

REPORT PRESENTED AT THE BELLINGER LANDCARE INC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING November 2020

Land for Wildlife

BLI is now the Land for Wildlife provider for our shire. This is a voluntary property registration scheme for landholders who wish to manage areas of wildlife habitat on their property. The scheme assists landholders to include nature conservation along with other land management objectives. Landholders are also encouraged to consider taking up higher level conservation agreements which can include permanent covenants on their land for biodiversity conservation. We provide site assessments, advice on suggested management strategies and actions for the property, and support and encouragement for landholders to carry out nature conservation on their land. Along with some key priority properties we are focussing on the Kalang area to distribute our activities more evenly across the shire. See more at <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/cpp/LandForWildlife.htm>

Bellingen Regenerative Farming Network

The kernel of the Bellingen Shire Regenerative Farming Network has formed in 2020 after a two farmer groups became active in the shire, and in response to a marked increase in demand for local food during the public health emergency. Taking a true localisation approach, this project will engage landholders in on farm, peer to peer learning within an action research / action learning community development process to increase their capacity to grow and market food locally, delivering benefits for soil health, water quality, biodiversity, carbon capture and human health. External expertise will be sourced to address knowledge and implementation gaps and findings will be shared throughout the shire and beyond. We are now forming a partnership with the national Regenerative Agriculture Alliance and Farming Together program based at Southern Cross University and are grateful to receive resilience funding from Bellingen Shire Council to build the network. We have also applied for two additional grants to support the network and hope to make a positive funding announcement regarding these in 2021.

Supported ten local Landcare Groups

The support provided has included assistance with project management, Crown Land license applications, meeting WHS requirements and public and voluntary worker insurance for unincorporated groups.

- Dandarrga Landcare
- Hydes Creek Landcare
- Mylestom Landcare
- Friends of Wonga Forest
- Dorrigo Mountaintop Landcare
- Tuckers Rock Dunecare
- Bellingen Hospital Action Group Gardeners
- Bellingen Urban Landcare
- Bellingen Island Bush Regen group
- Urunga Landcare

Supported seven groups with grant applications and reporting

- Mylestom Landcare
- Tuckers Rock Duncare
- Dandarrga Landcare Group
- Mountaintop Landcare Group
- Third Headland Community Conservation Collective
- Bellingen Health Action Group Gardeners
- Bellingen Urban Landcare (not sure about this one)

Design, delivery and evaluation of workshops to address identified knowledge gaps

- Urunga Wetlands bush regeneration and revegetation planting workshops
- Tour of Bellingen Island as part of our Annual General Meeting celebrations
- Upper Bellingen River Bellinger River Snapping Turtle workshops

Ongoing membership drive, collecting landholder expressions of interest and delivery of best practice natural resource management information to residents across the shire.

- Over 500 members
- Over 100 residents assisted face to face and on the phone.
- Over 50 landholders expressing interest to be involved in projects.
- Regular Facebook posts have often achieved over 1,000 views

Partnerships

BLI has proactive representatives on the BSC Koala Advisory Committee and on the Floodplain, Coast and Estuary Committee. The Invasive Plants Officer attended our Autumn Plant Fair stall as a very positive initiative. We are now forming a partnership with the national Regenerative Agriculture Alliance and Farming Together program based at Southern Cross University, to support the Bellingen Shire Regenerative Farming Network. BLI is a proactive partner in the Jaliigirr Biodiversity Alliance which has attracted further funding for biodiversity conservation at the landscape scale together with State government, Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare, and other community organisations. We support Bellingen RiverWatch when our knowledge, experience and skills make an effective contribution to their program.

BELLINGER LANDCARE PROJECTS

Hydes Creek Koala Corridor Project

Run together with the Friends of Wonga Forest and Hydes Creek Landcare Group

- 10 private landholders engaged
- 2 local Landcare groups engaged
- 4,060 trees planted
- 28 ha total project area
- 2 tree planting workshops and educational signage delivered
- 2Km Fencing

BLI working on this project as part of the Jaliigirr Biodiversity Alliance with funding from the NSW government Saving our Species program, the NSW Environmental Trust, North Coast Local Land Services and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature. The outcome is to establish a crucial link allowing the movement of Koalas across the landscape in the Bellingen Shire. It's exciting to see Koalas using the trees previously planted by the Hydes Creek Landcare Group and to see the corridor being significantly reinforced by the delivery of this project.

Upper Bellingen River Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat Connections

- 10 landholders engaged
- 6 km stream length
- 6 community workshops
- 3 km Fencing

The project is improving the condition of and extending the highly endangered Lowland Rainforest on Floodplain Endangered Ecological Community and improving habitat suitability in the upper Bellingen River for threatened species including the critically endangered Bellingen River Snapping Turtle. BLI gained \$100,000 from the NSW Environmental Trust and \$108,000 from the State government Saving our Species program to undertake on ground work and community capacity building. In 2019/20 we have completed two community workshops including one tree planting workshop and one best practice bush regeneration workshop.

