2006 Restoration and Rehabilitation State and Local Government Grant *$78,600*

WALLIS AND FISHERY CREEKS BIODIVERSITY CORRIDORS PROJECT

overview of the project

The Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (HCRCMA) and the Community Environment Network (CEN) worked with private landholders to develop and enhance seven biodiversity corridors in the Wallis and Fishery Creek catchments which contain endangered ecological communities.

One of the key threats to biodiversity in these corridors is lantana, which infests otherwise healthy bushland and causes it to become fragmented. Many landholders in the area were overwhelmed by the speed that lantana grows and smothers native vegetation. This funding enabled projects to complete over 1,200 hours of lantana control, over 3.4 hectares of fencing and regeneration of over 12 hectares.

The project also educated over 100 landholders on local biodiversity issues through field days and workshops which encouraged landholders to conserve and extend bushland on their properties. The workshops provided an opportunity for landholders to meet and develop networks through which they shared their knowledge and skills in bushland management.

PHOTO COURTESY: LEAH ANDREWS

Col Fitzsimons demonstrating the splattergun technique

how the project was carried out

Guided by literature and consultation with the HCRCMA and the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), CEN mapped out the wildlife corridors and determined what areas to target for conservation. With the target areas selected, the CEN contacted landholders and sent a brochure and letter on the project to encourage them to come along to an introductory workshop, to learn more about the project and funding available for conservation works on their land. During the workshop landholders were encouraged to apply for funding through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process.

The CEN then conducted 34 property visits with landholders. During these visits landholders' vegetation and land management practices were assessed and the data used to create a report with recommendations on actions to take to improve biodiversity on their property. These recommendations were used to develop 12 projects which received funding to undertake works such as planting, fencing and weed control and encouraged 11 landholders to sign up to a voluntary conservation program, Land for Wildlife.

Residents were also given the opportunity to learn more about biodiversity and bushland management through an educational workshop or field day held in each biodiversity corridor and advertised through mailouts. As these were held on private landholder properties, landholders were able to get hands on and learn about a wide range of management topics in practice, such as bush regeneration, birds, animal habitats, ecology, weed control, nest boxes and conservation agreements. Landholders and the CEN bush regeneration team were particularly excited by an innovative demonstration by two landholders who showed them how to do splatter gun lantana control by using a $15 plastic sprayer instead of the traditional gas gun, which costs over $250. Splatter gun lantana control is a relatively cheap, portable and accurate lantana control method where a low volume but high concentration application of herbicide is sprayed onto lantana foliage.

outcomes now and in the future

CEN's site visits to landholder properties encouraged discussions about property management and related biodiversity issues. These provided landholders with an opportunity to share their passions and problems with somebody knowledgeable in bushland management and it build their capacity and confidence in managing native vegetation.

As a result of the project, 177 hectares of land was conserved under the Land for Wildlife program and one Property Vegetation Plan was developed covering 49 hectares. Through carrying out projects on their properties, landholders were provided with the motivation and education to maintain their conservation works and to plan into the future using the report developed during their property visits.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The use of a plastic nozzle gun for splatter gun treatment provided landholders with a cost effective method of lantana control, as the use of the gas gun is prohibitively expensive. After seeing this technique, a local spray contractor treated 20 hectares of lantana on a local property and become an advocate for the technique.

Natural regeneration as an alternative to planting was demonstrated on several properties during the field days, including one property that had achieved a diverse forest over 10 years by excluding cattle. This alternate method of revegetation is low cost and accessible to landholders, and provides an opportunity to achieve conservation through relatively small effort and cost.

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