

NVCA News

www.nvca.org.au ~ nvca@nvca.org.au ~ PO Box 123, Bowraville NSW 2449 ~ # 2/11

March/April 2011 ~ Produced by the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association Inc.

AGM – 27th February 2011

At the AGM on 27th February all positions were declared vacant and Cr. Anne Smyth as a non-member, conducted the election, the results of which were as follows:

President: Georgette Allen; Vice President: Phillip Margolis; Secretary: Maureen Gallagher; Treasurer: Carol Margolis; Committee Members(3): L. Orrego. W. Wedge. J. Craven and Membership Officer: Wendy Wedge.

Change to meeting day

At the AGM it was decided to change the meeting day for NVCA Monthly Meetings from the last Thursday to the last Friday of each month. Meetings still begin at 10am, and for the venue, please email nvca@nvca.org.au - we'd love to see some of our loyal members come along.

Hundreds rally to protect communities, environment from mining and gas

More than 1200 people braved the rain on Sunday 20 March for the 'Can't Eat Coal, Can't Drink Gas' rally, jointly organised by the Nature Conservation Council and the new alliance of coal and farming communities Lock the Gate. People from across NSW travelled to Sydney with a clear message for government: "Food before coal. Water before gas. For our land, our water and our future."

People attended from communities facing new coal seam gas projects at Camden and Gloucester; farmers from the Liverpool Plains stopping the undermining of prime agricultural land; citizens from Western NSW tackling the proposed Cobbora coal mine; Southern Sydney and Illawarra locals working to protect drinking water from underground coal mining; and St Peters residents facing-off a proposal to extract coal seam gas from under Sydney city. Federal Independent MP Rob Oakeshott joined busloads of people from his electorate opposing the 110 gas wells recently approved in the Gloucester Basin.

Participants were inspired by a visiting resident of Tara in Queensland, where farmers have 'locked the gate' with a community blockade to protect land, water and community health from coal seam gas extraction.

Due to community action from farmers, conservationists and voters across NSW, both Labor and Coalition are under pressure to protect communities, agricultural land and water from the impacts of coal mining and coal seam gas. - *Nature Conservation Council (March 2011)*

Council Matters

Council's 'roving' ordinary meetings have been so far been well received by community members at Valla Beach and Eungai, with good attendance and plenty of delegations and questions regarding relevant local issues. Future meetings will be held at Taylors Arm Hall - April 7, Grants Hall, Bowraville - May 5, Scotts Head SLC - June 2, and Nambucca Heads Entertainment Centre - July 7.

Councillors have submitted their comments on a new version of the **foreshore redevelopment plan for River Street, Macksville**, which staff will consider. An amended draft 'concept plan' will come back to Councillors for further consideration before public exhibition. The future of the kaffir plums and fig trees is still not determined, however it is looking brighter. Council's new Director of Engineering Services has taken on board community and councillor's concerns and appears keen to take the time to create a concept plan that responds to the wider community's expectations.

Council resolved 5/4 to implement the **Scotts Head Reserve and Caravan Park Master plan** as exhibited, despite strong community opposition and serious concerns raised by some councillors regarding environmental and social impacts, in particular the proposed significant development of Council owned community land (Adin St oval) and unconvincing economic benefit statements. The Land & Property Management Authority, the State Government agency responsible for Crown Lands, refused to change a single aspect of the plan, which covers both Crown land and Council's community land, or respond to any of the concerns raised in the many submissions to the exhibited plan. Crs Flack, Smyth, Ainsworth and Moran opposed the move to proceed, believing that it would be better to wait until after the State elections to see if a new (likely) government would be more receptive to Council's concerns about certain aspects of the plan. A new draft Plan of Management will now be drawn up to accommodate the new proposal and will require exhibition before any changes can be made.

A proposed **\$5m+ development for a new catholic school on 3ha of regionally significant farmland at Dudley St** in Macksville will be determined by the Joint Regional Planning Panel. Council will consider making a submission to the JRPP regarding the DA at its next meeting. It is difficult to understand why the GM has recommended that Council support the approval of the DA, given the significant flooding issues raised in the body of the report. Consultants were engaged to peer review the applicant's flood study and concluded 'the proposed school site presents an unacceptable high flood risk, which will get worse with time due to climate change.'

Elevating the floor levels [will] not remove the evacuation risk. We would not recommend the development be approved unless the flood risk and long term sustainability are addressed'. In light of climate change and the many recent floods seen in Qld, NSW and Vic it makes little sense to put children at risk in a high hazard flood zone, with the only evacuation route subject to 1.8km of inundation.

Council engaged international consultants **Planet Footprint to provide environmental scorekeeping services in 2010 at a cost of \$3,450**. However, the level of reporting proved to be no more detailed than that provided by Council's own staff. The main advantage of using Planet Footprint, apart from the obvious independence of an external consultant, was the ability to benchmark Council's emissions reduction programs and environmental performance against other local governments and cities. Unfortunately council did not provide all the information required for these comparisons to be made. Council resolved to not re-engage the consultants for the next financial year, but revisit the opportunity in 12 months.

- *Opinions expressed in this report are those of Crs Flack and Smyth and not necessarily those of Nambucca Shire council.*

Shameful mismanagement of Private Native Forestry (PNF)

Revelations regarding PNF have caused conservationists to completely lose faith in the State government's willingness and ability to ensure promised environmental protection during commercial private logging.

An independent audit has revealed DECCW has reclassified possibly as much as 8,000ha of mapped old-growth forests on private land on the NSW North Coast, allowing it to now be logged. DECCW's rhetoric, that logging in accordance with the PNF Code of Practice 'improves or maintains environmental outcomes' and that PNF regulation provides sufficient protection for biodiversity to warrant bio-certification is farcical.

The objective of the Private Native Forestry Project is to ensure the supply of timber products from private forests at a sustainable rate that can be maintained indefinitely for present and future generations **while at the same time maintaining non wood values at or above target levels considered necessary by society for the prevention of environmental harm and the provision of environmental services for the common good**. The NSW Nature Conservation Council believes the PNF Project funded by the Environmental Trust has failed to meet its own objectives.

It is disgraceful that the Northern Rivers Biodiversity Management Plan, prepared by DECCW, identifies forestry as a 'high threat to biodiversity values, while removing old growth protection with the stroke of a pen and declaring logging under the PNF Code of Practice (COP) 'maintains or improves environmental outcomes'.

Much of the private old growth forest areas which have been 'downgraded' were identified in DECCW's own High Conservation Value (HCV) mapping layer used in the North Coast and Mid North Coast Regional Planning Strategies and by local governments in preparing Local Environment Plans. Many of these HCV areas will no longer be available for other conservation land uses such as bio banking offsetting, CMA incentive funding or inclusion in the Great Eastern Ranges corridor initiative due to their destruction through private logging.

By not requiring appropriate pre private logging biodiversity surveys, the PNF code of practice promotes ignorance as an excuse to destroy threatened species and their habitat. Approximately 50 PNF Property Vegetation Plans have been granted allowing logging of over 2,000ha of core koala habitat in the Coffs Harbour area, in likely breach of PNF regulations. This flagrant disregard for threatened species habitat does not meet the expectations of the wider community or Coffs Harbour City Council. If DECCW cannot ensure the protection of iconic high profile species as the koala what protection will lesser known threatened species be given?

The allowance of commercial logging in endangered ecological communities highlights the fact that the PNF Code of Practice does not deserve bio-certification status which exempts operations from the provisions of the Threatened Species Conservation Act. The NSWNCC has called for the removal of bio-certification from PNF operations and urged that pre logging surveys for threatened species be undertaken.

- *Source: NSWNCC members report on the Private Native Forestry Project, March 2011 (Jim Morrison NCEC)*

EDO publications on conservation of our environment

A Guide to Private Conservation in NSW has been prepared by the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO). The purpose of the booklet is to help landowners understand the different private conservation options available and help in deciding which option would be most suitable for their property and circumstances.

Private conservation mechanisms differ in a number of ways and they range in the level of legal commitment required of the landholder and the targeted ecological outcomes.

Download a copy by going to http://www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site/pdf/pubs/100503private_conservation.pdf

Another informative EDO publication, *Caring for the Coast: A guide to environmental law for coastal communities in NSW* is available and can be downloaded from <http://www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site/publications.php#coast>.

The Nambucca Estuary- River Restoration Guide

This pamphlet was first produced by Nambucca Valley Landcare in 2000 and is a guide to assist landowners in selecting the right plant species for riverbank restoration works in the estuarine waterways of the Nambucca.

