

Cooks River Foreshores Working Group



**Annual Report
2005 / 06**

About this Report

This Annual Report provides an update on the activities and achievements of the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group during FY2005 – 06.

Copies of this and previous CRFWG Annual Reports can be downloaded from 'CookNet – The Cooks River Portal' at <http://www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/cooknet.htm>.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Cover Photo

View of Cooks River looking upstream towards Fatima Island, Kendrick Park and the Tempe Railway Bridge. Taken from the Cooks River Bridge (Princes Highway) during a Riverlife Interpretive Tour. Photographer not yet identified.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

CREW	Cooks River Enviro Workers
CRFIP	Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program
CRFSP / Foreshores Strategy	The Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan (Clouston, 1997)
CRFWG	Cooks River Foreshores Working Group
DEC	NSW Department of Environment and Conservation
DNR	NSW Department of Natural Resources
DOP	NSW Department of Planning
LGA	Local Government Area
MGP	Metropolitan Greenspace Program (NSW Department of Planning)
NRM	Natural Resource Management
The River	The Cooks River
Sydney Metro CMA / SMCMA	Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority

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About the CRFWG

The Cooks River Foreshores Working Group (CRFWG) is a voluntary association of foreshore and catchment councils and State Government agencies who are working together to improve, restore and revitalise the Cooks River, its foreshores and its catchment environment.

Guided by the vision, objectives and strategies of the *Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan (CRFSP)*, the CRFWG initiates, coordinates, assists and promotes regional collaboration by the councils and other stakeholders to improve the health and amenity of the river and foreshores, establish a more holistic and coordinated approach to their management, and realise the potential of this valuable natural, recreational, cultural and educational resource for the benefit of the community and the environment.

The CRFWG and the CRFSP address the wide range of issues relevant to river and catchment management, from natural conservation and restoration (biodiversity), water quality and riverbank rehabilitation, to access and recreation, cultural heritage and interpretation, as well as the planning, coordination and administrative measures needed to move from strategies on paper to actions on the ground.

Through regional collaboration, the CRFWG seeks to ensure coordination of efforts, professional management, optimal use of resources and greater impact on governmental policies and decisions affecting the River than could be achieved through each partner working separately.

The CRFWG today plays a pivotal role in driving Cooks River improvement. Its ongoing efforts and initiative have helped to attract significant State Government support in recent years for and investment in actions to improve the Cooks River, including, for example:

- \$2 million in matching funding for council and regional projects through the Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program;
- \$2.9 million for the Steel Sheet Piling Removal and Replacement Program;
- \$320,000 from Sydney Water and the Department of Natural Resources for riverbank stabilisation, rehabilitation and restoration projects; and
- \$100,000 from the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority for biodiversity improvement projects.

Vision for the Cooks River

The Cooks River will be a vital and dynamic river system, representing, in all its dimensions, a healthy natural environment within its urban landscape.

The river and its foreshores will provide a rich recreational resource valued by both the local and wider community, catering for all interests from dog walkers to joggers, sports groups to picnickers and anglers to boat users; It will also be recognized as an important regional cycle link between Homebush Bay and Botany Bay.

As a generous river corridor, the foreshores will create an ideal opportunity to restore and conserve a range of native plant communities and wildlife habitats, establishing a link from the River's beginning in Bankstown to its issue into Botany Bay.

The river and its catchment will be managed to assist the natural recovery of the water quality, aquatic life and riverbed profile, enhanced by riverbanks that reflect a more natural character.

In all of its dimensions, the long Aboriginal and European history of the river will be recognised through informative, educational and artistic programmes and features along the river's length, bringing to the community that shares and enjoys its many attractions, a sense of pride in helping to secure a sound future for this valuable city landscape.

Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan (Clouston 1997)

Coordinator's Message



Photo: © Strathfield Council

I am delighted to present this CRFWG Annual Report for FY2005 – 2006.

Looking back now through this report and the year it covers, I feel awed by how much great work is being done to improve the health and amenity, as well as the social and cultural values, of the Cooks River.

I am also awed by the generous and capable support which has been provided by so many fantastic individuals. I personally wish to thank and commend all of the local and state government officers who have been participating so willingly in the CRFWG itself and in the project activities documented here. Without their support and personal, as well as professional, dedication none of this would be happening.

I also take my hat off to the growing number of dedicated, enthusiastic and creative members of the community who are investing massive quantities of passion, time and energy into improving their River and their local environment.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to have the opportunity to work with so many committed, enthusiastic, willing, talented and, what's more, really nice people, towards such a positive common vision and goal. And it is a joy to see all of our efforts increasingly coming to fruition after so many years of planning, fundraising and partnership building.

As much as has been accomplished, there is still a long ways to go to tackle the remaining big environmental problems facing the River and to fully realise the great potential of the River corridor for community recreation, expression and enjoyment.

Over the past few years, the State Government's \$2 million Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program has triggered a welcome

and quantum leap in works being undertaken by the foreshore councils, and the Department of Planning has been very supportive and helpful in working with us to make this program a success. But the last of this funding will have been distributed by early 2007, leaving uncertainties as to the availability, level and source of future support for the work which remains.

Sydney Metropolitan CMA is proving to be a valuable partner to the CRFWG, the councils and catchment community groups, and is working closely with us to instigate, support and fund (within its limited means) many valuable new initiatives. We look forward to continuing to build on the strong partnership already established, to make an even bigger difference over the year and years ahead.

Sydney Water has been helpful with a number of CRFWG projects to date and we look forward to building a far stronger and more effective partnership with them in the year(s) ahead.

