

NVCA President's Annual Report, for AGM, 9 February, 2016

This past year has seen NVCA's activities really ramp up, especially through our Forest Campaign, led mainly by Lyn Orrego and Paula Flack.

We have participated in meetings of the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA), along with members of the Bellinghen Environment Centre, and our area's Greens Candidate. At NEFA's last meeting, January 2016, Lyn gave the Power Point presentation created by her and Paula, aimed at informing those in our communities who are not yet aware of the current major threats to our native forests. Lyn also presented this talk and information at Bowraville Theatre, as part of the November month-long Sustainable Living Festival events focussing on environment issues of the Mid North Coast. This presentation is a work in progress, with further adaptations planned.

NVCA has maintained our connection with the local 'Lock the Gate' group - Lock the Nambucca Valley (LNV), with many members being involved with both associations. That group remains strong and active. LNV's focus is on our river, and the problems facing our water catchment in general. NVCA believes it is most important to make information available to the broader community regarding the health of our water catchment and river system.

Submissions

NVCA made submission opposing use of native forests to be burned as bio-mass. In February 2015 NVCA joined fifteen other environment groups, with our logo on a letter to appropriate MP's opposing the use of native forests as bio-mass.

March 2015 – to Nambucca Shire Council (NSC) re Dredging study. Later, the issue of dredging the lower estuary of the Nambucca River was raised yet again, with what was purported to be a community consultation, held at Council in January, 2016.

With advice that Council proposes to match a \$10,000 grant, for yet another study of the supposed need to dredge the river, NVCA is concerned re the motives behind these repeated drives for dredging, in terms of whose agenda would be met?

In May 2015 NVCA made a submission to NSC regarding the dangers to wildlife and other issues involved with Rally Australia's activities in our Valley. NVCA considers the rally to be costly and destructive to our roads, dangerous to our community and wildlife and, contrary to Rally organisers' claims, fails to attract tourist dollars.

In August 2015 we made a submission to NSC in support of a group of Missabotti residents who are strongly opposed to a shooting range being built in their Valley. Sadly, this development was approved by our Council. However, it is hoped that the stringent restrictions imposed by Council may indeed mean that the proposal never eventuates. Let us hope so! As pollution from such a development would jeopardise adjacent waterways, NVCA will no doubt support the Missabotti group in their efforts to monitor the situation, ongoing.

November 2015, NVCA made submission to Nambucca Shire Council re the proposed DA for 73 Lot residential subdivision on an area very close to the Deep Creek wetlands, at South Valla. A Motion was put to a meeting of the Valla Beach Community Association (VBCA), that VBCA register their support of NVCA's submission. The Motion was passed, and thus we had the benefit of support from the VBCA, who enjoy close co-operation with Council in achieving improvements for the Valla community, in environmental as well as social projects. I also worked closely with other Valla Beach residents in compiling their submissions to Council, opposing this proposed 73 Lot subdivision.

Media releases – January 2015, input to an article in “North Coast Advocate”, re the Great Koala National Park proposed to State government, for which Labor committed their support, should they win government. NVCA continues work to protect vulnerable threatened populations of koala, by informing the community of the above proposal, and obtaining signatures for a Petition initiated by NSW National Parks Association, as part of NVCA’s information stall at local markets. In May 2015 I wrote a piece for the ‘Valla Views’ newsletter circulated throughout Valla and Valla Beach, informing the community re the proposed cable logging trials. NVCA created a tour of our steep, upper catchment forests, to demonstrate their unsuitability for cable logging, taking six officers from Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Forestry Unit on the tour. Later, Penny Sharpe, Shadow Labor Environment Minister and Linda Voltz, M.L.C. were also taken on the tour. At a meeting with the Environment Minister Mr Mark Speakman, on 3 August, he said “Cable logging is not expected to be included” ... in the new logging rules being drawn up, though he “can’t rule something out forever”. We took it as a victory!

In August 2015, Lyn Orrego accompanied members of the North Coast Environment Council and the North East Forest Alliance Conservation groups taking NSW Minister for the Environment, Mark Speakman on a brief tour of north-east NSW's forests, to share their concerns about our ailing public native forests, particularly the issue of koala decline, and the degradation of our public forests resulting from the current intensive logging practices. The tour took in forests at Royal Camp and up the Richmond Range, west of Casino.

Early and mid last year, I attended consultation meetings at Urunga regarding the Urunga antimony contaminated site’s proposed remedial works, to be carried out by the Department of Primary Industries’ Soil Conservation Service, on behalf of NSW Crown Lands. This remediation work is finally now well underway.

In June 2015 Lyn Orrego was part of a field trip to Compartment 10, Queen’s Lake State Forest, to view an IFOA (Integrated Forest Operations Approval) Options Trial area. A substantial report was compiled, highlighting the issues and grave concerns re proposed logging practices in that area, with a wide range of questions being put to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and to Forestry Corporation NSW. Following the Enquiry into the Performance of the NSW EPA, carried out by the Standing Committee No. 5 of the Legislative Council in 2014, the EPA were shown to continue with shortcomings in performing their role as protector of the environment. However the EPA remains in place and, sadly, continues to prove ineffective in many cases, failing to address serious breaches of environmental legislation, by organisations such as Forestry Corporation NSW.

