through this innovative project, conservation efforts were extended beyond reserve boundaries and seven new wildlife corridors were created.

This project successfully conducted 255 property visits, which resulted in 137 landholders signing up to the Land for Wildlife Program and 11 others applying for more binding conservation agreements. As a result of this effort, 1,718 hectares of land is now managed under a conservation agreement.

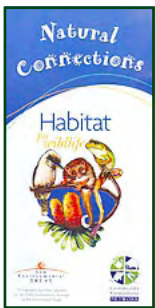


Land for Wildlife members with their sign

PHOTO COURTESY AMANDA BLAND, COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT NETWORK

how the project was carried out

From the outset, a project advisory committee was established, made up of key partners including local councils, catchment management authorities and natural resource management consultants. The committee initially held a strategic planning workshop that mapped out key actions to be undertaken during the project.



Land for Wildlife brochure

The chosen approach was to target selected areas of privately owned land, based on the connectivity of stands of vegetation with riparian areas and reserves, as well as areas of high conservation value. Property owners within the selected areas were contacted and invited to submit an expression of interest to have a site assessment of their property. Site assessments involved walking the property with the landholder and providing on-site advice about species present and best management scenarios. Following the visit, the landholder was provided with a property vegetation plan that detailed future management options.

After property assessments were conducted, landholders were encouraged to negotiate a Land for Wildlife agreement. The agreements act as a management tool for remnant tracts of native vegetation. Once the agreement was negotiated the landholder had access to training in bush regeneration techniques, weed control and tree planting, as well as assistance with weed removal from the CEN bush regeneration team.

In addition, an education strategy was implemented that involved field days, training opportunities, brochures, posters and fact sheets. 25 workshops were conducted with 370 attendees in all. Topics were chosen in response to landholder needs and included:

- basic bush regeneration techniques
- weed identification and management
- seed collection and propagation.

To ensure urban residents impacts were not left out, a program was developed that promoted awareness of the importance of bushland in urban areas and encouragement of the protection of these areas. Over 460 residents registering to be part of the program.

outcomes now and in the future

This project successfully enhanced existing corridors and created new corridors of native vegetation through building community awareness of the importance of these areas and the benefits of corridors on agricultural land. Landholders involved have successfully created an additional seven wildlife corridors across the region, many of which link with National Parks and reserves.

The CEN bush regeneration team were an invaluable resource for landholders. They helped them to take control of the exotic species threatening to take over vast tracts of land, and enabled the landholders to learn techniques in weed identification and control. During the project, the bush regeneration team spent over 220 days treating weeds at 65 different properties, which covered 16 hectares of land. 667 hours of assistance from landholders was given towards weed removal.

A regional seed bank, housing 84 different species, was also created. The seeds were used for revegetation work on properties with vegetation plans in place. This seed bank is an integral part of preserving the diversity of local native vegetation.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The broad range of representatives on the advisory committee was a key factor in allowing access to resources, knowledge and assistance from within organisations and in the development of relationships that assisted in liaising with landholders.

Workshops were initially held during the week and covered information on one bush regeneration technique. While these workshops were popular, they were attracting people who already had sufficient knowledge of the principles of bush regeneration. To combat this trend, the workshop format was altered to cover multiple techniques in less detail, and were scheduled for weekends to allow working landholders to attend.