

# OurRiver Newsletter | April 2010



Residents and Bankstown City Council staff at the Freshwater Creek Wetlands, Chullora (in Rookwood Road Subcatchment) during the March Water Wise Tour.

**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: Upper Wolli Creek Subcatchment Management Plans go to councils

On 24 March, Hurstville City Council resolved to publicly exhibit the Draft Upper Wolli Creek Subcatchment Management Plan (Hurstville section). The draft plan includes a raingarden and vegetated swale concept design that Council proposes to build in Bundara Reserve, Beverly Hills using OurRiver and Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority funding. The plan is available for public comment until Wednesday 28 April. An information session to discuss the proposed raingarden will be held on 21 April (see Upcoming Events box).

On 7 April, Rockdale City Council endorsed the Upper Wolli Creek Subcatchment Management Plan (Rockdale section). The plan includes concept designs for a raingarden in Gilchrist Park, and a rainwater harvesting and reuse project at Kingsgrove-Bexley North Community Centre, Kingsgrove. These on-ground works will be funded by the OurRiver project.

## Upcoming Events:

**20 April 6<sup>30</sup>-8pm: Eastern Channel East Subcatchment Working Group meeting** Residents are invited to discuss the group's role and potential on-ground works.

**21 April 10am-12pm: Upper Wolli Creek Info Session** Hurstville City Council and OurRiver staff will be available at Bundara Reserve to discuss the draft Management Plan and proposed works.

**9 May 10am-2<sup>30</sup>pm: Strathfield Water Wise Tour** Visit sites within Strathfield LGA including wetlands, raingardens and a restored section of the Cooks River. Come along if you want to learn about ways to save water and reduce water pollution.

**22 May 9<sup>30</sup>am-12pm: RiverLife Cooks River Community Talk.** Walk the green spaces from Richardson's Lookout to Wolli Bluff. Tour is in English and Mandarin. Call 9789 9999 to book.

More details are available at [www.ourriver.com.au](http://www.ourriver.com.au) or by calling 9748 9635.

eight councils with one vision for a healthy cooks river

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# Project Update

Over the last two months, OurRiver has been focusing on finalising Subcatchment Management Plans so they can be endorsed by councils, and progressing on-ground works and capacity building projects with partner council staff.

## Context Mapping:

To develop appropriate local solutions detailed research about the physical, social and organisational characteristics of each of the six OurRiver subcatchments has been undertaken. Reports for the business survey undertaken in the subcatchments have now been finalised which largely completes the context mapping process. OurRiver partners at Monash University are continuing to help councils identify opportunities to improve water management based on results of organisational reviews.

## Collaborative Planning:

OurRiver continues to work closely with council staff across a range of departments to raise the profile of sustainable urban water management and to develop designs for on-ground works within the project subcatchments. OurRiver is also working with City of Sydney to develop resources to help staff integrate WSUD (see Jargon Buster section) into tree plantings along streets. In February, Ashbury Subcatchment residents met to discuss local water and sustainability activities. Outcomes from the meeting include plans for community to work with council to vegetate a swale in Canterbury Park. Attendees also voted on preferred sites for on-ground works, agreed to write a letter to council in support of the Ashbury Subcatchment Management Plan, and discussed holding local garden tours. In March, Munni Street Subcatchment residents took part in a survey to help decide what type of water education projects OurRiver will implement in the area. A number of other activities are planned (see Upcoming events section of newsletter) to ensure ongoing community involvement in the implementation of Subcatchment Management Plans.

## Jargon Buster

What is a **megalitre**? A megalitre is a common unit of measurement used when talking about water use. One megalitre (ML) is equal to one million litres. An Olympic sized swimming pool holds 2.5 ML.

What is **water sensitive urban design (WSUD)**? WSUD is the integration of urban planning with the management, protection, and conservation of the urban water cycle. WSUD ensures that urban water management is sensitive to natural processes<sup>1</sup>. WSUD aims to protect natural systems like creeks and rivers, to reduce water pollution, to reduce demand on drinking water supplies, and to reduce the intensity of stormwater flows to waterways. Raingardens and rainwater tanks are examples of WSUD.



Boat Harbour on Cooks River in Hurlstone Park. Built in 1964, it became useless within 5 years as it filled with silt<sup>2</sup>.

**On-ground works:** Planning for on-ground works in the six OurRiver subcatchments is progressing well with sites for works identified in four subcatchments. In March, residents from Drew Street in Greenacre, Strathfield Council staff and members of the OurRiver team attended a BBQ to discuss concerns and ideas for the raingardens to be built on Drew Street. In April the OurRiver team along with Hurstville City Council and Marrickville Council will host community meetings to discuss proposed works in the Upper Wolli Creek and Eastern Channel East Subcatchments (see Upcoming Events box).

<sup>1</sup>Wong, Tony, 2007, Water Sensitive Urban Design - the Journey Thus Far, BEDP Environment Design Guide, August 2007, Des 11, Summary, The Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

<sup>2</sup>Australian Society for History of Engineering, Ryde to Tempe Self Guided Cycle Tour, viewed online 14 Apr 2010, [www.ashet.org.au](http://www.ashet.org.au).