

Introduction

Again welcome to the Gills Bridge Creek Community Newsletter, Issue No. 4. Site works are progressing well and there is much to share as well as plan for the near future. If you would like to find out any additional information about the project or would like to become involved please contact Nathan Hegerty or Allister Gee in the Sustainable Development Services Department at Kempsey Shire Council on 6566 3200.

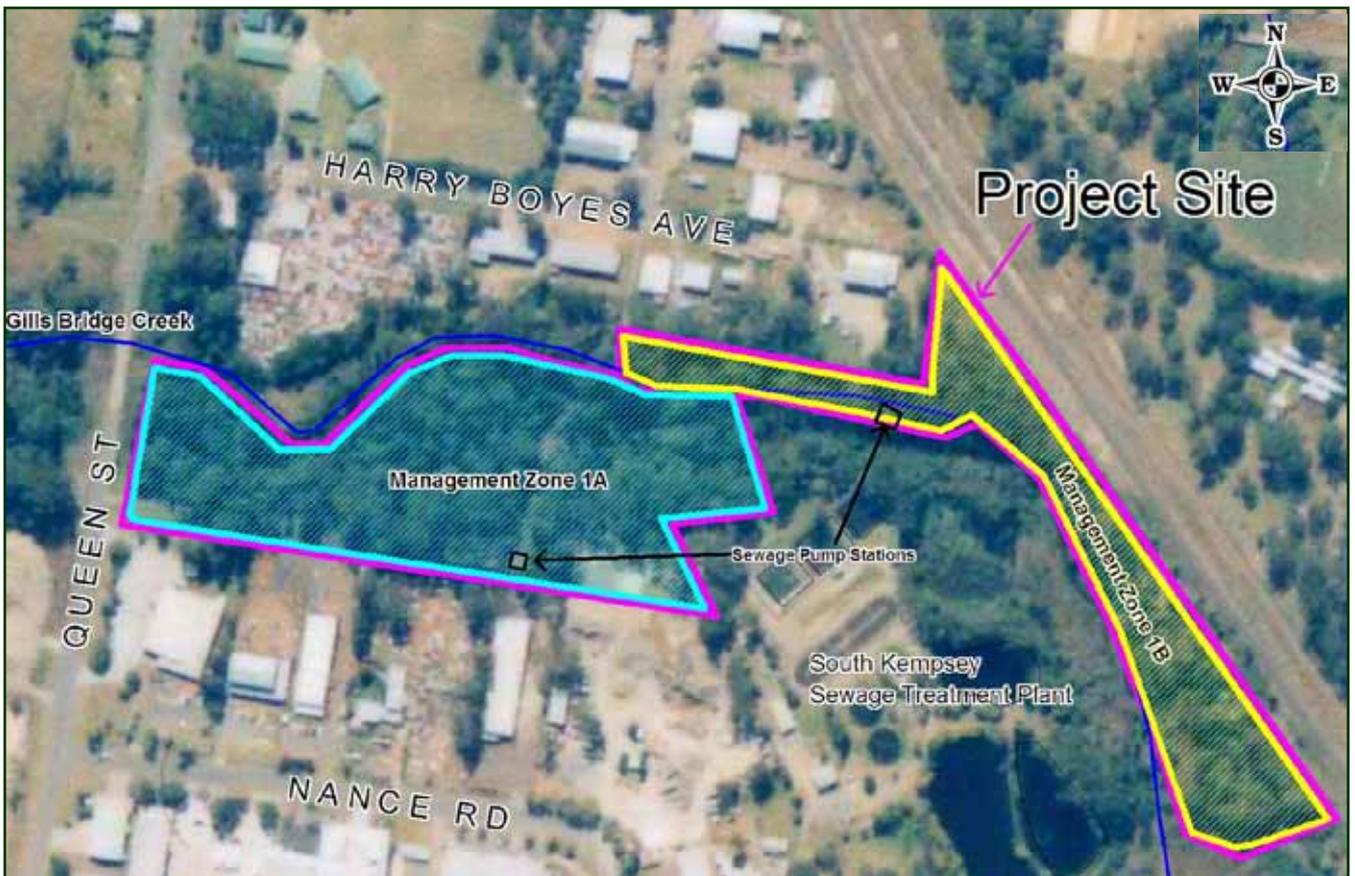
Bush Regenerator Site Works – Progressing Well