It has now been revamped by John Schmidt at DECCW and is available at the Landcare office in Bowraville.

Coffs Coast residents alarmed by 'unsustainable' development

A campaign by 'Save the Northern Beaches Alliance' was kicked off at Coffs Harbour's Diggers Beach recently. Local Greens councillor, Mark Graham, says the State Government's approval of a 200-lot residential development at Hearn's Lake, south of Woolgoolga, has angered residents.

He says the aim of the campaign is to protect the region's pristine northern beaches. "With the concept approval of 200-houses at Hearn's Lake prior to Christmas, and the suggestion that approvals of many houses in the South Moonee forest and at North Emerald beach are about to occur, there was a need to coordinate opposition to these unsustainable developments."

The campaign includes the launch of a website, www.savecoffscoast.com which will act as a public forum where residents can discuss their concerns.

Councillor Graham says it is hoped the campaign will send a clear message to government. "Hundreds upon hundreds of residents have made their concerns known to date," he said. "We're hoping to send a very strong message to Macquarie street that enough is enough. "These important greenbelts along the northern beaches are important for the quality of life of residents, "They're very important for the local tourism industry and the kidneys of the Solitary Island Marine Park."

- Mark Graham

Flying foxes and farmers share \$5 million net benefit

NCC, the state's peak environment group has welcomed the pledge by both Labor and the Coalition that licensed shooting of grey-headed flying foxes will be phased out in NSW from July with farmers offered compensation to install nets for crop protection.

The decision to end the licensed kill of grey-headed flying foxes means a strong chance of recovery for this important vulnerable species. The grey-headed flying fox plays an important role in pollinating native forests and, without the phase out of licences, it was predicted that they could be extinct within 80 years. The extinction of the grey-headed flying fox would have alarming consequences for the regeneration of our native forests, hampering the reproduction of eucalypt and melaleuca trees and the spread of rainforest fruits.

Shooting has never been shown to be effective in protecting fruit crops. Investing \$5 million to help farmers install nets to protect their crops will benefit both industry and our native grey-headed flying foxes.

This funding pledge will allow fruit growers to protect their crops with full exclusion netting. It will ensure livelihoods in rural areas and maintain supplies of local fresh fruit while protecting crops in a humane manner.

- Nature Conservation Council Chief Executive Officer, Pepe Clarke (March, 2011)

President's Report for 2010 as presented at the AGM

The year 2010 has proved fairly 'low key' for NVCA. Meeting attendances have remained stable, and our membership continues to grow steadily. Appreciation goes to our continuing members, and welcome to our newer members.

This year the results of NVCA's Court case against Nambucca Shire Council were reported, with mixed responses. Predictably, Council presented our organisation as having 'cost the ratepayers' dearly, by way of costs charged to them, by the Court. The case was won on the grounds of Council's undue process, in considering and determining the Development Application (DA) on East West Road, Valla. The elements of the case concerning destruction of core koala habitat were not upheld, and this enabled the developer to lodge a slightly amended DA. This key issue remains ongoing.

During this year, my role as NVCA President has continued to involve organisation and despatch of correspondence, submissions and meeting arrangements. Our wonderful executive committee members continue to provide much valued support. However, we all acknowledge the need for a 're-think', of what needs to be done, who is in a position to do what, and how. I am not in a position to continue with the current work-load, into the future, beyond the standard role of President, if I am re-elected.

I believe wholeheartedly that each of our executive committee and support members will continue to passionately 'Keep the Faith' in defence of our fellow species, and protection of our vulnerable Valley, river system and coastline. I also believe it is time to 'think outside the square' regarding our ongoing conservation efforts. To this end, we are holding a Planning Day on Sunday 6 March, at Bowraville. Members are sincerely requested to join us, on this day.

During this year, the following submissions were despatched from NVCA: Draft submissions, EIS off-river storage system – February and April 2010, To Coffs Harbour City Council, on Proposed town, Bonville – March 2010, To NSC, on Rural Residential subdivision, East West Road DA – August 2010, To DECCW, on Draft Ecological Harvesting Plan (EHP) and Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC's) - August 2010.

My deep appreciation goes to those who contributed to the formulation of all those comprehensive documents.

Once again, I acknowledge with deep gratitude the work done by Carol Margolis as our patient and thorough Treasurer – Thank you Carol. Along with appreciation to Carol, goes appreciation to Dave McCormack, who has once again, conducted our financial audit. Thank you Dave!

