

# NVCA News

SEPT/OCT 2015



www.nvca.org.au ~ nvca@nvca.org.au ~ PO Box 123, Bowraville NSW 2449 ~ # 5/2015

## NVCA to hold Forest Information Stalls to inform community about Intensive Logging in our State Forests - *instead of Up-Market Market*

Putting plans for an Up-Market Market at Argents Hill on hold for now, the NVCA has started conducting forest information stalls at local markets. Our aim is to raise public awareness of the State Government's obnoxious plan to create an Intensive Logging Zone from Grafton to Taree - over 143,000 hectares of public native forests where clear-fells of 50-60 hectares will be allowed with only a small number of trees required to be left. This is unacceptable - it damages the wildlife including our threatened koalas and reduces water supply to properties and coastal towns downstream. Carbon storage potential of mature forests will be lost as will the recreational and tourism opportunities that a mature native forest provides. There is a degree of urgency to this in that we need to get the message out to and motivate as many people as possible, prior to the new draft Integrated Forest Operation Approval (IFOA) going on exhibition in mid October. We will be asking people to write letters opposing the industrial-style, clear-felling that is proposed to be legitimised. Also, with a Federal election due within a year we need to highlight the serious decline our public native forests are suffering due to such intensive practices already becoming the norm. The information stalls also aim to raise funds for NVCA's forest campaign.

The first NVCA Forest Information Stall was held at Valla Beach Community Market on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October and the next one will be **Funkya at Unkya on Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>**.

**Good quality saleable items, farm and garden produce, cakes etc are still needed as we will have a fundraising table in conjunction with the information table (goods for sale will draw people to the NVCA stall), we will also sell raffle tickets for the NVCA Forest Campaign Raffle and take bookings for a Tag-along-forest tour.** If you have items to donate for the fundraising table please email [georgetteallen@bigpond.com](mailto:georgetteallen@bigpond.com) for Valla, [lynorr@iinet.net.au](mailto:lynorr@iinet.net.au) for Nambucca and for Macksville or Bowraville [tisw3ndy@gmail.com](mailto:tisw3ndy@gmail.com) - *The NVCA Committee*

## Council Matters *September 2015 by Cr Paula Flack*

**World Rally 2015** has been and gone. A number of complaints were received by council regarding rally driver behaviour during pre-rally route test driving prior to rally day. Serious speeding and dangerous driving incidents occurred on our public roads, putting other road users at significant risk. A head on collision with a local driver and serious collision with a logging truck were two incidents mentioned at a council meeting with other incidents and near misses likely to have occurred. Council has formally complained to WRA organisers and is awaiting a response.

In 2013 Council received funding from the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) which along with Environmental Levy funds enabled it to engaged experts to undertake vegetation mapping and koala habitat survey work across the coastal part of the shire. Recently Mr John Turbill from OEH presented to Council on the project results and draft **Koala Habitat Study & Vegetation Mapping Report**. It was resolved that subject to OEH's (likely) financial assistance, Council will commence the preparation of a **Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management** for the coastal part of the shire. This welcome and long overdue decision has been many years coming despite community lobbying. Our poor koalas are rapidly declining, with habitat loss occurring at a rate never seen before. The highway upgrade, rural and residential development and rapid intensification of private and public logging in native forests are all significant contributors. It is appropriate that Council plays a part (albeit it a modest part) in recognising this icon species' desperate need for help. Council also resolved to: a) Undertake further koala survey work and data analysis; b) Work with landholders, government agencies and departments and the community to promote protection and management of koala habitat ID'd in the study; c) focus on promoting koala habitat protection, threats management, habitat regeneration and corridor establishment, including seeking landholder support through targeted awareness, education and funding opportunities in 'Core Koala Habitat' and d) develop a register of landholders interested in environmental management and/or improvements on private land to assist in the development of future grant applications with a call for expressions of interest be added to the next rates notice. Adopting Koala Plans of Management is often a complex and challenging process with some landowners not willing to accept constraints to land clearing/logging activities to protect important koala habitat.