Council is pleased to report that the Bush Regeneration Contractor – Mid Coast Land Management, is making steady progress on the initial site works program. The project site is located immediately downstream of the Queens Street low level crossing on Gills Bridge Creek (GBrCk). Identified as Management Zone 1A – MZ1A (located stream-side adjacent to the South Kempsey Post Office Depot and extending from the Queen St low-level crossing down to the South Kempsey Sewage Treatment Plant on

the south side of the creek) and Management Zone 1B – MZ1B (again located stream-side and lying largely opposite MZ1A to the north of the creek - with access south off Harry Boyes Avenue).

This is the first area to receive rehabilitation works funded under the Environmental Trust Grants Program. To date an area of over 5 hectares has received a broad control program of splatter-gun spraying of exotic riparian weeds using Bio-active Spray (chemicals which breakdown quickly after being taken-up by their target species and are certified to be used along stream margins). Directed specifically at Lantana it has been very successful in reducing this smothering weed cover, with the weed dying in-situ to naturally breakdown into a rich mulch layer (while still providing habitat shelter for small native birds, reptiles and marsupials). Follow-up inspection has confirmed a very large number of native seedlings (from local native seed sources) are now establishing themselves into the vacant 'light zone' created.

Below: Location of Management Zone 1 - Bush Regenerator Work Site.





John Delaney of Mid Coast Land Management undertaking a program of splatter-gun spraying of exotic riparian weeds.

In addition a large area of MZ1A has received a program of intense hands-on 'Cut and Painting' of woody weeds with the weeds removed being stacked into mulch piles. Weeds specifically targeted for rehabilitation work here include Lantana, Camphor Laurel, Ochna, Senna, Small and Large-leaved Privet and Coral Tree.



Cut and Paint method for controlling woody riparian weeds.

The Contractor is confident that they are on-track to meeting their works time-line and are pleased with the results to date.

Site rehabilitation activities have opened up the understorey and revealed a new character to the creek margin including a unique hidden 'Billabong' feature and a multi-channelled waterway mosaic – both of which add a complexity to the creek system as a living waterway.



Lantana 'dieback' from splatter-gun spray (broad area treatment). Note native seedlings in foreground emerging.

Business / Private Landowner Partnerships Being Developed Along the Gills Bridge Creek Margin

Council is pleased with the enthusiasm and support of responses from neighbouring GBrCk business houses and landowners in the South Kempsey area. A number of partnerships are currently being developed to enhance the living and working environments of the GBrCk margin for both local wildlife and the local residents.

Active support and 'In-Principle' support has been given by South Street Nursery (Barry Westerman), Ezy-way Waste and Recycling (Mathew Norton), Boral – Concrete and Quarries (Mark Arandale), Hy-Tec Industries (Trent Alexander and Ralph Giles) and Mr Neville Faulkner (property owner South Street / GBrCk margin). In addition KSC's Macleay Water must also be acknowledged for their matching support with an extension of rehabilitation actions along their work boundary to the creek (South Kempsey Sewage Treatment Plant).



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Barry Westerman (South Street Nursery) and Kempsey Green Corps Trainee (Jerry Jiranek) planting a local Koala food tree species into the GBrCk riparian corridor.



Ralph Giles and Trent Alexander from Hy-Tec Industries meet with Council staff to discuss rehabilitation works at the rear of their site.



Matthew Norton from Ezy-Way Waste & Recycling meets with Council staff to discuss rehabilitation works along western boundary of his site.

As each private property owner, business house and Government Authority link their creek-side estate together into a complete management area, the over-all health of the corridor is being improved – piece by piece. Other GBrCk stakeholders have been involved in preliminary works discussions to extend the managed rehabilitation areas still further, along this Creek's riparian margin and public interface. A big thank-you to all the GBrCk Community actively involved to date, and eager anticipation to yet more partnerships being developed towards improving our living working environment in this area. If interested in the possibilities to further improve the GBrCk area (and your own living and working environment) please contact Councils' Sustainable Development Services Department; Nathan Hegerty and Allister Gee will be pleased to hear from you!

