

The Blue Mountains Bushcare Network

and Blue Mountains City Council present

The Bushcare Conference 2013 - Report

The Bushcare Conference held in August 2013 was an opportunity for Bushcarers and our community to come together, to share and hear ideas, and find opportunities to use the strength of a co-operative approach to protect the health of our natural areas for future generations.

The Conference ran over a full day. There were presentations from guests in the morning, as outlined on this page, below. The guests shared their knowledge on the origins of the diversity of life in our natural areas, discussed the way Council is guided by the natural relationships contained in catchments in their approach to strategic management in Bushland, and present a living case study of how much can be achieved through strong vision, determination and the building of relationships for a co-operative approach.

After a delicious lunch there was the opportunity for all of the participants at the conference to get together, find common purpose and lay the foundations for the development of strategy & resources for the future of our Natural Areas. Some of the results of those afternoon sessions are included here.

“The Diversity of Blue Mountains Plant Communities “

An ecological adventure from ancient species to endangered listings

Margaret Baker

Margaret guided us through the story of the origins of diversity in Blue Mountains plant communities, with reference to geological development and plant evolution, and the continued presence of ancient plants alongside modern species. The story led us to what can be seen today, in the environmental characteristics of some endangered ecological communities.

“Ten Years of Healing:

Restoring the upper catchment of Popes Glen Creek, Blackheath”

An illustrated account .

Dr. Alan Lane, Popes Glen Bushcare Group

Alan’s presentation illustrated the 10-year history of the program to rehabilitate and revegetate the silt plug and its associated infestation of willows and other weeds, in the context of the 25-year life of the group to date. The success of the program has been due both to a very productive, long-term partnership between the Popes Glen Bushcare Group and Blue Mountains City Council and to supportive funding, provided by the Urban Runoff Control Program, the NSW Environmental Trust and others.

“Bushcare and Beyond”

Working together in catchments

Linda Thomas, BMCC & Jenny Hill Leura Catchment Group

Linda introduced the catchment approach to bushland management, both as Council’s strategic approach to overall bushland management, and the potential for Bushcare Catchment Groups to form and engage with each other and other catchment programs. Jenny Hill gave us an overview of an example, in the Leura Catchment.

“Catchment Management”

Changes to NSW Government Catchment Management Structure

Bill Dixon, Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority

Bill gave us a bird’s-eye view of the approaching changes to the role and structure of Catchment Management throughout the state and how this might affect our on-ground work.

The 2013 Bushcare Conference was held at Lawson Community Centre, 31st August, 2013.



Summaries of the results from the facilitated networking groups, by Table/Topic.

Note that the items below have been transcribed from hastily written notes and will need further conversations, discussions and thought prior to action. Their main use would seem to be as topics or ideas for actions. Where included on the written record, any links &/or key issues have been highlighted, numbered or otherwise noted.

1. Recruitment of New Volunteers and Transition, Rejuvenation of Bush/Land-care Groups.

- a. Leura Primary School - does have a Swamp Care program.
- b. Targeting - Families - they are pressed for time
- c. Targeting - 40 to 50 year-olds
- d. Targeting - people on Centrelink
- e. People who would like to do it but don't have the time
- f. People who just don't know about it (Bushcare program or activity)
- g. Passion Mashing - possibly Honeysuckle ****vers (*indistinct writing*)
- h. Encouragement of families to participate:
 - i. Parents to look after kids
 - ii. Example - The Gully Swampcare site.
 - iii. Cake is important!!
 - iv. David King's Chai
- i. Buddhist group - Education morning/Meal/Bushcare afternoon.
- j. People and kids who just don't know about local native plants - Susan took along common native plants
- k. Address a school class - teacher needs to motivate/bring them onto site.
- l. U-Tube - Kids compile a movie on Bushcare.
- m. Katoomba High School becomes a Bushcare site - trivia quiz/treasure hunt about what species survive at the school.
- n. Holiday drop-off to Bushcare
- o. Kids love to be asked to help
- p. Approach schools re Duke of Edinburgh Program.

2. Integrating Segments of the Current Council Program (*first points show segments and relationships*).

- a. Bushcare } - Bushcare program
- b. Trackcare } - Environmental Management
- c. Landcare } - Bushcare Program
- d. Swampcare } - Bushcare Program
- e. Bush Backyards } - Environmental Management
- f. Streamwatch } - Australian Museum (not signed at time of Conference, now done)
- g. Better communication between various sections of Council
- h. Environmental education to local residents
- i. **① Better awareness of the various programmes to residents**
- j. **② Education/Media Officer to work with relevant Council officers on their programmes.**
- k. Discussions with RFS and Council
- l. Catchment approach
- m. Enthuse people to get involved.



3. Diversifying into Complementary Activities in Conjunction with Bushcare.

Headline or most important items:

- a. ① Link Bushcare with an external or created event (e.g. surveying vegetation, birds, weeds.)
- b. ② Include the community by targeting a specific site, weed species or problem and concentrating resources for the day.
- c. ③ Aboriginal Heritage.

