

CREATING A GREEN-LINK

overview of the project

The 'Creating a green link' project was designed to connect two Sydney waterways, the Cooks River and Iron Cove, with a corridor of native vegetation. Specific objectives included restoring and weeding a degraded environment, providing erosion control and increasing biodiversity in the area. An additional priority was to create community interest and ownership of the site. The project site is a highly urbanised environment that includes an operating goods railway, a canal and a drainage line. Human activity has caused degradation of the land, and this project addressed the associated problems of weed infestation, loss of native vegetation and low habitat value.

A major achievement was the successful negotiation of community access to the rail corridor, within agreed protocols, for restoration work. This breakthrough has set a precedent that will greatly facilitate future work on the site. The new plantings have established well and creation of the green corridor has provided a linked open space to be used by wildlife and the human community, enhancing quality of life and pride in the environment.



Regeneration work in progress

how the project was carried out

Organisers of the scheme had a complex mission. Activities included various project management tasks, training in rail corridor and chemical safety, on-ground restoration works and follow-up maintenance and monitoring of the site. There were 40 work days organised for site rehabilitation. Up to 3,700 native seedlings were planted, along with other on-ground tasks such as fencing of the railway areas, clearing of vegetation, rubbish removal and seed collection and propagation.



A section of the rehabilitated rail corridor

Community support was a vital component as the large-scale planting required the help of many volunteers. Residents were encouraged to plant local species in their gardens to enhance the native vegetation on private land

running along the corridor. One of the important events run through this program was the plant giveaway day in which nearly 700 seedlings were given to residents for planting. In addition, organisers distributed 5,000 brochures to further encourage community involvement.

outcomes now and in the future

This project achieved its main aim of creating a natural vegetation cover along much of the corridor. Progress was made in removing weeds in accessible parts and a program

of follow-up weeding was implemented. Weeding will continue indefinitely, although it will decrease as weed sources gradually come under control.

Biodiversity has been increased in the corridor, with the addition of 30 different species of native plants. A continuous vegetated link between the two waterways is not possible at this time, due to difficulties gaining access along some of the rail lines. Two areas have been fully revegetated and five other sites were improved. The group is committed to expanding on the work. The model provided by this project is being used for further sites along the corridor. The experience gained from this grant will be used for a future project on the development of a revegetation manual.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The revegetation of two sections of the corridor and maintaining them in a weed-free state was considered a success, and a framework is now in place for future linking of the various vegetated sections. The site is now one of the biggest areas of native grasses in inner Sydney, with ten species thriving. Many local residents along the corridor were involved in the restoration.

The project faced major frustrating delays while access to rail corridors was negotiated, threatening the momentum of the work. However, the liaison required was a learning experience and has set up a framework that will guide future negotiations.