

REGENESIS

overview of the project

Regenesis utilised existing bushland and bush regeneration activities to generate an income stream for local councils through carbon trading. This project developed a kit that guides councils through the process of developing a local carbon trading system.

Through partnerships with over 30 agencies and the efforts of over 11,000 community members throughout Blacktown and Liverpool Plains, 33 carbon forests were established resulting in over 100 hectares of revegetation. Over the next 40 years, 19,103 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent will be sequestered and \$382,070 of income generated for the owners of the sites. This project also resulted in the first ever local government owned carbon forest registered under the NSW Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme (GGAS).



Quipolly Dam Planting

PHOTO COURTESY: LEAN ANDREWS

how the project was carried out

Almost all vegetation sequesters carbon by converting carbon dioxide to sugar and water using photosynthesis. However, not all vegetation is allowed to be registered under a carbon trading scheme as a source of carbon sequestration. For example, under the GGAS scheme, each carbon forest must: be human induced; be at least 0.2 hectares in size; be clear of any forest on 31 December 1989; and contain a legal instrument to protect the forest for 100 years.

To investigate suitable areas for carbon trading, a 'carbon map' was developed. This map, developed from historical photographs and planning documents, outlined which forests currently meet the criteria required and which forests could meet the criteria if revegetated. Forests were then selected for registration or revegetation based on the following criteria: visibility, existing and proposed land use as well as benefits to the environment such as erosion control and reduced salinity. To register private land under the scheme, private landholders were engaged through three rounds of applications which were assessed, modified and ranked to ensure probity and equality.

The selected sites were then revegetated by community, businesses, Bushcare groups, schools and project partners, who were encouraged to get involved through media releases, information stalls, presentations, partnerships and a project launch.

The resulting carbon forests established on private, council and crown land were then reviewed by an external contractor who conducted on site assessment, mapping and validation of the proposed carbon forests under GGAS. These sites were then approved by council who submitted the required documentation to the Land and Property Management Authority for registration under the scheme. Consultants were also engaged to implement, manage, market and assist with trading the offsets generated under GGAS to electricity producers and parties who sell or buy electricity. As the scheme requires record keeping, reporting and auditing, contractors also assisted forest landowners with these requirements.

A 'Blacktown City Council Green Leaf Sponsorship Program' was also developed which offered a way for businesses and the community to voluntarily offset the carbon emissions their businesses or households produce by sponsoring a carbon forest through capital or in-kind contributions.

outcomes now and in the future

The 'Regenesis Toolkit' provides a clear process for councils, residents and businesses to establish a local carbon trading scheme, yielding long term income through carbon trading under GGAS and future potential federal schemes.

Through the project's marketing and community engagement strategy, the project team were able to utilise a variety of media and implement almost 70 information stalls and 231 presentations to various community groups, agencies, schools, government sectors and forums. This resulted in the planting of over 222,000 local native plants through over 80 planting days, and the establishment of two new Bushcare groups.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

Delays in the commencement of a federal carbon pollution reduction scheme initially created uncertainty over the requirements for generating income through carbon sequestration by vegetation. To address this issue, the project team ensured they were aware of the current and proposed emissions trading schemes and aimed for the toolkit to offer compliance under as many legislated and voluntary schemes as possible.

The low financial return of sequestering carbon compared with returns offered by other agricultural products and services can be a barrier to engaging private landholders. This challenge motivated the project to create an opportunity by marketing the environmental benefits of Regenesis such as reduced salinity and erosion and marketing Regenesis as an option for marginal land.