Original Brainstorm items:

- d. Ensure activity does not generate rubbish or antisocial activities.
- e. Spotlighting - animals/birds }
- f. Bird watching/surveying } These activities can involve & may appeal to younger people.
- g. Regent Honeyeater - an example of cross-fertilisation of activity. Involves "farmers", conservationist, Bushcare volunteers, and others from local and distant communities.
- h. Seed collection - partnership with Wildplant Rescue.
- i. Bushtrackers - activity for younger people to experience a bushwalk and encouraged to make a creative input/output and a publication produced.
 - i. Can produce the attendance of parents to the Bushcare site as a by-product.
- j. Koala survey program (another example).
- k. Frogs -
- l. Maintain a range of activities (*at each Bushcare workday* -Ed)
- m. Festivals? Maybe associate with or arrange to talk to people - this could be interactive over a period or a "take-away" product. ...
- n. Or an activity at a stall instead of just handing out pamphlets. Catchment/Swamp model? (refers in part to the excellent portable display unit built by Council showing swamp operation).
- o. Eco Home Tours - try a Bushcare Crawl.
- p. Bushcare Day Out.
- q. Pick a particular area and concentrate an event/resources to draw in outside people/include "adopt a weedy backyard" program.
 - i. Or - Weed-specific attacks, e.g. Mobile Privet Team.
 - ii. Or - **Hijacking** another event, e.g. Clean Up Australia Day.
- r. Bushcare event upper/middle/lower (Mountains) on the same day and a dinner/dance after.
- s. Heritage value of Aboriginal sites etc. Training of Bushcare volunteers in Aboriginal Heritage, plant (use) etc.
- t. CALENDAR with all environment activities/information - including Bushcare.
- u. Connect with people who are interested in human health as a relief mechanism.

4. Engaging with Young People.

- a. School children - Bushcare in school grounds.
- b. Guest speaker in school.
- c. Combining activities with Bushcare e.g. weavers, camp cooking (maybe once a year).
- d. Bushcare group open day.
- e. Try to engage family groups. ← - - - - -
- f. ① Gathering information of what is happening in schools in the area.
(teachers who will be supportive).
- g. ② Link with neighbourhood centre to organise holiday activities. ← - - - - -
- h. ③ Use social media to highlight these points.
- i. Target community groups (e.g. church). ← - - - - -
- j. Notices & information to go out with (Council) rates notices.

5. Shale based communities – a landscape approach on the ridges

We looked at two big issues:

- Preservation of these communities; and
- How bushcare can be more involved

ACTIONS PROPOSED

- **PRIORITY** – Get the information about **Shale based communities locations into the LEP**
Contact Council re ensuring community consultation and workshops with Council planner once the LEP goes on public exhibition – the aim of these meetings is to ensure that **all** locations of endangered communities have been zoned for protection. Request that Council invites bushcare groups and give them at least a month’s notice before the meetings
 - More targeted publicity to people living in the communities
 - The BMCC Tree Preservation Officer needs to be more aware of how critically endangered these communities are and therefore take action to stop tree felling when requests come in – especially for Ironbark and Turpentine
 - Map out where the Ironbark and Turpentines are right down to the very last ones on every property. This will also give us information for the publicity and to build a picture of the original extent of the communities – this requires resourcing
 - Check the plant communities/preservation plans for the Springwood golf course and the Springwood cemetery
 - Gather information about the logging history and sawmill along Hawkesbury Road
 - Ensure BMCC parks and mowing people are aware of the significance of these trees/communities and have a plan to manage the understory in a way that is not detrimental
 - Map the extent of the shale/sandstone transition up the mountains – it extends to Kent Rd - this requires resourcing
 - Bushcare groups undertake education programs where they invite experts such as Margaret Baker to educate the group about shale communities and link these education opportunities to other community group; such as: school newsletters; community meetings in non-threatening venues - this requires resourcing
 - Ensure that there is a designated project officer for the task of progressing these plans
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6. Problems or Barriers - Catchment Model (Two key priorities are marked in green).

- a. Information collection:
 - i. Photos etc.
 - ii. Council
 - iii. etc.
- b. Template
- c. Weeds after fire
 - iv. Fire management }
 - v. Weed management }
- d. Identify skills
- e. ① **Bushcare Officers should have master set of maps for site and share with volunteers on site. This is related to the "catchment & landscapes" theme.**
- f. Understanding site
- g. Mentoring by other groups (ties in with "template" above).
- h. ② **Start informally with combined work days.**
- i. Alliances with other community organisations - not just conservation groups, but perhaps those wanting the same or similar outcomes.
- j. Alliances with other NRM agencies e.g. NPWS, CMA (now LLS - Ed), Sydney Water.
↓
- k. PEOPLE POWER (community has opportunities to lobby whereas Council does not) = advocacy - credible voice

Feedback from Participants:

A significant percentage of the people who attended the conference provided written feedback, either on the paper forms provided, or by email. This was most helpful to the volunteer organisers of the event and there were many good ideas and some indicators of things we can do better next time. So thank you to all those who contributed.

This Report - including the information from all focus table groups is available to all registered Conference attendees, Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Office (and associated Line Managers) and all BMCC Councillors.

The following additional information is available to Conference Participants and others as listed above, on request:

- **A Decade of Healing** PhotoPoint Presentation (slides only, no notes). Presented by Alan Lane. 170Mb.
- **Popes Glen Ten Years of Healing** - PDF document. A summary of Alan's presentation.
- **BUSHCARE CONFERENCE 2013 - CATCHMENT MODEL** (slides only). Presented by Linda and Jenny. 9Mb.
- **Bushcare conference CMA_LLS Bill Dixon** (slides only) Presented by Bill Dixon. 500Kb

Finalised 16 June 2014, Paul Vale on behalf of BMBN Conference Organising Committee.

