2003 Restoration & Rehabilitation – State & Local Government Grant *$42,300*

KINCUMBER CREEK RIPARIAN RESTORATION PROJECT

overview of the project

Kincumber Creek is an important and well used waterway north of Sydney. It is widely valued by the community for ecological, social and historical reasons, and is dear to many older locals as a focus for recreational activities in their early lives. The riparian corridor contains significant vegetation and provides habitat for threatened species including the endangered Bush Stone Curlew. Regeneration programs for the creek have been in place since the 1990s and this project built on work started in 2002. The emphasis for this stage was on waterway conservation, and involved weeding strategically along the creek and fencing off existing riparian vegetation. The community has a long history of involvement in the rehabilitation of Kincumber Creek and this project provided further training and experience for volunteers in bush regeneration. The conservation of an important creek line has been significantly advanced by this project.

The site before weeding commenced

how the project was carried out

Guided by a Rehabilitation Plan, the work was conducted by a bush regeneration company with the help of 25 volunteers, and students and staff from Kincumber Primary School. Led by the council, the company conducted training for the volunteers in bush regeneration techniques, native plant identification and weed control. The volunteers worked once or twice a month with a supervisor to regenerate priority areas and continue follow-up maintenance of the site. The weeding process was carried out gradually to avoid creek banks becoming eroded. The team worked on small areas and staged the work to avoid weeding large expanses because it was important to allow some cover as a protective habitat for fauna. Areas of significant vegetation were fenced by the council to restrict access and mowing.

After revegetation work

Council provided publicity throughout the project with monthly updates in the local paper to promote the work and attract volunteers. Group members were also interviewed on ABC radio.

outcomes now and in the future

The project achieved a number of outcomes contributing to the conservation of the riparian corridor. The work has improved the structure of the riparian vegetation and allowed natural regeneration of native species including the vulnerable *Melaleuca biconvexa*. The team spent over 1,240 contractor hours and 100 volunteer hours in reducing weed density. Inevitably, given the proximity to local gardens, weed seeds continue to reach the creek line, but many regenerated areas are competing well. Nearly 700 seedlings were planted with an average survival rate of 60 per cent.

The program recommenced in 2006 and a small core of volunteers has shown interest in continuing the work. Future programs will incorporate a seed bank to supply locally adapted seed. This will improve long term survival rates of plantings and preserve local plant species. Ongoing monitoring of regeneration and weed growth will be important in future stages, as will providing support for volunteers.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This stage of the rehabilitation project for Kincumber Creek has been assessed as highly successful, adding to the value of the previous work and encouraging community interest in future work. There are promising signs that native species diversity has increased in the areas improved by bush regeneration. An evaluation on completion of the project showed very strong support from the community. They valued the training, the quality of the supervision and the opportunity to be involved. The volunteer contribution was an integral part of the project. Although a core of volunteers stayed with the project, it was difficult to maintain the numbers and to continue recruiting new workers. Organisers are aware that more support of volunteers and monitoring of their capacity will be necessary in the next stages.

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DEC 2007/83 Published April 2007