Green Corps Team Assist with Rehabilitation Activities



South Street Project Site – Kempsey Green Corps Rehabilitation Works Area – GBrCk

Council has formed a partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia and Central West Community College to set up a Green Corps Team to assist with the rehabilitation works along the GBrCk corridor. Green Corps teams consist of a Conservation Volunteers' Team Leader, qualified in bush regeneration work and a group of job seekers who wish to make a difference to the environment while gaining personal and practical skills that will place



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them at best advantage in joining or rejoining the work force.

The Green Corps Team set up in the Kempsey region will be working on a number of environmental rehabilitation projects currently underway throughout the Shire, including GBrCk. The Team has already commenced rehabilitation work in the GBrCk corridor and made substantial progress on a section of creek bank near the South Street Bridge crossing.

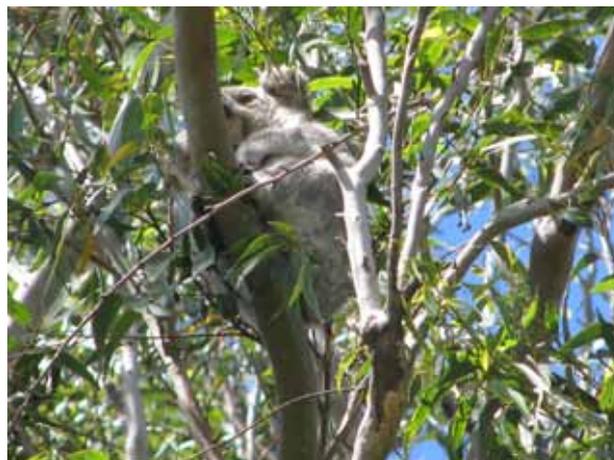


Barry Westerman (South Street Nursery) and Kempsey Green Corps Trainees (Wayne Sines - L) and (Jerry Jiranek - R) assisting planting at GBrCk

The Green Corps program funding is provided by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

More Local Wildlife Identified in the Gills Bridge Creek Riparian Corridor

As rehabilitation works continue, a range of different species of native wildlife are being encountered. In early October Local business owner Barry Westerman and the Green Corps Team were lucky enough to spot what appeared to be a mature male Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) high up in a Koala food / browse tree on the banks of GBrCk near the South Street Bridge Crossing. This is the fourth siting of a Koala within the GBrCk corridor during the past 12 months, including a female and Joey in November 2008.



A Koala, most likely a male, affectionately named 'Gilly' spotted again in the tree tops beside GBrCk near the South Street Bridge crossing

Also during October, a female Squirrel Glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*) and juvenile were encountered within the GBrCk riparian corridor near the rear of the South Kempsey Sewage Treatment Plant. Unfortunately mum was not well and the pair were found in an exposed location in broad daylight and as such were at risk from predation by native or feral wildlife. With this in mind the mother and juvenile were removed from the site and taken into the care of a local WIRES volunteer. They will be released back into the GBrCk corridor when mum has fully recovered.



Juvenile Squirrel Glider encountered along with mother in a section of riparian habitat adjacent to GBrCk near the rear of the sewage treatment plant.



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In addition to these two marsupial sightings, an interesting and secretive reptile was also encountered recently within the GBrCk corridor. In a moist section of habitat amongst thick understorey vegetation and fallen timber, a Land Mullet (*Egernia major*) was spotted by Council's Environmental Project Officer – Allister Gee. Not often seen, the Land Mullet is one of the largest members of the skink family (*Scincidae*), reaching lengths of up to 50cm. They are uniform glossy black to brown, with a paler ring around the eye. The unusual name comes from the pungent, fishy odour emitted when threatened. Native to coastal eastern Australia, they are found from Gosford, New South Wales north to south-eastern Queensland.



A Land Mullet found in a moist location amongst some dense undergrowth in the GBrCk riparian zone.