Led by Lyn Orrego and Paula Flack, interested volunteers were invited to join us on Forest Orientation trips to local forest areas in the upper reaches of North Arm and Buccrabendinni valleys, out from Bowraville. Lyn and Paula have made numerous trips into the forest catchment areas, paving the way for a well-informed Orientation day or weekend. These forest surveys were conducted throughout the year, with another weekend camp planned for later this month (February 2016). These outings are a beautiful way to engage with our forests, and with one another, and are highly recommended by me, number one koala scat spotter. No mere ‘thank you’ can encompass the extent of appreciation due, to Lyn Orrego, for her work on NVCA’s

Forest Campaign. She and Paula have truly put the plight of the forests into the hearts and minds of so many people, by ensuring such a high profile for the issues pertaining to the intensive logging practices in our forests. Our Forest Surveys have resulted in temporary reprieve for the Northern block of Compartment 387, which is a mixture of old growth and re-growth, containing many Rusty Plum, a threatened species, as well as koala habitat and some truly magnificent old growth trees.

I also extend a special thanks to Steve Hensler, for his steady support for us all, and his genuine love and care for the forests. Thank you, as well, to all our forest survey volunteers. In particular, Dee has shown great interest in the forest campaign and been a huge help with her administrative skills, typing up the data sheets, and being a great scribe, while out in the forest.

In preparation for these trips, NVCA put in place a policy of OH & S, and Risk Management Procedures, to guarantee insurance cover for all volunteers, as well as our usual cover for our association members. Thank you to those who worked on that comprehensive document.

Late in 2015 I was invited to meet with a community group in Valla Beach who are working to create a community garden, to be established on Council land adjoining the Valla Beach Pre-School. Originally the group thought it would be necessary to remove some trees along the roadside, due to concerns re shading etc. With the help of a local botanist, all floral species were identified, with recommendation that all native species be retained, as buffer against pollution, filtered shade, and public amenity. A good result, with the community group continuing with their plans, and all the trees remain. This kind of community involvement is a heartening way for the objectives of NVCA to be gently introduced and upheld, within our communities.

Markets – In October 2015, NVCA received very positive responses to our information stall at the Funkya Unkya market, at Eungai. For that market we created a handout, with graphic images of the destructive aftermath of intensive logging practices. The heading read: “An intensive logging zone is proposed over 143,000 ha of your state forests between Grafton and Taree”. This grabbed the attention of many community members who had no idea of the ravages of Forestry Corporation’s current logging practices.

Re our executive committee – dear Carol has once again carried out the duties of Treasurer, as well as Secretary, while Phil has continued as Vice President. Long may we continue this way. Phil and Carol are definitely our ‘quiet achievers’. We all extend our deep appreciation to you both. You provide the foundation of our administrative systems. Thank you Phil and Carol!

NVCA continues to bask in the presence of our lovely Doug and Alyson, who can always be relied upon to provide a harmonious perspective on all issues – as well as wonderful organic snacks, at our meetings! Thank you Doug and Alyson!

On Wendy’s suggestion, and with concurrence from us all, NVCA’s Newsletter has recently undergone a transformation, with work under way for transition to a Face Book / social media presence. In the meantime, Wendy has come up with the idea of a Bulletin, as a brief summary of current events, with the more lengthy information

to be posted on the social media page. In this way, with appropriate management of the media page, information will be available on issues of importance to the environment, local and national, as well as reports on any 'wins' gained by community-based groups and organisations. Bowraville Technical Support Centre (BTC) continues to donate all the computer time required for Wendy to achieve this very important component of NVCA's work. Thank you to the BTC! – and to Wendy! Hopefully Wendy can continue as our mail collection person. The situation continues, that so much of NVCA's correspondence is transmitted via e-mail. However, the business of maintaining the postal collection remains important and necessary, and is much appreciated. Thank you for that, too, dear Wendy!

Of course, limitless thanks go to our tireless member, Councillor Paula Flack, who provides us with comprehensive Council reports which are most helpful with valuable information regarding current projects of Council, funding available, issues of importance coming up on Council's agenda, etc. Thank you Paula!

Thank you also, to Joy van Son, in continuing as our Public Officer.

I also say Thank you to our general committee member Sally, who is there when we need her strength and input. Sal continues as our representative on the Gaagal Wanggaan National Park Board of Management.

Throughout the year, our meetings have been regularly attended by the core group of committee and general members. Thank you to all our membership! This year we have gained some new members, which is very heartening, and we warmly welcome you all. If you have time and energy to join our monthly meetings, we extend a warm invitation to you. I extend on NVCA's behalf, sincere thanks for your continued faith in what can be achieved by a small group such as ours. Your ongoing loyalty is much appreciated.

I offer my personal thanks to each and every member of our 'band', for your caring support of myself, and one another, for your generosity of time, energy and resources to our cause.

If nominated and elected. I am happy to continue as NVCA's 'la Presidenta' Long may we flourish, and not waver in the face of adversity, persevering in the interests of the survival of our fellow critters, animal, vegetable and mineral! Thank you, one and all!

Sincerely,
Georgette Allen
President, NVCA