A huge 'Thank you' also, to our stalwart member Maureen, who allows us to meet in her lovely welcoming home, and always brings a stable and wise perspective to our discussions. Maureen has also been our Minutes Secretary, and mail collector - a much appreciated contribution.

Wendy, our 'techno whizz' continues to emerge from her non-electrical, no-phone home, to co-ordinate NVCA's website and membership, and to produce our regular newsletters, from trendy-down-town Bowraville Technology Centre. Wendy, you are amazing, and very much appreciated, by us all.

My continued appreciation goes to you, Phil Margolis, for continuing as our Vice President, and for being

available at all times. There is also, of course, our quiet achiever, Lyn Orrego, whose perspective, and long experience in conservation campaigns, provides NVCA with an unfailing strength and wisdom.

Our member, Sal has also provided valuable support by having our information stall combined with her stall at local Community Markets. These markets provide a friendly and open atmosphere, at which I and other members are able to discuss the work and aspirations of NVCA. Thank you. Sal!

Our meetings have been consistently enhanced by the presence (whenever possible) of guest Councillors, Paula Flack, and Anne Smyth. These Councillors' comprehensive Council reports have been most helpful in providing enlightening information on current projects of Council, etc. Your attendance at our meetings is greatly appreciated.

I thank you all, each and every member of our 'band', for your support, expertise and energy, throughout this last year. I look forward to engaging with you all, in whatever format we develop, at our Planning Day, in March. Thank you, one and all - *Georgette Allen, President, NVCA*

Planning Workshops

As mentioned in the President's Report, the time has come for a re-think regarding the NVCA's ongoing conservation efforts. It's time to look at how we do things, can we continue and who is going to do what?

In an effort to work through these issues, a Planning Workshop was held early in March, with the topics discussed focusing on NVCA's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

It was a very intense but fruitful day, and though all who participated were wrung out at day's end, we felt positive about the outcomes our efforts had produced.

A second workshop was then held on 1st April to work through the issues which were deemed 'high priority'. This second processing of the issues was to give us a clear structure to work with, and help us to be more effective in the conservation work we take on in the future.

The workshop delivered on those points, and you will be seeing the evidence of some of them soon - a survey to find out what NVCA members are interested in, and a social gathering is in the wind.

We'll keep you posted through the e-list and the newsletter, and possibly a special mail out, so stay tuned.

- *Wendy Wedge - Membership Officer, NVCA*

Further 3 year funding for Indian Myna bird control

The Mid North Coast Indian Myna control program has just completed its first 2 years with funding from NSW Environmental Trust. Tien Pham the Indian Myna Control Officer said "We have had over 1000 people involved in the project over the past 2 years resulting in culling over 2000 myna birds across 3 shires, 600 in the Nambucca.

This shows a huge concern for the impact this pest species has on our local bird life and biodiversity. Volunteers were elated that a further 3 years of funding from the NSW Environmental Trust means a project officer will continue to be employed to coordinate and support their efforts. Having a skilled person with a couple of days per week dedicated to coordinating the program and training volunteers in the correct use of the traps, is the key to a successful control program.

Our statistics from the 2 year program show that the number of birds caught per person, has increased over the duration of the project. This is due to improvements in trapping methods and traps, but mostly due to the assistance given to trappers when they borrow a trap.

Another 3 years of funding should see numbers controlled to an extent that volunteers can carry on at a much reduced level." says Tien. The three Shire Councils, the Landcares and NPWS are still supporting the project.

- *Joy van Son, Nambucca Valley Landcare*

Things to Remember . . .

There has been a
change of meeting day for
the NVCA monthly meeting.

Meetings are now held on
the **LAST FRIDAY**
of each month.

Beginning at 10am.

For venue: email nvca@nvca.org.au

Coming soon, to a town near you . . .

**Nambucca Shire Council's
'Roving' Meetings**

will be at

**Taylors Arm Hall on April 7,
Grants Hall in Bowraville on May 5 and
Scotts Heads Lifesaving Club on June 2**

Be there, take a friend, and lots of questions.

NAMBUCCA VALLEY LANDCARE

AUTUMN TREE FAIR

Where: Bowraville Race Track, Rodeo Drive **When:** Saturday 9th April **Time:** 7.30am to 1.30pm

FREE ENTRY

NVCA will be having an information stall, so come along and say hello.
