

# OurRiver Newsletter | February 2010



Ashbury residents listen to Catriona, a Water Ambassador from Marrickville, explain her community's role in developing and maintaining a local rain garden.

**OurRiver – the Cooks River Sustainability Initiative – is about communities, businesses and councils working together in a new way for the long-term improvement of the Cooks River Catchment – reducing pollution, developing sustainable water sources and creating water wise communities.**

The OurRiver Project was initiated by the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group and is funded by the NSW Environmental Trust Urban Sustainability Program. OurRiver is a partnership of eight councils within the Cooks River Catchment (Ashfield, Bankstown, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville, Marrickville, Rockdale, Strathfield) and Monash University. The goal of OurRiver is to establish the Cooks River Catchment as a leading model of collaborative urban water management. Using six small local areas (called subcatchments), OurRiver will show how communities and councils, working together in varied and highly urbanised contexts, can improve their social and water environments and achieve long-term sustainable water management.

## Newsflash: Two OurRiver rain garden projects win additional funding!

The Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Project (BBWQIP) has awarded \$50,000 each to Hurstville and Strathfield councils for rain garden projects that have been proposed as part of the OurRiver project.

The Cooks River is one of two rivers that flow into Botany Bay. Its catchment is highly developed and contributes a large amount of polluted stormwater to Botany Bay. The proposed rain gardens will filter stormwater and slow its travel to the Cooks River. In this way, rain gardens function the way natural catchments do, as opposed to urban catchments where large paved areas prevent water soaking into the ground and natural filtration by soil and plants.

The additional BBWQIP funding will allow the rain gardens to treat more stormwater to best practice standards than would have been possible with the OurRiver funding alone. The BBWQIP is run by the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority and funded by the Australian Government.

## Upcoming Events:

**23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 6<sup>30</sup>-8<sup>30</sup>pm: Ashbury Community Meeting**  
Hear about progress towards on-ground works and influence the initiation of community projects.

**16<sup>th</sup> March 6:30-8pm: Munni Street Info Session**  
Get an update on project progress and provide input on potential community education projects.

**13<sup>th</sup> Mar 9am-12pm: Bankstown Water Wise Tour**  
Visit sites within Bankstown, such as rain gardens, wetlands and council buildings that show ways to reduce stormwater pollution and conserve water.

Upcoming event details are available on our website: [www.ourriver.com.au](http://www.ourriver.com.au) or by calling 9748 9635.



Passionate about the Cooks?  
Keen to share your enthusiasm?

RiverLife Interpretive Tours are looking for volunteer tour guides for the 2010 season. For more information contact David Kuhn at [david.kuhn@strathfield.nsw.gov.au](mailto:david.kuhn@strathfield.nsw.gov.au).

eight councils with one vision for a healthy cooks river

To receive newsletters via email, send an email to:  
[ourriver@strathfield.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ourriver@strathfield.nsw.gov.au)



## Event Wrap-Up: Water Wise Contest

In December and January, OurRiver ran a contest looking for home water savings tips. **Congratulations to Matthias** who submitted the winning tip, which was selected based on its originality and potential water savings. His tip is:

**Eat vegetarian one more time per week – most of the water households use is embodied in meat, especially beef!**

Water is essential for the growth of plant crops and livestock. Livestock directly consumes 1-2% of the total water used in agriculture; however, significant water is required for forage and grain production that supports livestock. If you replace the meat in one meal with vegetables and wheat, you will save approximately 650 litres of water compared to a serving of chicken; 10,000 litres compared to a beef steak; and 12,000 litres compared to a serving of lamb chops<sup>1</sup>.

## Project Update

Over the last two months, OurRiver has been focusing on producing Subcatchment Management Plans, developing concepts designs for on-ground works and considering the designs with partner council staff.

**Context Mapping:** To develop appropriate solutions for the six OurRiver subcatchments, detailed research was performed to understand the local context. OurRiver examined physical features relevant to water, such as current water use and how much of the area is paved. OurRiver examined the social make-up of each subcatchment and the behaviour and attitudes of residents and businesses in relation to water. This research showed that, in general, people in the Cooks River Catchment feel they have a role in protecting the local environment and are open to using rainwater and greywater for certain uses (e.g., toilet flushing, garden watering). OurRiver partners at Monash University studied how councils function and are helping councils identify opportunities to improve water management within each organisation.

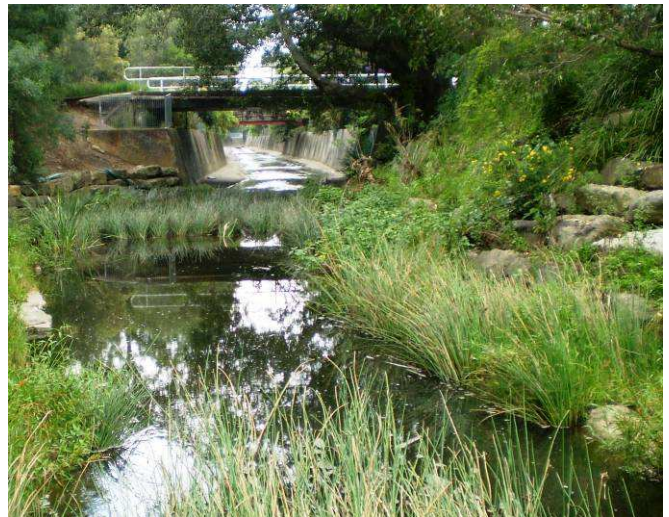
**Collaborative Planning:** OurRiver continues to work closely with council staff to raise the profile of sustainable urban water management and to develop designs for on-ground works within the six project subcatchments. To enhance staff capacity, OurRiver hosted a cross-council workshop on designing raingardens and stormwater harvesting systems. OurRiver will also continue to involve subcatchment residents in the implementation of the Subcatchment Management Plans.

### Jargon Buster

What is **greywater**? Greywater is water previously used for things such as dish washing, the laundry and shower.

What is **infiltration**? Infiltration is the natural process of water soaking into the ground. Paved surfaces like roads and footpaths prevent infiltration.

What is **evapotranspiration**? Evapotranspiration is the transfer of water from the ground to the air through evaporation and through transpiration, which is the release of water from plant leaves.



Restored section of the Cooks River at Freshwater Park, Strathfield.

### Subcatchment Management Plans:

Subcatchment Management Plan drafts were developed with input from partner council staff, and the Plans are anticipated to be submitted to councils for adoption in the next few months. The Plans bring together the context mapping and collaborative planning results and propose actions for improving local water management, including the works to be funded by OurRiver. The Plans will complement existing council plans with the ultimate aim of helping councils and communities manage urban water more sustainably.

eight councils with one vision for a healthy cooks river

<sup>1</sup>Values based on Pimentel et al., "Water Resources: Agricultural and Environmental Issues" in *BioScience* vol. 54, pp 909-918, 2004.