Urunga Coastal Freshwater Wetlands Rehabilitation Program - stage one

This three year \$100,000 project funded by the NSW Environmental Trust is focussed on working together with the Urunga Landcare group to engage the community in improving the condition of the Urunga coastal freshwater wetland on floodplain in NSW which is a threatened ecological community. Additional threatened ecological communities at the site are Swamp Schlerophyll Forest on coastal floodplain and Littoral Rainforest. The project is educating the community to not dump garden waste along the wetland margins to reduce weed impacts, removing weed trees and bush regeneration by a professional contractor, and supporting the local Landcare group undertake very effective monthly working bees.

Bush Connect

Since 2016 BLI has been delivering the highly successful Bush connect program as part of the Jaliigirr Biodiversity Alliance. The project is improving 322 hectares on private land, including 34 hectares of weed control targeting invasive environmental weeds impacting on ecological processes, a kilometer of fencing and the planting of 2,130 trees. We are engaging private landholders on seven sites funded by the NSW Environmental Trust and administered by the Jaliigirr Biodiversity Alliance. Two of the sites on the Dorrigo Plateau have waterways protected from stock impacts, each site is benefiting from good bush regeneration outcomes with two of the sites having revegetation planting also being undertaken. Two other sites are located on or adjacent to the lowland areas of Dorrigo National Park so contain the Subtropical Rainforest on Floodplain Threatened Ecological Community. In 2019 we also commenced work on two additional sites on the main channel of the Bellinger River located along Summervilles Rd, Gleniffer.

Dorrigo Plateau Community Based Priority Weed Control

We are working intensely with four landholders to control a highly invasive water weed, Long-leaf Willow Primrose. This weed poses a major threat to the entire Bielsdown and Clarence River catchments. Landholders along the upper reaches of Rocky Creek are being alerted to the presence of the weed and the major threat that it poses in the hope to contain and eventually control the infestation. We have engaged a weed control drone operator to treat areas not accessible on foot. We are also engaging plateau landholders in the treatment of Black Locust and Honey Locust which are priority weeds in the North Coast Regional Weeds Strategy. This project is being funded by North Coast Local Land Services until December 2021.

Mountaintop Landcare Project

BLI has received \$20,000 from the Federal government Communities Environment Program to work together with the Mountaintop and Dandarrga Landcare groups to engage six private landholders in the regeneration of native riparian vegetation on in the upper reaches of the Bellinger River catchment on the plateau. Follow up work is also included at Rocky Creek Reserve within the Bielsdown River catchment as a highly visible site on public land where the community has invested significant time and energy over the years into its care.

Mylestom to Tuckers Rock Coastal Corridor Project

BLI has received \$20,000 from the Federal government Communities Environment Program to build upon the long term work of Mylestom Landcare group at Alma Doepel Park to improve a remnant of Tuckeroo - Bird's Eye Alectryon – Beach Acronychia littoral rainforest, through the vegetation corridor to the north to connect to the Tuckers Rock Dunecare site. The main vegetation type in the corridor is Bloodwood Coast Banksia Open Forest of Holocene Dunes and Coast Banksia Tuckeroo Shrubland to Open Forests of Holocene Dunes. The project is strongly driven by local Landcare groups we've been supporting over the years. We have made a new grant application to the NSW Environmental Trust Restoration and Rehabilitation grant program. Further funding is particularly crucial to reduce a current level of volunteer fatigue and will give the local groups a much needed boost to carry on making their invaluable in kind contributions to our shire.

Post fire environmental restoration

BLI has been working extensively with both the DPIE threatened species unit and LLS on post fire recovery actions in the Bellinger Shire. An initial project working on post fire recovery actions in Lowland Rainforest Endangered Ecological Community and for the Bellinger River Snapping Turtle has been prepared and funded, with further actions to be worked on as priorities become evident. BLI has also been working extensively as a partner of Jaliigirr Biodiversity Alliance to look at priorities for post fire recovery and the rehabilitation of priority key refuges not affected by fire across a range of ecosystems throughout the shire.

See project figures on the next page.

Landcare group and project figures (total amounts to date for project duration)

	LOCAL GROUPS	BUSH CONNECT	HYDES CREEK KOALA PROJECT	UPPER BELLINGER RIVER PROJECT	URUNGA WETLANDS PROJECT	MYLESTOM TO TUCKERS ROCK PROJECT	MOUNTAINTOP RIPARIAN PROJECT	PLATEAU PRIORITY WEED CONTROL	TOTAL
Timeframe	2019/20	2016–21 (6yrs)	Commenced in 2018 and ongoing	Commenced in 2018 and ongoing	2020-22 (3 years)	2020-21 (1 year)	2020-21 (1 year)	Commenced in 2019 and ongoing	
Number of plans / sites	8	7	10	10	1	1	4	4	45
Total area (ha)	30	40	92	12	1	14	20	2	211 ha
Weed control area (ha)	30	34	28	12	1	14	20	2	141 ha
Number of plantings	400	2,130	4,500	1,650	1,500	30			10,296
Length of fencing (m)		1,000	2,000	3,200					6,200
Number of participants	60	7	15	30	16	6	4	10	103
Number of workshops				2	3				5
Number of contractors		4	4	3	3	1	1	4	4
Number of grant applications				2	1	2	1	4	10
Value of volunteer in kind contributions (\$)	136,000	193,000	181,600	90,000	10,000	6,000	6,000	20,000	542,600
Cash funding amount (\$)		145,000	123,500	148,000	99,950	20,000	20,000	40,000	556,450