



Constraints

An important part of any rehabilitation plan is to identify and describe the constraints of the project, including resources (both budgetary and human), access to land parcels and timeframes. In order to implement all of the recommended actions, funding resources, additional to those currently estimated in Council's long term budget, will be required. To this end Council has applied for grant funding through the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC) Urban Sustainability Program. Council will also continue to pursue future opportunities for grant funding to assist in the implementation of the recommended actions of the Rehabilitation Plan.



The visual appearance of Gills Bridge Creek is in decline

Community Consultation and Involvement

The Rehabilitation Plan has recently been endorsed by Council for the purposes of public exhibition and is on display at the Customer First Centre, and Shire Libraries at Kempsey, South West Rocks, Stuarts Point and Hat Head from 22 May until 26 June 2007. The Plan may also be viewed in electronic format on Council's website at www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au.

The Rehabilitation Plan has been designed to encourage community participation in a number of the proposed rehabilitation actions. At this stage the Plan has not finalised the sites to qualify for riparian rehabilitation and as such Council is open to discussions with businesses and landholders that may be interested in doing rehabilitation works in collaboration with Council.

For further information or to make a comment, please contact:

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Gills Bridge Creek Rehabilitation Plan

Introduction and Background

The visual appearance of Gills Bridge Creek has been declining for a number of years and basic water quality monitoring has indicated some impacts from the surrounding urban, commercial and industrial environment. Over the past 12 months Kempsey Shire Council (KSC) has been investigating the degradation of the Creek with an aim to develop a Rehabilitation Plan.



Basic water quality of Gills Bridge Creek has been declining

Catchment & Land Use

The Gills Bridge Creek Catchment is a sub catchment of the broader Macleay River Catchment. It is located in the southern to central portion of the Kempsey Shire Local Government Area (LGA). The catchment encompasses approximately 17.31 km² (1,731 ha) and contains a number of various land use zonings. The majority of the southern half of the catchment is zoned rural, although much of this land remains vegetated with scattered to semi-dense timber and consists of scrubland, open woodland and open forests, including a portion of Kalateenee State Forest. The headwaters of Boat Harbour and Green Wattle Creek (major tributaries of Gills Bridge Creek) and other smaller unnamed tributaries of Gills Bridge Creek are also located in the southern half of the catchment. Land adjacent to each side of the Pacific Highway, in the southern half of the catchment, has been cleared or partly cleared and includes industrial and special business land use (accommodation facilities).



North eastern portion of the catchment is predominantly grazing land

The central portion of the catchment includes the main industrial centre of South Kempsey and Kempsey Golf Course. Residential land uses, including schools are also present within this portion of the catchment. Other significant land uses in this portion of the catchment include the South Kempsey Sewage Treatment Plant. The north eastern portion of the catchment is characterised by low-lying marshland and swampland and is predominately used as grazing land.

The location of the Creek and Catchment Boundary is shown in Figure 1 (*see overleaf*).

The Rehabilitation Plan

The Gills Bridge Creek Rehabilitation Plan aims to set a framework for preserving and enhancing existing assets of the creek, such as remaining segments of riparian vegetation and native habitat, and to rehabilitate degraded assets, such as water quality and the extent of weed coverage. In doing so, the project aims to improve the ecological condition of the creek, while encouraging a Total Catchment Management (TCM) aware, involved and practising community.

The objectives of the rehabilitation plan are to:

1. Improve water quality and flow regimes;
2. Protect and where possible regenerate riparian vegetation;

3. Increase bank stability and decrease erosion;
4. Manage, control and where possible reduce the area and extent of weed species; and
5. Raise community awareness of total catchment management (TCM) principles.

The Rehabilitation Plan proposes a number of actions designed to meet the project objectives. In summary, the Plan proposes to undertake work in the following 4 key areas:

Rehabilitation of Riparian Zones – including weed removal and revegetation of endemic tree and understorey species along the banks of the main channel of Gills Bridge Creek and the major tributaries of Green Wattle and Boat Harbour Creeks.



source: Many Sustainability Strategy (2003)

Cooperative Environmental Audit of Industrial and Commercial Premises – focusing on stormwater management and pollution reduction measures. As indicated, the audits will be conducted in a cooperative manner, providing business owners with reasonable recommendations to implement over time to reduce pollution events to the creek.



source: NSW EPA Stormwater Management Information Sheet 3

Community Education & Participation – to promote Total Catchment Management (TCM) principles and pollution reduction measures to residential households and schools.

Ongoing Water Quality Monitoring – including quarterly monitoring at 4 strategic locations for a number of potential contaminants through out the rehabilitation project.



source: KESAB Pittawalonga and Torrens Waterwatch

Why is Council Undertaking This Project

Development and implementation of a Rehabilitation Plan for the Creek were listed as high priority actions in the 2005/06 supplementary State of Environment Report and the recently completed Kempsey Shire Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) Strategy. The project will also encourage positive partnership building between the local businesses, land holders, Council and the community and may help to reduce incidences of vandalism and theft in the area.