



KEMPSEY
Shire Council

DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT

11th April 2006

DSDS12	PROGRESS REPORT ON GILLS BRIDGE CREEK REHABILITATION PLAN
FILE: 863 NDH	{ Folio No. * }

SUMMARY:

Reporting on the progress of the Gills Bridge Creek Rehabilitation Project.

Council is in the process of developing a rehabilitation plan for Gills Bridge Creek. The aim of the rehabilitation plan is to preserve remaining segments of riparian vegetation and native habitat, and to remediate degraded assets, such as water quality, flow restrictions and the spreading of weeds. A program for rehabilitating Gills Bridge Creek will aim to improve the ecological condition of the creek, while encouraging a Total Catchment Management (TCM) aware, involved and practising community.



BACKGROUND:

The total catchment area for Gills Bridge Creek encompasses approximately 17.31 km² (1,731 ha), extending from the headwaters located in the upper ridges of the catchment, through to the relatively flat terrain associated with the wetlands of East Kempsey Swamp. The main arm of the creek generally flows in a north easterly direction from the headwaters in relatively undeveloped terrain in the south western portion of the Catchment. It then meanders through the industrial centre of South Kempsey, where the creek flows in a predominately east and south easterly direction, before returning to a north eastern flow direction, reaching East Kempsey Swamp and discharging into Pola Creek.

As a result of past and existing land uses within the catchment, Gills Bridge Creek suffers from gulying and erosion, channel instability, modified flow regimes, degraded riparian vegetation, degraded habitat known to support threatened species, sedimentation and poor water quality.

Proposed Rehabilitation Plan

The rehabilitation plan for Gills Bridge Creek has been based on the guidelines from the technical guide, *A Rehabilitation Manual for Australia Streams*, produced by the Cooperative Research Centre for Catchment Hydrology and Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation (2000). This document provides a 12 step process as a means of thoroughly planning the rehabilitation process from the very beginning, when setting visions and goals through to the implementation and evaluation stage at the end of the project.

The project brief developed for the rehabilitation program, titled, *Planning for a Rehabilitation Program Gills Bridge Creek* is presented in [\(Appendix V, Part 1, Part 2\)](#) The flowchart presented on page 4 of this document provides a project outline of the broad steps to be taken during the rehabilitation plan. Each of these broad steps has then been divided into a number of smaller steps, which provide more detailed directions for achieving the rehabilitation plan.

Progress So Far

A draft vision and a set of 3 main goals have been developed for the Creek. Letters containing the draft vision and goals have been sent out to key stakeholders to gain feedback from local community, industry and business groups in the catchment. A copy of the draft vision and goals are presented in [\(Appendix W\)](#).

Furthermore, research and data compilation has enabled the development of a detailed picture, or 'template', of the goal condition of the creek, from historical records, stream remnants that are still in good condition today, and generic models of healthy streams. Field observations have allowed for a description of the present condition of the stream, such as, condition of riparian zones, fauna habitat and water quality, although ongoing monitoring and an increase in the scope of the pollutants currently being analysed, are required to gain a more detailed picture of water quality in the creek.

Comparison of the current and template condition of the creek enabled the identification of major assets, degraded assets and their trajectory (improving, stable or deteriorating) and the problems causing these degradation issues.

Two (2) annotated maps (Figure 3 and 4) presented in [\(Appendix X\)](#) summarise the findings of the data compilation and field work conducted thus far.

Next Step(s)

Gathering important input from community groups and ongoing water quality monitoring, including an increase in the scope for analysis of pollutants, are the immediate next steps. However, this

can happen concurrently with the next major steps in the rehabilitation process, which are setting priorities and measurable objectives. The main aim of these steps will be to produce a list of reaches and their problems (in the order of priority for treatment) and identification of strategies and objectives to address these problems, over a measured time period.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

The development and implementation of a Rehabilitation Plan for Gills Bridge Creek will improve the ecological condition of the Creek. Specifically, the Plan will aim to eradicate (where possible) and control the spread of weeds, conserve riparian vegetation and important fauna habitats, enhance flow and connectivity and improve water quality.

- ***Social***

A rehabilitation plan for Gills Bridge Creek will reflect community goals and aspirations and as such encourage involvement from the local community, industry and business groups. An important part of the rehabilitation plan will be to educate the public and encourage a Total Catchment Management (TCM) aware, involved and practising community. Rehabilitation of Gills Bridge Creek will help to create a sense of pride and improved community cooperation, encouraging people to live more harmoniously and sustainably within their Catchment.

- ***Economic (Financial)***

Council will need to appropriately resource the rehabilitation program that will include, but not be limited to, ongoing water quality monitoring, providing public education and promoting the principles of TCM and ESD and the on-ground works (including ongoing maintenance), once a list of priorities has been established.

Having regard to the success of the Macleay River Floodplain Project in attracting grant funding, \$20,000 derived from the Environmental Levy will not be required. It is recommended that Council reallocate this money to the Gills creek Project thereby negating the need for a separate allocation proposed in the Draft 2006 / 07 Estimates.

- ***Policy or Statutory***

The Plan, once completed, will provide policy direction for development within the catchment.

RECOMMENDATION:

- A** That Council note the progress of the Rehabilitation Plan; and
- B** That Council reallocate \$20,000 from the Macleay River Floodplain Project to the Gills Creek Project in 2005 / 2006 Budget.

.....
R B Pitt
DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES