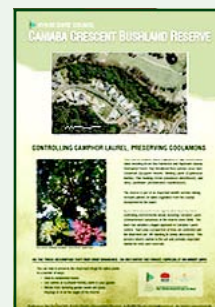


# RESTORING BYRON'S HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE VEGETATION AND CORRIDORS

## overview of the project

Through the project Restoring Byron's High Conservation Value Vegetation and Corridors, Byron Shire Council (BSC) has rehabilitated 30 hectares of vegetation across 14 sites which were under threat from weed invasion and habitat isolation. The 14 sites were all within defined wildlife corridors and all had a high conservation value, containing a total of seven endangered ecological communities and 39 threatened plant and animal species. Over 9,500 native seedlings were planted over five hectares, with most seedlings growing to a height of 1.5–2 metres tall during the first two years.



Signage explaining the need for weed control

## how the project was carried out

BSC's bush regeneration team, Landcare groups and contractors worked together to protect, restore and enhance 14 sites through their weed control programs. The weed control programs covered over 70 species of environmental weeds; including two weeds of national significance, Lantana and Bitou Bush, and exotic vines, recognised as a key threatening process to vulnerable species.

The weed control program was guided by a uniform bush regeneration methodology developed during the project which included site assessments, monitoring plots and photopoints, along with the preparation and implementation of bush regeneration action plans. The plans provided clear direction for on-ground works using best practice techniques. Works conducted on the site also included the installation of over 2.5 kilometres of fencing to prevent cattle from entering sensitive areas such as mangroves and endangered ecological communities.

The community was involved and educated through the project; two information stalls were setup where garden escapees and environmental weeds were displayed and discussed, encouraging residents to remove the plants from their gardens. Three planting days were also organised and advertised in the local newspaper. 100 volunteers attended the planting days, where they revegetated a two kilometre gap in an identified wildlife corridor using native seedlings. Signage was installed at all project sites to encourage community support for the areas and to direct people away from walking on restored areas.

## outcomes now and in the future

Weed control and revegetation with native plants has reduced the density and cover of environmental weeds across all project sites. The removal of weeds has created gaps in vegetation cover where native plants that were previously stunted or flattened by weeds can now grow successfully. Some areas are seeing the return of species such as warrigal green and coastal couch where once only weeds dominated and thrived.

Many of the sites extended or developed wildlife corridors,

essential in an environment where bushland is slowly disappearing and wildlife can no longer reach other parts of their habitat. Prior to bush regeneration activities on one site, repeated and targeted searches failed to find any Koalas. Since the project's completion, Koalas have been sighted on two separate occasions.

BSC's bush regeneration Action Plans provided an easy way to report on bush regeneration and capture outcomes achieved, producing clear, accurate and easy to read documents. The use of Action Plans assisted in successfully applying for further rounds of funding, as they provided support in following up and expanding on work done during the project. These Action Plans were published on BSC's website, and provide information about the site including maps, tables, species lists, why species are threatened and most importantly, what needs to be done about it.

The BSC Natural Resources Team further publicised the outcomes of this project through a presentation at Council Chambers as part of a series of seminars on biodiversity. A professional photojournalist also wrote two articles describing project outcomes to be published on the council's website alongside the bush regeneration Action Plans and monitoring reports.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

BSC was able to save money and add value to the project by sourcing alternate funds for cattle exclusion fencing. The funds saved were redirected into additional contractor hours for on-ground works at Vallances Road and Ocean Shores Sewerage Treatment Plant.

Originally, BSC intended to engage consultants for nearly all of the project's actions. However, during the project, BSC established an in-house three person bush regeneration team to work on council owned sites. Instead of hiring contractors the team was offered the opportunity to work some extra days and implement on-ground works on 11 of the 14 sites. This helped to further develop Council expertise and experience in managing the sites and was an efficient use of resources.