The sightings of these quite rare species highlight the value of the GBrCk riparian habitat, which is acting as an important wildlife corridor for a number of locally endemic species.

Kempsey Macleay Men's Shed Support the GBrCk Project with Construction of Native Animal Nesting / Roosting Boxes.

Kempsey Macleay Men's Shed Inc. in association with the Sheila's Shed, under the enthusiastic guidance of John Hastings has agreed to assist the GBrCk Rehabilitation Project by constructing a series of habitat nesting / roosting boxes tailor designed for the site.

Three designs have been agreed upon to provide a wide range of native species with shelter:

1. A Squirrel Glider style Nest Box;
2. A Lorikeet/Parrot style Nest Box; and
3. A large entry Possum/Glossy-Black Cockatoo style Nest Box.



John Hastings of Kempsey Macleay Men's Shed Inc. with Lorikeet/Parrot style Nest Box

Each box design has been modified by KSC Environmental Staff with John's input to also house a Micro-bat Roost in a below floor shelter giving each box a multi-design roost function. The Micro-bat roost is accessed by flight, with bats landing from below and is complete with shade cloth ladders to vertically roost upon. The roosts are set inside sheltering narrow wooden partitions.

Kempsey South Public School Continue Waterwatch Program

With the assistance of Council, Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, Macleay Landcare Network and Cascade Environmental Education Centre, Kempsey South Public School completed another round of Waterwatch activities at GBrCk in late October. The students once again sampled the water within the Creek for the presence of aquatic water bugs and recorded the levels of pH, temperature and turbidity, all of which give an indication of water quality. The session was a great success and the students should be congratulated on their enthusiasm and behaviour on the day – well done!



A big thank you also to Wendy Rogan, Year 5/6 teacher at Kempsey South Public School, for arranging time out of the busy school schedule to allow the students to come along.



Kempsey South Public School students and teacher, Wendy Rogan, learning how to identify aquatic water bugs with the assistance of Carla Sbrocchi from Northern Rivers CMA and Bruce Winter from Cascade Environmental Education Centre.

The water quality was assessed as 'Fair' according to the results obtained. A number of interesting and some more sensitive macro-invertebrates (waterbugs) were also identified, again indicating the Creek system is in a 'Fair' condition. The results obtained by the students have been uploaded on the Waterwatch NSW website and add further data to that already being collected through Council's water quality monitoring program.

What's Next?

Further Bush Regeneration Works

Bush regeneration works will continue along a number of sections of GBrCk over the coming months. The first round of weeding works being undertaken in MZ1 by Mid Coast Land Management (discussed on page 1 of this Newsletter) are due for completion in late November / early December. Once the weeding work is completed the site will be assessed for the level of natural regeneration from native seed stock already present on-site. If it is considered that regeneration could be enhanced by additional planting then a program of works for planting will be developed.

The works being undertaken by the Green Corps Team will continue well into the New Year, focussing along the Creek line between South Street bridge crossing and the Queen Street low level crossing. The Green Corps Team will be continuing weeding work with additional planting work undertaken where necessary. Also, to further enhance the habitat value of the above sections of vegetation, Council will be looking at installing a range of different habitat nesting and roosting boxes, built and supplied by the Kempsey Macleay Men's Shed as outlined on pages 4 & 5 of this Newsletter.

Stormwater Management Strategy

Council has engaged a consultant, specialising in stormwater planning and design, to assist with the development of an overarching Stormwater Management Strategy for the GBrCk catchment. The Strategy, focussing on the industrial area in South Kempsey, will use MUSIC (Model for Stormwater Improvement Conceptualisation) to identify and document the current hydrological conditions of the GBrCk Catchment, and provide recommendations for best practice stormwater management to achieve a net positive environmental outcome for the Creek.

Using the MUSIC modelling, the Strategy will be looking at how to improve the water quality discharging from the various stormwater outlets that currently enter the Creek. Depending on the results of the modelling and the area available between the discharge point and the Creek itself, it is anticipated that the Strategy will put forward a number of recommendations for treatment of stormwater through constructed vegetated swales and bio-retention systems.



This program has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust



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