

# OurRiver Newsletter | February 2011



Members of the OurRiver Steering Committee

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, and 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: OurRiver project finishing

This will be the last edition of the OurRiver newsletter, as the OurRiver project is wrapping up in the next couple months. OurRiver has been an ambitious and challenging project that has succeeded in helping councils and communities implement more sustainable practices with regards to managing water and catchments. The OurRiver project team would like to thank all those who have contributed their time and energy into helping make OurRiver successful and a rewarding project to work on.

The legacy of the OurRiver project will live on through the Subcatchment Management Plans developed that councils will continue to implement, through the increased understanding of council staff and residents, and through the relationships established and strengthened between council staff, community members and other stakeholders. In addition, OurRiver facilitated the development of a new framework for coordination and collaboration of Cooks River Catchment stakeholders. The new Cooks River Alliance will begin mid 2011 and will replace the current Cooks River Foreshores Working Group. If you'd like to be added to the Alliance mailing list, send an email with 'subscribe Alliance' to [ourriver@strathfield.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ourriver@strathfield.nsw.gov.au) in the subject line.

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

## Upcoming Events:

**6<sup>th</sup> Mar, 10am – 2pm: Community Information and Clean Up Day at Enmore TAFE Park.** Info and workshops on things like composting in small spaces and being an environmentally friendly pet owner. Take part in [Clean up Australia Day](#) by helping pick up litter in and around the park. For more details and to RSVP, e-mail us or call 9748 9644.

**Mid-March Date TBC: Raingarden Planting at Gilchrist Park.** Help bring to life the new raingarden and celebrate its official opening. Call 9748 9644 to register your interest.

For details: [www.ourriver.com.au](http://www.ourriver.com.au) or 9748 9644.

## Tell us what you think!

Your 5 minutes could be worth \$50! Please complete a short survey on the OurRiver project and this newsletter. For completing the survey, you'll have a chance to win a \$50 Coles/Myer Giftcard. Link to survey at: [www.ourriver.com.au](http://www.ourriver.com.au) or call us for a hard copy.



# Project Update

## Collaborative Planning:

OurRiver continues to work with local people and council staff to raise the profile of sustainable urban water management and to build on-ground works within the six OurRiver subcatchments.

## On-ground works:

Construction works at two locations within the Upper Wollli Creek Subcatchment are now complete.

At Bundara Reserve in Beverly Hills, Hurstville City Council constructed two swales and a raingarden that collect and treat stormwater from local streets.



Raingarden site at Bundara Reserve

Rockdale City Council recently finished constructing a raingarden in Gilchrist Park, Bexley North. A community raingarden planting day will be held in March. The plants are a critical finishing touch as their roots absorb excess nutrients and pollutants.



Gilchrist Park Raingarden ready for planting

Both works will remove pollutants and excess nutrients from stormwater and allow more water to soak into the soil. These projects use native plants to enhance biodiversity and make the sites more attractive to native birds.

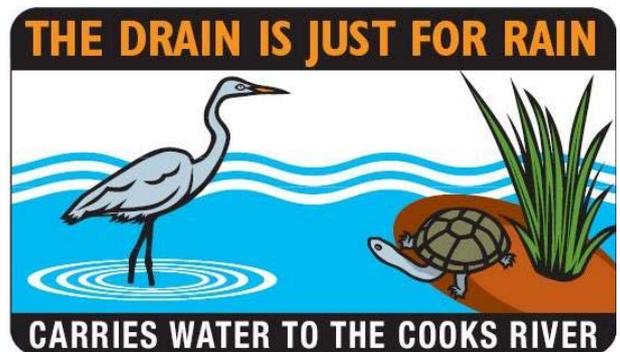
## Jargon Buster

What are **GPTs**? GPTs, or gross pollutant traps, are devices that filter out large pollutants from stormwater. Working like sieves, GPTs keep things like plastic bags, drink bottles, leaves, and twigs from entering waterways. Depending on their design, GPTs can also remove sand and soil, but they cannot remove dissolved pollutants like nitrogen and phosphorus from stormwater.

## Community Education:

### Stormwater Drain Markers

Many members of the community are unaware of the link between the stormwater drain and local waterways. They either think that water flowing into drains enters the sewage system and gets treated along with household waste water, or they fail consider where stormwater goes at all. This was evident at recent community stormwater workshops held late last year in Ashfield. It highlighted the importance of educating the community on stormwater pollution and what better place to start than the source point of that pollution - **the drain**.



Stormwater drain marker

With this in mind, OurRiver along with Ashfield, Canterbury and Strathfield Councils are embarking on a drain marking program in which noticeable but visually appealing educational markers that were designed using community feedback, are used to promote an anti-pollution message. These markers will remind residents that anything that goes down the drain will end up in a local waterway.

If you live within the Council areas mentioned above and would like to be involved in the program, please contact the OurRiver staff.

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