There are a number of larger catchment-level projects currently in the works, including CRFWG council, State and Federal Government initiatives, which will hopefully move us significantly forward towards more sustainable management of the catchment and a healthier River system. What the CRFWG's role will be in relation to the regional collaboration needed to for these catchment initiatives to succeed is yet to be determined.

The community wants and needs to be better informed about what's being done for the River and the catchment. And many people want to be more meaningfully included in planning, decision-making and on-ground works. While we have been busy doing many things, we have been poor at communicating the intent, extent and outcomes of our efforts to the community. This is an area needing greater attention in the year ahead. We also hope to facilitate and see more community involvement in future collaborative projects.

The structure and operations of the CRFWG need to be streamlined further and long-term funding stabilized, to enable the Group to keep up with and more efficiently manage its growing workload. This will require both council and State Government support – financial, administrative and technical.

I look forward to reporting back to you again next year on the progress we have made in all of these areas and more.

Judy Pincus
COORDINATOR

Executive Summary

ACTIVITIES & OUTCOMES

NEW FUNDING FOR RIVER & FORESHORE IMPROVEMENT

New grants for projects

Member councils were awarded a total of \$393,455 in matching funding for seven new projects, under the NSW Government's Cooks River Foreshores Improvement Program (Round 3). The varied projects will bring about improvements to riverbank stability, biodiversity, recreational amenity and access along the foreshores.

Three new projects to improve biodiversity in the catchment will be funded through a \$100,000 grant from the Sydney Metro CMA, under its Catchment Initiatives Icon Projects Program. The projects were identified through consultations, facilitated by the CRFWG Coordinator, between the CMA and CRFWG member councils.

Funding for CRFWG coordination

An increase in council and matching State Government (CRFIP) funding for CRFWG coordination has made it possible to employ the Coordinator on a full-time basis, for the first time in the Group's history, from September 2005 until the end of June 2007.

In anticipation of the loss of this significant external source of funding from 1 July 2007, due to the expiration of the CRFIP, in-principle commitments were secured from most member councils to incrementally increase their annual contributions, at least through FY2008 – 09, to ensure a stable source of funding for ongoing coordination.

Currently projected council commitments alone, however, will not be sufficient to sustain full-time coordination after CRFIP funding runs out. Active pursuit of a more stable source of long-term funding, including assistance from the State Government, will therefore be a high priority during the year ahead.

Donations

The CRFWG Coordinator helped secure a donation of \$15,000 from Australand/Landcom

to Landcare Australia Ltd, which was granted to the Riverscience project in December 2005.

AWARDS

Strathfield Council won two awards for its Cooks River Restoration Project in Freshwater Park. This project implemented a demonstration project from the *Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan*, and was initiated and originally managed by the CRFWG as part of a regional Cooks River bank rehabilitation and restoration project.

ISSUES & ADVOCACY

Leading the Catchment towards sustainability

Eight CRFWG councils are working with the Coordinator to prepare an application for a \$2 million grant, under the Urban Sustainability Program of the NSW Government's Environmental Trust, for a 'Cooks River Sustainability Project' that could change the way water and related issues are managed in the catchment.

If funded, the project aims to bring about improvements in river health, greater conservation of water resources and improved sustainability performance by councils and community through:

- Applying a proven locally-based, multi-disciplinary, participatory approach to catchment management in five diverse sub-regions (across eight LGA's) within the catchment; and
- Bringing together key catchment stakeholders to develop and establish catchment governance arrangements, which will support effective partnerships, sustainable management and the implementation of ongoing improvements.

Proposed desalination plant pipeline threat

In November 2005, the NSW Government released an Environmental Assessment of its proposed desalination plant at Kurnell, which revealed that the Government was considering constructing an underground pipeline and associated infrastructure along the Cooks River Foreshores, from Kyeemagh to the vicinity of Wollli Creek, to deliver water from the plant to Sydney's suburbs.

Because of the many potential environmental and other impacts of constructing and operating

Executive Summary

such a pipeline along the River, the CRFWG Coordinator convened a meeting between Sydney Water, CRFWG council and community representatives to discuss concerns raised by this proposal.

The meeting made Sydney Water aware of values and issues which had not been identified through its environmental assessment process and helped the Cooks River stakeholders to prepare strong formal submissions against it.

Sydney Water later advised that the issues we raised were being given serious consideration. The final route for distribution pipelines, should a desalination plant eventuate, was still undecided at the time of publication of this Annual Report.

Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program

The CRFWG and the CRFWG Coordinator have continued to play a critical role in the successful implementation of the NSW Government's Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program (CRFIP), through assisting councils with planning and funding local projects, implementing collaborative regional projects and facilitating communication between councils and between councils and the Department of Planning regarding the program and projects being funded through it.

Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority

The CRFWG has developed a strong and cooperative partnership with the Sydney Metro CMA that is yielding many benefits to the River and catchment, including:

- funding for new projects;
- training for council staff and community volunteers to build skills and knowledge and increase community engagement; and
- planned publication of a joint CMA-CRFWG *Cooks River Community Update* and bus tour of bushcare sites in the lower catchment, to raise awareness of all the great work being undertaken by councils and community groups and encourage more community involvement.

Steel Sheet Piling removal and replacement

The CRFWG continues to monitor progress by the NSW Department of Natural Resources on the \$2.9 million Steel Sheet Piling Removal and Replacement Program that was announced in March 2003. The CRFWG Coordinator and

Marrickville and Canterbury Councils participate in the project steering committee, along with representatives from DNR and the SMCMA.

Community liaison

The CRFWG Coordinator plays a valuable role in conveying information to the community about the Cooks River and about CRFWG, council and State Government efforts to improve the River and foreshores, and in keeping CRFWG members aware of community activities and concerns, by, for example:

- Responding to frequent requests from community groups, residents, students and local media for information;
- Maintaining regular liaison with local community groups;
- Giving presentations and tours to community groups;
- Running information stalls at public events;
- Participating in meetings, events and forums; and
- Updating information on the CookNet website

Litter

Negotiations continue with Sydney Water to obtain permission for the CREW team to remove litter from the concreted-channel sections of the River. A work safety plan will be completed shortly and access should be granted early in FY2006 – 07.

Looking ahead

See page 15 for a list of some priorities for action by the CRFWG during the year ahead.

CRFWG Operations

Total cash contributions received from member councils increased from \$19,300 in the previous year, to \$32,000 in FY 2005/06.

The NSW Government contribution rose to \$35,000, over \$33,360 in the previous year.

A review of CRFWG operational and funding arrangements undertaken during the year resulted in:

- Adoption of a new funding formula whereby financial contributions from councils for CRFWG coordination are calculated on the basis of the share of catchment area within each LGA;

Executive Summary

- Agreement that decision-making authority and full membership benefits accrue to financially contributing council members only, to ensure continuing local government control of the CRFWG.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Regional projects

The Cooks River foreshore path has already seen improvements to its safety and been slated for further works by councils to improve safety, legibility and amenity for pedestrians and cyclists, as a result of the **Cooks River Pedestrian and Cycle Path Improvement Project**. This collaborative project has identified some \$20 million worth of improvement works and produced a *Pathway Development Strategy* that will guide councils and other land managers in managing the entire route in a cohesive and consistent way.

Over 25 tonnes of litter and dumped materials and over 230 sharps were removed from the foreshores and River by our **CREW** team. Since its start in July 2004, CREW has removed over 70.5 tonnes of debris from the River.

We have more knowledge than ever before about the ecological health of the Cooks River and will be able to track and assess future changes in its ecological health, as a result of the **Riverscience Cooks River Ecological Monitoring Program**. The scientific data collected will help councils to better manage local activities influencing waterway health.

More local residents are getting turned on about the Cooks River and are turning out to enjoy its open space and beauty and learn about its ecology, history and rehabilitation, thanks to the continuing success of the **RiverLife Interpretive Tour Program**. A third training yielded 15 new volunteer guides, who together with the continuing guides delivered 38 tours to 438 eager participants.

Visitors will soon find it easier to find their way to, from and along the foreshores with the

implementation of an attractive new regional family of Cooks River Path signage expected to begin in early 2007. The designs and implementation strategy for new wayfinding, river identification and safety signage are being developed as part of the **Cooks River Path Signage Strategy**.

To improve ecological and environmental quality in the highly urbanised landscape of our catchment, Strathfield Council and UTS Sydney are working with the Sydney Metro CMA to develop guidelines for the use of local native species in street and park plantings, as part of the new CMA-funded **Improving Biodiversity in Streetscapes** project.

Other collaborative regional projects are reported on in the 'Regional Projects' section below.

Member projects

The **Cooks River Open Space Plan**, being developed by the Department of Planning in consultation with the CRFWG councils, will provide both councils and the State Government with strategic guidance for future open space land use planning.

Cooks River Foreshore Landscape & Access Guidelines, also being developed by the Department of Planning in consultation with the CRFWG councils, will provide consistent principles of design and management to guide the development of spaces and landscape elements along the foreshore corridor.

Preliminary studies needed to be able to prioritise sites for the **Removal and Replacement of Steel Sheet Piling (DNR)** and to determine the most appropriate alternative treatments at various locations along the River are expected to begin in the early part of FY2006/07.

Council and other State Government agency projects are described in the 'Member projects' section of this report, below.

Activities & Outcomes

NEW FUNDING FOR RIVER & FORESHORE IMPROVEMENT

Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program grants

Seven new projects were awarded a total of \$393,455 in matching funding under the NSW Government's Cooks River Foreshores Improvement Program (Round 3) in December 2005. The varied projects, listed below, will bring about improvements to riverbank stability, biodiversity, recreational amenity and access along the foreshores.

CRFIP (Round 3) grants announced December 2005

Project	Grant recipient	Grant amount
Cooks River Cycle Way Upgrade and Extension	Burwood Council	\$40,000
Bush Regeneration – Campsie Bushland	Canterbury City Council	\$7,500
Wolli Creek Bush Regeneration (Bray Ave, Earlwood) - Stage 2	Canterbury City Council (in partnership with Wolli Creek Preservation Society)	\$13,530
Turella Weir Fishway	Canterbury and Rockdale Councils (joint project)	\$20,000
Steel Park Playground Upgrade Works	Marrickville Council	\$62,425
Cooks River Pedestrian and Cycle Path - Holbeach Ave to Alexandra Canal	Marrickville Council	\$90,000
Cooks River Restoration, Freshwater Park (Area B)	Strathfield Council	\$160,000
TOTAL CRFIP Round 3 grants:		\$393,455

Progress on each project is provided in the 'Member Projects' section below.

Applications for grants under the fourth and final round of the CRFIP are due in September 2006, with award announcements expected in late 2006.

The Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program is a \$2 million NSW Government program aimed at enhancing the natural environment and recreational opportunities of the Cooks River foreshores by providing matching funding for council and community projects to improve the green space along the foreshore, restore riverine habitats, naturalise river banks, improve access to the water and extend pedestrian and cycle links along the river. The CRFIP is based on the *Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan* and the *Southern Sydney Catchment Blueprint*. It is also based on, and supports the work of, the Cooks River Foreshore Working Group.



There's still a lot of work to be done!

Photos:

© Rockdale Council

© Sharon Zwi



Activities & Outcomes

Sydney Metropolitan CMA funding for three new biodiversity projects

The Sydney Metro CMA has agreed to contribute \$100,000 from its Catchment Initiatives Icon Projects Program for three new projects aimed at improving biodiversity in the Cooks River Catchment, including:

- Construction of a fishway at Turella Weir to improve fish passage in Wolli Creek;
- Restoration works to assist establishment of a local provenance native vegetation riparian corridor along the Cooks River in Freshwater Park, Strathfield; and
- Improving ecological and environmental quality in the urban landscape through the use of local native species in street and park plantings.

The three projects were identified through consultations, sought by the CMA and facilitated by the CRFWG Coordinator, between the CMA, CRFWG member councils and other State agencies active in the catchment. Because of the cooperative approach and common knowledge built up over the years through ongoing CRFWG activities, unanimous agreement to endorse these projects was reached swiftly and efficiently. Progress on each project is provided in the 'Projects' section below.

Increased funding for CRFWG Coordination

Thanks to an increase in council contributions and matching State Government funding through the CRFIP, it has been possible to employ the CRFWG Coordinator on a full-time basis, for the first time in the group's history, since September 2005. For details see 'CRFWG Operations', below.

Recognising the instrumental role the Coordinator has played and continues to play in facilitating successful implementation of its Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program, the NSW Government has agreed to continue providing financial assistance for coordination out of CRFIP Round 4 funds during FY2006/07, the final year of the CRFIP. Combined with council contributions, this funding is expected to make it possible to continue full-time employment of the Coordinator until 30 June 2007.

In anticipation of the termination of the CRFIP and the resulting loss of this significant external source of funding for CRFWG coordination, in-principle commitments were secured from most member councils to incrementally increase their annual contributions each year, at least until FY2008/09, to gradually establish a stable source of funding for ongoing coordination of the Group.

As projected council commitments alone, for at least a few years to come, will not be sufficient to sustain full-time coordination after CRFIP funding runs out, active pursuit of a more stable source of long-term funding, including assistance from the State Government, will be a high priority during the year ahead.

Corporate Sponsorship

The CRFWG Coordinator helped secure a donation of \$15,000 from Australand/Landcom to Landcare Australia Ltd, which was granted to the Riverscience project in December 2005.

Activities & Outcomes

AWARDS

The Cooks River Restoration Project, Freshwater Park, Strathfield (Stage 2), won two awards during the year.

In September 2005, the project was awarded Runner Up for the Community Facilities Award as part of the Keep Australia Beautiful 2005 Sustainable Cities Awards.

In December 2005, it went on to win the Division B (population based) and Category Awards for Urban Waterways Restoration, in the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW 'Excellence in the Environment Awards'.

This project implements a demonstration project highlighted in the CRFSP and was initiated and managed by the CRFWG from 2000 to 2002, as part of a regional Cooks River Bank Restoration Project.

In acknowledgment of the role played by the CRFWG and the Coordinator in the success of this project, the Coordinator was invited to join the representative from Strathfield Council in accepting the award.



Jon Stiebel, Strathfield Council, and Judy Pincus, CRFWG Coordinator, with the Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards for Urban Waterways Restoration won by Strathfield Council for the Cooks River Restoration Project, Freshwater Park in December 2005. (Photo: © Strathfield Council)

ISSUES & ADVOCACY

Leading the Catchment towards Sustainability

In the absence of any catchment-wide group specifically focused on the Cooks River Catchment, a growing number of non-foreshore councils and other stakeholders are looking to the CRFWG to fill the void. The issue is discussed frequently at CRFWG meetings but current resources are insufficient to enable broadening the Group's scope of work to the extent required.

While discussions continue as to the future direction of the CRFWG, eight CRFWG councils have agreed on an initiative they wish to undertake jointly from 2007, that could change the way water and related issues are managed in the Catchment, leading to improvements in river health, greater conservation of water resources and improved sustainability performance by councils and community.

Council officers are currently working with the Coordinator to prepare an application for a \$2 million grant under the Urban Sustainability Program of the NSW Government's

Environmental Trust for a 'Cooks River Sustainability Project' that aims to:

- Apply a proven locally-based, multi-disciplinary, participatory approach to catchment management in five diverse sub-regions (across eight LGA's) within the catchment; and
- Bring together key catchment stakeholders to develop and establish catchment governance arrangements which will support effective partnerships, sustainable management, and the implementation of ongoing environmental, social and economic improvements.

Applications are due in August 2006, and grant awards are expected to be announced near the end of 2006. If approved, the grant would enable the employment of new staff to run the project.

In the meantime, local and state government political figures across a number of parties have been calling for the establishment of a Cooks River Catchment committee that would include councillors and possibly community members from all LGAs in the catchment. If the grant comes through, it is hoped that the new project will help to deliver an effective structure for realising this vision and improving the sustainability of the catchment.

Activities & Outcomes

Proposed desalination plant pipeline threat

In November 2005, the State Government released an Environmental Assessment of its proposed desalination plant at Kurnell for public comment.

The EA mentioned two options under consideration for the siting of delivery infrastructure to distribute water from the plant to Sydney's suburbs. One of these options called for the construction of an underground pipeline and associated infrastructure along the foreshores of the Cooks River from Kyeemagh to the vicinity of Wollie Creek, then across the River to the Marrickville foreshores before moving away from the River.

As the proposed construction would involve major earth works, including trench digging, underground tunneling, pipe laying and the construction of tunnel access shafts in the foreshore open space corridor, serious concerns were raised about the potential environmental impacts of both construction and maintenance of this infrastructure on the River, foreshore values, council and community environment programs and riverside parklands.

Potential impacts include water quality degradation due to sedimentation and disturbance of contaminated and acid sulfate soils; loss of habitat and fauna; and compromising of council and community environment programs through destruction of completed works and the prevention or significantly delayed implementation of planned restoration works.

Because of these concerns, the CRFWG Coordinator convened a meeting, in January 2006, between Sydney Water representatives, CRFWG council officers and representatives of the Wollie Creek Preservation Society to discuss issues relating to this proposal. The meeting made Sydney Water aware of important matters which had been overlooked by the environmental assessment, including:

- the high environmental and recreational value placed on the River and foreshores by councils, the community and, indeed, the State Government itself;
- the large and growing investment being made by local and state government and the community into the restoration and improvement of the River and the foreshores;

- the existence of important aquatic, inter-tidal and terrestrial habitat along the River, including both remnant vegetation and council and community plantings of local provenance native species; and
- the potential harmful effects pipeline construction could have upon water quality, biodiversity and important public open and recreational resources.

The meeting also gave the Cooks River stakeholders a clearer understanding of the pipeline proposal, enabling them to prepare strong formal submissions to the NSW Department of Planning against it.

In response to the huge public outcry against the desalination plant proposal, in February 2006 the NSW Government announced its decision not to construct a desalination plant at this stage. The Government, however, remained committed to completing the legwork necessary to ensure it will be ready to construct a plant at short notice if severe drought conditions continue. The threat of possible pipeline construction along the River, therefore, still remains.

Sydney Water has advised that the issues we raised were being given serious consideration, but the final route for distribution pipelines, should a desalination plant eventuate, was still undecided at the time of publication of this Annual Report. The chosen route is expected to be announced in late 2006, so the CRFWG will continue to monitor developments.



Foreshore restoration works undertaken by councils and the community, such as this revegetation site at Kyeemagh Dunes which has been planted and cared for by Kyeemagh Infants School and Rockdale Council, could be destroyed if the desalination plant delivery pipeline gets constructed along the River. Photo: © Rockdale Council, 2005.

Activities & Outcomes

Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program

The CRFWG and the CRFWG Coordinator have continued to play a critical role in the successful implementation of the NSW Government's Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program (CRFIP). As the CRFIP is based on the *Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan*, the success of the CRFIP means progress has been made towards realising the vision and objectives of the CRFSP as well.

Through discussions at CRFWG meetings, special meetings and via communications facilitated by the CRFWG Coordinator between the Department of Planning and the foreshore councils, the CRFWG has helped councils and/or the Department to:

- plan and implement all of the strategic regional projects underway;
- identify and prepare applications for funding for new projects under Round 4;
- resolve issues relating to individual project funding and implementation; and
- get better value out of the CRFIP by delaying the timing of CRFIP Round 4 to give time for strategic projects funded in previous rounds to progress sufficiently to be able to inform Round 4 projects

The CRFWG Coordinator and foreshore council officers also had input into the development of an Open Space Plan and Landscape and Access Guidelines for the foreshore area, through their participation in steering committees for these two projects, which are being managed by the Department of Planning.

Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority

The CRFWG has developed a strong and cooperative partnership with the Sydney Metro CMA that is yielding many benefits to the River and catchment.

At a CRFWG meeting held in August 2005, the CMA articulated its commitment to the Cooks River as a catchment of particular focus, due both to the needs of the catchment and the strong arguments put forward by the local councils through the CRFWG for the CMA to concentrate its efforts there.

CMA representatives participate on the steering committees for a number of regional CRFWG projects. The CMA also regularly seeks input from the CRFWG to help it identify, scope and implement a variety of initiatives aimed at improving water quality and biodiversity, increasing community engagement and achieving other NRM objectives in the catchment. In 2005/06, such collaboration has led to:

- The identification and funding by the CMA (\$100,000) of the three 'Icon Projects' described elsewhere in this report;

- Development of a 'Cooks River Community Update' brochure (to be released in early 2007) to help inform the community about the many CRFWG, council, CMA and other State Government agency, and community initiatives underway to improve the catchment environment and encourage people to get involved (see Member Projects);
- Planning for a 'Lower Cooks River Catchment Bus Tour' to promote community involvement in bushcare and other environmental volunteering in the catchment (to be held in September 2006) (see Member Projects);
- Provision, by the CMA, of a variety of trainings, programs and services designed to support CRFWG councils' and local community NRM programs and to help build council and community capacity for more effective NRM in the Cooks River area.

The CRFWG Coordinator gave a presentation to the CMA Community Support Team in November 2005, to increase their awareness of the breadth of CRFWG activities and of issues facing the Cooks River.

Activities & Outcomes

Steel Sheet Piling Removal and Replacement Program

The CRFWG continues to assist with and monitor progress by the State Government on the \$2.92 million Steel Sheet Piling Removal and Replacement Program.

The Program, which was originally announced in March 2003, aims to replace deteriorating steel sheet embankments within an approximately 4.5km section of the River between Canterbury Road and Illawarra Road / Homer Street, with more ecologically viable, safe and aesthetic bank treatments.

The project is being managed by the NSW Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with a steering committee comprised of representatives from Marrickville and Canterbury Councils, the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority and the CRFWG Coordinator.

Community Liaison

A number of regional and member-led projects involve or are based on partnerships between CRFWG councils and local community groups active in the catchment, such as the Wolli Creek Preservation Society and The Mudcrabs.

With community concern and initiative on behalf of the Cooks River continuing to rise during the year, the CRFWG Coordinator received and responded to frequent requests from community groups, residents, students and media outlets for information about the condition of the River and what is being done to improve it.

The Coordinator also liaises regularly with local community groups interested in the welfare of the Cooks River, providing information on upcoming events, skills trainings, current issues and projects and tracking community concerns and activities in order to keep CRFWG members aware of important developments.

To raise community awareness of CRFWG, council and State Government efforts to improve the River and foreshores, as well as to strengthen community partnerships, the Coordinator also:

- worked with the CMA to help plan the above-mentioned *Cooks River Community Update* and Cooks River Catchment Bus Tour;
- ran information stalls at the Riverworks Environmental Sculpture Competition, run by The Mudcrabs (March 2006), and at the Cooks River Festival, held by Marrickville Council (April 2006);
- gave presentations to the Marrickville Cooks River Committee (Feb 2006) and to the Riverlife Tour guides (May 2006);
- attended the second annual Cooks River Forum, held by the Hurlstone Park Community Group (September 2005);

- attended meetings of the Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee's Aboriginal Cultural Research Working Group (July 2005);
- attended an initial planning meeting for the Riverworks Environmental Sculpture Competition (November 2005)
- met with the Corporate Development Manager of the Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL to invite support for CRFWG, council and community initiatives;
- provided new information and resources to the webmaster for updating the CookNet.

The CRFWG received numerous positive mentions and expressions of appreciation at the September 2005 Cooks River Forum, both from members of the community and from political officials addressing the 100-some participants.

The River and the CRFWG also attracted international attention this year. In February 2006, the Coordinator took a group of students from the University of Washington, Seattle (USA), on a tour of the catchment as part of an international field course on comparative urban sustainability and environmental issues.

The Coordinator also obtained permission from local artists Anni Turnbull and Sharon Zwi, to display photos from their *Lines of Sight: Changing Views of the Cooks River* photo exhibition, on the CookNet website, adding artistic expression to this important portal for information on the Cooks River. (The exhibition was held August - September 2005, at Marrickville Council's Chrissie Cotter Gallery.)



Community groups shared their passion for the River with visitors and recruited new members, at Riverworks 2006. (Photo: © Judy Pincus)

Activities & Outcomes

Litter

Negotiations continue with Sydney Water for permission for the CREW team to work in the concreted-channel sections of the River, where large amounts of litter get lodged in and released from the mangroves regenerating in the channel. The Georges River Riverkeeper is assisting the process by preparing a work safety plan acceptable to Sydney Water. It is anticipated that the plan will be completed and access granted early in FY2006 – 07.

The CRFWG considered the development of a regional litter reduction education program aimed at the sports clubs who use the foreshore playing fields, but concluded that the problem is due more to informal users than organised clubs.

Fox management

Responding to community concerns, raised in the previous year, about the impact of foxes in urban areas on native fauna (as well as domestic pets), a CRFWG sub-committee consisting of council and Sydney Metro CMA officers continued to investigate ways to better manage this problem. Plans were progressing to develop a brochure for distribution throughout the catchment that would educate the community about the issue and about simple measures they can take to help control fox populations.

Further action was suspended in February, however, when a group of inner city and southern Sydney councils and State Government agencies formed the Sydney South Region Feral Animal Management Committee to explore and develop a coordinated approach to feral animal management across the entire Sydney Central/Sydney South Region. The CRFWG will follow the progress of this committee so that members can participate in any joint actions that may be appropriate in the Cooks River area.

Participation in other regional initiatives

The CRFWG was represented by the Coordinator and/or member council officers at a number of regional forums and meetings, including:

- A scoping meeting for a CMA-led urban streams dechannelisation project (Sept 2005)
- Coastal Catchments Initiative – Botany Bay Catchment, initial briefing meeting convened by Sydney Metro CMA (March 2006);
- Metro Greenspace Program grants – workshop (April 2006)
- Meetings of the Sydney South Region Feral Animal Management Committee (February and May 2006)
- Cooks River to Iron Cove Greenway planning meeting (Feb 2006)

Avicennia
dominated
mangrove
on Wolli Creek.
(Photo: ACU)



Activities & Outcomes

LOOKING AHEAD

Some priorities for action by the CRFWG during the coming year include:

- Secure long-term funding commitments from councils and the State Government to ensure ongoing full-time coordination of the Group.
- Progress and complete current regional projects being managed by the CRFWG, including:
 - Preparation of a Cooks River Integrated Interpretation Strategy
 - Preparation of the Cooks River Path Signage Strategy and implementation of new signs;
- Work with councils and other stakeholders to promote and implement recommendations from the *Cooks River Pathway Development Strategy*
- Report to the community on the ecological health of the River based on the findings of the RiverScience project
- Continue to work collaboratively with the new Sydney Metro Catchment Management Authority to achieve desirable outcomes for the Cooks River Catchment
- Build and strengthen partnerships with Sydney Water and other State Government agencies and with local community groups
- Continue working for the best possible outcomes for the environment and the community from the State Government's Steel Sheet Piling Removal and Replacement Project
- Upgrade and update CookNet, the Cooks River website
- Secure funding and begin planning for a review of the CRFSP in 2007/08
- Identify and implement changes to the structure and operations of the CRFWG to better manage growth in activities and opportunities
- Apply for funding, from the Urban Sustainability Program of the NSW Environmental Trust, for the 'Cooks River Sustainability Project' to improve catchment governance and sustainability and, subject to grant approval, assist with project commencement

How healthy is the Cooks River?

Baseline monitoring undertaken for the Riverscience Project indicates that while the overall ecological health of the Cooks River can be considered poor, certain components appear to be in a state of recovery or expansion. Here are some of the key findings:

- Mangroves are healthy and should continue to expand. There has been a 265% increase in the area of mangroves since the 1940s. Most of this increase has occurred since the late 1970s.
- By contrast, the area of saltmarsh has declined by 70% since the 1940s and its rehabilitation should be prioritised.
- The most ecologically significant saltmarsh in the Cooks River estuary occurs in Wolli Creek.
- Seagrass has been noted historically in Muddy Creek but was not found in a 2005 survey.
- Casuarina is spreading along foreshores due to planting and natural colonization.
- Mud-dwelling invertebrate organisms (molluscs, polychaetes, crustaceans) are less diverse than comparable sites in other estuaries.

CRFWG operations

Membership

There are three categories of membership in the Group:

Core Members consist of councils participating actively in the CRFWG, including regular attendance at Core Member and Full Group meetings and contributing financially towards coordination of the group.

Participating Members include non-paying councils and other organisations / agencies participating actively in the CRFWG, including regular attendance at meetings.

Corresponding Members include other agencies or organisations, which provide specific technical support, information and advice as needed.

The CRFWG operates as an officer-level working group, and each member organisation appoints at least one officer to represent it within the Group.

A full list of CRFWG members and their representatives, as of 30 June 2006, is provided on the inside back cover of this report.

Meetings

The full Working Group (Core and Participating Members) met five times during the year. Five Core Member-only meetings were also held to focus on administrative matters and issues of particular concern to the councils.

Meetings were hosted by the member organisations on a rotating basis.

Guest presentations at meetings help keep members informed on a range of issues and developments relating to the condition and management of the River. During the year members had the opportunity to hear from:

- Sydney Water regarding its efforts to reduce and prevent sewage overflows into the River (September 2005);
- The NSW Government's Environmental Trust regarding its strategic grant programs targeting environmental restoration and urban sustainability (February 2006); and
- Sydney Airport regarding its activities to protect and enhance the Cooks River environment, eg, stormwater management, remediation of toxic land, wetland restoration, spill management, community sponsorship, etc, (April 2006).

Staff

The CRFWG employs one full-time Coordinator to coordinate, facilitate and support its activities. The current Coordinator, Judy Pincus, has served the Group since 2000.

Employment support

Marrickville Council continued to administer and provide managerial support for the employment of the CRFWG Coordinator during the year.

Strathfield Council continued to host the Coordinator's position.

Funding for CRFWG coordination

Employment of the CRFWG Coordinator is funded through Core Member contributions and, at present, through assistance from the NSW Government through its Cooks River Foreshores Improvement Program.

Total cash contributions received from member councils increased from \$19,300 in the previous year, to \$31,000 in FY 2005/06. This rise was due to increased commitments by Canterbury, Marrickville and Strathfield Councils, as well as the decision by Bankstown Council, which has been actively involved as a Participating Member for many years, to become a paying member for the first time this year.

Core Members also provide in-kind assistance, by hosting and administering the Coordinator's position.

In addition, Hurstville Council, currently a Corresponding Member, committed \$1,000 as an ongoing annual contribution, to lend a gesture of support for the valuable work being done by the CRFWG.

The NSW Government has been matching cash and in-kind contributions towards coordination, from councils eligible for CRFIP funds, since 2004, in recognition of the important role played by the CRFWG and the Coordinator in the successful implementation of its CRFIP. In FY2005/06, the State contribution rose to its maximum available level of \$35,000, over \$33,360 in the previous year.

Thanks to these increases in funding, it became possible to employ the CRFWG Coordinator on a full-time basis from September 2005, for the first time in the CRFWG's history.

Actual financial and in-kind contributions towards CRFWG coordination in FY2005/06 are shown in the table on the following page.

CRFWG operations

Revised operational and funding arrangements

A review of operational and funding arrangements begun in May 2005 was completed in the first quarter of the year. The review became necessary due to the tremendous success of the CRFWG in recent years, which created a need for revised funding arrangements and greater clarification of the roles, rights and responsibilities of Core Members (paying councils).

Significant changes arising as a result of this review included:

- Adoption of a new funding formula whereby financial contributions from councils for CRFWG coordination are calculated on the basis of the share of catchment area within each Local Government Area;
- Agreement that decision-making authority and full membership benefits accrue to financially contributing council members only.

The clarification of decision-making authority was needed to ensure continuing local government control of this council-initiated association, even when external funding is accepted from the State Government.

The revised operational and funding arrangements aim to:

- establish a fair and objective basis for the calculation of each council's financial contribution towards coordination of the CRFWG;
- ensure a stable source of funding for coordination of the CRFWG, until at least 2008/09; and
- formalise CRFWG membership.

The *CRFWG Statement of Purpose and Operations* was revised in September 2005, to reflect these and other changes.

Project management

The CRFWG Coordinator managed four collaborative (multi-partner) regional projects during the year: CREW, the Cooks River Path Signage Strategy, the Cooks River Integrated Interpretation Strategy and the Cooks River Pedestrian and Cycle Path Improvement Study.

Canterbury, Strathfield and Burwood Councils provided assistance with the financial administration of these projects.

Other regional projects were each managed and administered by one of their project partners, selected by agreement among the partners, as shown in the project updates.

Financial and in-kind contributions for CRFWG Coordination

Contributor	Cash contribution FY2005/06	Cash commitment FY2006/07	In-kind contributions
Bankstown City Council	\$2,000	\$2,000	Staff time and meeting support
Burwood Council	1,000	0	Staff time and meeting support
Canterbury City Council	9,000	12,850	Staff time and meeting support
City of Sydney Council	2,000	5,422	Staff time and meeting support
Marrickville Council	10,000	6,000	Administration and management support for employment of Coordinator; Staff time and meeting support.
Rockdale City Council	2,000	4,000	Staff time and meeting support
Strathfield Municipal Council	5,000	5,000	Hosting of Coordinator's position; Staff time and meeting support
Ashfield Council	300	500	Staff time
Hurstville Council	1,000	1,000	
NSW Department of Planning (CRFIP)	35,000	35,000	Staff time / technical support
Sydney Metro CMA	0	0	Staff time / technical support
Sydney Water	0	0	Staff time / technical support
RailCorp	0	0	Staff time / technical support
Total	\$67,000	\$71,772	

Regional projects

The following are collaborative regional projects active during the year, which were initiated through CRFWG deliberations and managed by the CRFWG Coordinator or partner councils, except two, which are being run by the Department of Planning in consultation with the foreshore councils to support and complement the Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program.

Projects are categorised according to the principal strategic area they address (based on the categories used in the CRFSP), but most address a far broader range of objectives. They are also grouped by their status, ie, 'new' (started in 2005/06), 'continuing' (ongoing from previous years) and 'completed' (completed in 2005/06).

Funding amounts shown represent the cumulative cash amount (excluding GST) expended on and/or committed to the project to date. The figures provided are based on the best information available at the time of printing.

ACCESS, RECREATION AND USE PROJECTS

CONTINUING

Cooks River Pedestrian & Cycle Path Improvement Project

2004 - 2006

Project Description

The increasingly popular Bay-to-Bay Cycleway is one of Sydney's oldest shared walking and cycling paths and is in need of considerable upgrading. This project brings together the seven councils responsible for managing the foreshores of the Cooks River and the Alexandra Canal, and three State Government agencies, to identify safety, access and other issues and recommend improvement strategies for the Cooks River section of this iconic route, including its linkages to other intersecting routes.

The project aims to provide a regional perspective on the path that will guide future works by the councils and ensure a more coordinated, coherent and strategic approach to the path's maintenance, servicing and development.

The study area extends from Mason Park in Homebush, to the river mouth at Botany Bay, as well as along the Alexandra Canal and other strategic links.

Partners

- CRFWG (Project Management)
- Burwood, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils
- NSW Department of Planning

- NSW Roads & Traffic Authority
- Sydney Water

Funding

- Burwood, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils: \$19,000 plus in-kind
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 1): \$21,000
- City of Botany Bay: in-kind
- NSW Roads & Traffic Authority: in-kind
- Sydney Water: in-kind

Status

To understand the condition, use, opportunities, constraints and issues facing the path, the project consultants (Jamieson Foley Traffic & Transport, Sustainable Transport Consultants and The Environment Works) conducted site visits and in-depth consultations with government officers (local and state), Sydney Water representatives and members of the community who use the path.

Their findings and recommendations were reported in a number of documents issued for the study, including:

- an 'Issues and Options Paper';
- a formal Road Safety Audit of the entire route;
- a draft *Pathway Development Strategy*, which was peer reviewed by IN Partnership to ensure adequate consideration of the needs and interests of pedestrian users; and
- a final draft *Pathway Development Strategy*, which was delivered in June 2006.

The draft *Pathway Development Strategy* identifies some \$20 million worth of works that could be undertaken by councils, the RTA and other landholders to improve the safety, legibility and functionality of the path

Regional projects

Some urgent safety-related works have already been completed (eg, hazard removal at Mackey Park and along General Holmes Drive). Other recommended works have been incorporated into relevant council design and planning projects for implementation in the near future. Most of the partner councils will be seeking funding in the upcoming 4th round of the CRFIP to assist with implementation of priority works.

Major works, such as those calling for new road underpasses, will require long-term planning and significant investment to realise. The CRFWG will continue to work with the councils, the Department of Planning and the RTA, to further investigate and progress feasible projects.

The *Pathway Development Strategy* will be finalised in the coming year, following review and comment by the project partners. The Strategy is expected to stand as an active reference and baseline document for many years to come, providing cohesive and consistent guidance for all interested parties.

The support and involvement of the Department of Planning has been critical to the success of this project. Also significant has been the level of cooperation and agreement reached by the diverse group of agencies participating in the project, each with very specific land and asset management requirements and risk issues. The willingness of participants to visit and consider sites beyond their own areas of responsibility was extremely valuable and helped to strengthen stakeholder understanding of and commitment to improving the path as a whole.

Cooks River Path Signage Strategy (formerly CR Foreshores Interpretive Trail Project)

2001 –

Project Description

Five foreshore councils are participating in this collaborative initiative to design and implement a new, coordinated system of wayfinding and other signage for use along the Cooks River path from Strathfield to Botany Bay.

The project is based on recommendations in the CRFSP and the Cooks River Signage Audit (2000).

Partners

- CRFWG (Project management)

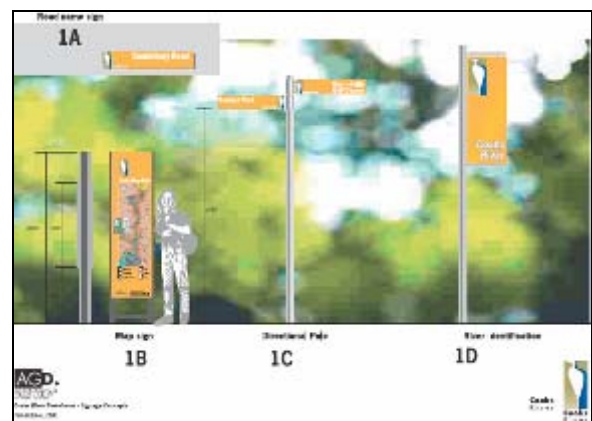
- Burwood, Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils

Funding

- CRFWG (Project management): in-kind
- Burwood, Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils: \$38,655, plus in-kind
- DOP, