

EXTENDED CARE: COMMUNITY BUSH REHABILITATION, SECOND HEADLAND

overview of the project

Extended Care: Community Bush Rehabilitation at Second Headland was a project that involved clearing and revegetating a weed infested site in the Urunga area as part of the Bellinger Coastal Weed Control Program. The local Aboriginal community wanted to take on more direct management of this significant piece of land and so the Second Headland Indigenous Landcare Group was established in 2003 to protect the area. The group worked on the culturally significant site to remove weed species including bitou bush and lantana. This was the first indigenous Landcare Group to be established in the area. This project extended work conducted in a previous project funded by the Environmental Trust.



Examples of bushland cleared of weeds

how the project was carried out

Three members of the local Indigenous community were trained in weed and native plant identification, best practice control methods for removal of weeds and occupational health and safety requirements for bush regeneration. With this new found knowledge they undertook weed control in the Second Headland area mostly along creek lines and fore and hind dunes. The methods used included hand pulling weeds, cutting and painting weeds with herbicides and backpack spraying of weeds with herbicides. Over 750 hours of professional bush regeneration work were undertaken in addition to the community hours contributed to the project.

Once initial weed removal had been completed and the weeds controlled, planting on the fore and hind dune proceeded. One hundred coastal wattles (*Acacia sophorae*) were purchased as tube stock and planted. In addition to this a further 100 coastal wattles were grown in a basic plant nursery at the site from locally sourced seeds and were also planted. As a trial, 20 m² of the fore dune was direct seeded with local coastal wattle seeds however this method was not found to be very successful.

outcomes now and in the future

Good progress was made in eliminating bitou bush and lantana from the area and rehabilitated native vegetation in an area of cultural significance to the local Aboriginal community. Target sites in a five hectare area were covered for weed removal, bush regeneration and environmental rehabilitation. This exceeded the initial expectation of two hectares stated in the original application. In carrying out this work the group linked up with adjacent Landcare Groups and the local council, to help control weeds along the coastline.

Second Headland Indigenous Landcare Group now has an opportunity to join the Council's coastal vegetation management program. Joining this program will assist in giving them longevity of maintenance of the area.



benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This has been a successful restoration project that has had a positive impact on the local community, by providing training and employment opportunities for the local Aboriginal population. Participants have received support from local Elders, as well as featuring as a case study in the Bellinger Landcare Inc. nomination at the 2005 State Landcare Awards, which won a Bronze Award.

A major challenge for this project has been difficulty in motivating and engaging the local Aboriginal community to work on the project on a consistent basis. The project was slow to show progress in its early stages and participants had much to learn about bush regeneration. This may limit the capacity for the community to continue with natural resource management works on their own in the future.

The project has helped to consolidate links between the local indigenous community, the local council and the local Landcare network, which is a valuable outcome of the project. Participants have learnt a great deal about how to undertake regeneration work and this project can be viewed as a pilot to encourage further involvement of the local Indigenous community in natural resource management.