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Council has received a Federal Grant of \$241,240 for a **pressure sewerage system to serve the south Nambucca** along the current Pacific Highway from Teagues Creek to Pelican Park, excluding Kingsworth Estate. For many years there have been a number of on-site waste system (septic) failures in this area, resulting in unacceptable and illegal pollution of the Nambucca River. The proposal will eliminate this ongoing problem. Council will now call for expressions of interest for design and construction. Connection will be mandatory for all affected property owners with Council utilising grant funding to provide subsidies to property owners.

Council has resolved not to proceed with the reclassification of the **Kingsworth Lake Reserve**. This decision is welcome news indeed especially for the many identified species of flora and fauna existing in the reserve. Council staff will now investigate opportunities to assist in the management of the reserve with a report expected in February 2016.

At its first **River Monitoring Committee** meeting Council adopted the Off River Storage (dam) Adaptive Management Plan prepared by GHD in 2012. Cr Flack intends to seek clarification on a number of issues which were not addressed at the meeting including the cease-to-pump levels which dictate when pumping must stop in order to protect in-stream environmental flows (an early key Council promise to the community), how river flows will be measured, monitored and reported. The role of committee is to consider the monitoring results and environmental impacts of the pumping regime for the filling and topping up of the dam, however fulfilling this role may be difficult given that the committee will only be meeting once a year. Following a motion put by Crs Flack and Smyth, Council has called for a report regarding applying for a permanent licence variation to enable capture of high flood flow from the upstream catchment of the dam (another early key promise to the community).

Cr Flack successfully moved that Council receive a report regarding the possibility of funding a **part-time Natural Resources Officer/Volunteer Supervisor** from the next round of the Environmental Levy.

The draft **Water Supply Policy** is on exhibition until 4pm on 21st October, 2015. A copy of this document is available for viewing at Council's Administration Centre and Macksville and Nambucca Libraries and on Council's website.

*- Opinions expressed are those of Cr Paula Flack and not necessarily those of Nambucca Shire Council*

## **Breakthrough in Bellingen River Snapping Turtle death mystery**

Scientists at the Elizabeth MacArthur Agricultural Institute (EMSI) have recently made a significant breakthrough and detected a new virus, the cause of a mystery illness that killed more than 350 rare Belliniger River Snapping Turtles.

The discovery brings the NSW Department of Primary Industries one step closer in identifying the cause of the virus, which struck the region earlier this year.

Member for Oxley, Mel Pavey, has commended the innovative research led by virologist Dr Peter Kirkland at EMAI, as part of the multi-agency emergency response.

"Initial testing by a number of Australian laboratories for a wide range of infections and toxic agents was undertaken with no confirmed diagnosis, however, based on water sampling, contamination from pesticides or hydrocarbons was able to be ruled out early on," Dr Kirkland said.

"Scientists worked methodically to hone in on the pathogen that was causing such devastating symptoms and the fact that all turtles presented with the same clinical and pathological signs suggested a single causative agent was responsible. All affected turtles died despite extensive attempts to treat and save them. There is no evidence that this virus affects other animals or people. Other turtle species in this river system appear healthy" said Dr Kirkland.

This finding will hopefully allow more knowledge to be gained which will help save the turtles. Follow-up work will be done to assess if the disease is present in any remaining turtles in the river.

*- [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)*

## **Land for Wildlife 2015**

Another 10 properties signed up to Land for Wildlife this year in the Nambucca Valley voluntarily conserving part or all of the vegetation on their land. This makes a total of 21 properties with landowners conserving a total of approximately 600 hectares of vegetation and restoring around 150 hectares of land. Most landowners will also be maintaining their conserved hectares with regular weeding activities.

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary property registration scheme that aims to assist landholders to maintain wildlife habitats on their land. The program is available to landholders with properties of half a hectare or more of native bush and who are willing to manage their property in an environmentally sustainable way.

Private landholders are in a unique position to help create natural havens for wildlife on their properties and to link up with neighbours or adjacent areas of vegetation to improve chances for threatened species and all wildlife in general. Wildlife corridors are important because fragmented bush results in isolated

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areas often too small to sustain viable populations. The Land for Wildlife properties are spread over the whole shire with some close to the estuary and others right out in the upper catchment. Several properties link up with their neighbours who are also members. - *Joy van Son, Land for Wildlife co-ordinator.*

## Scientists call for radical overhaul of Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

Scientists have called for a radical overhaul of a government strategy intended to protect Australian plants and animals, after at least three animals became extinct in the five years since it was drafted.

An Environmental Department spokesperson said Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, which is currently under review, was written in 2010 with the aim of "providing an agreed framework for the conservation and sustainable use of all of Australia's biodiversity".

Charles Darwin University conservation biologist John Woinarski said Australia's extinction record for mammals and plants was worse than any other country. "The Biodiversity Strategy should be about redressing the loss of our heritage and clearly it's failing in that. It needs a substantial overhaul," he said.

Professor Woinarski said there were many reasons the current Biodiversity Conservation Strategy had not lived up to expectations. "There's no commitment in the strategy to try to prevent extinction, which, to me, should be a fundamental of what should be in our conservation strategy," he said.

A review of the strategy published in April by environmental group Humane Society International (HSI) found just one target out of 10 had met the 2015 deadline. The 10th target in the strategy was to: "By 2015, establish a national long-term biodiversity monitoring and reporting system."

The Terrestrial Ecosystems Research Network (TERN) was nominated as the government-funded program closest to meeting target number 10. Director Tim Clancy said a lack of resources meant his organisation did not have a good sense of the trends in Australian biodiversity "by a long shot. The resources we've got are nowhere near enough to provide a comprehensive monitoring capability across all of Australia," he said.

Professor Clancy said TERN, which receives \$6 million in government funding a year, would need at least five times that to cover the breadth of Australia.

Scientists said monitoring was one of the most important areas for Australia to work on but that little progress had been made. Forest ecologist at Australian National University's Fenner School of Environment and Society David Lindenmayer said a lack of monitoring meant it was hard to tell whether conservation activities were working in Australia. "At the moment we do a whole lot of environmental management and we simply can't tell whether it's working or not because we're not doing the monitoring. It's not only about whether we've spent money wisely it's also about making sure we can prioritise ongoing investment in conservation," he said.

Professor Lindenmayer said he believed the Environment Department would miss the 2015 target to establish a national approach to ecosystem monitoring. - <http://www.abc.net.au>, September 2015

## No Joking Matter

People often joke that three degrees warmer sounds like a nicer day. But three degrees of global warming would have devastating impacts on the people, places and animals we love.

The World Wildlife Fund has put together a simple tool where you can see what's happening, and the impact it's having on our lives. Check it out, then share it with someone you think would be surprised about the impact of global warming.

It only takes a small change in the climate to mess up the delicate balance of nature that we rely on for our food, water, air, economy and great Aussie lifestyle.

Go to [www.wwf.org.au](http://www.wwf.org.au) then Choose Your Climate Future

The impacts of climate change can seem far off, but they are happening right now in our own backyard. Help get this important message out by sharing this tool on Facebook or Twitter.

- *Kellie Caught, National Manager for Climate Change, WWF, Australia.*

## NVCA News to transmute to Facebook

The committee has been discussing the idea of NVCA having a bigger/brighter presence on facebook with its own up-to-date informative page making the present newsletter redundant.

If there is anyone with the skills and time to create and manage this page to keep it relevant please email [nvca@nvca.org.au](mailto:nvca@nvca.org.au) to let us know.

**NVCA MEETINGS are usually held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month however, with so much happening at the moment this is subject to change, as is the venue.**

**For information about meeting dates, times and venue please email [nvca@nvca.org.au](mailto:nvca@nvca.org.au)**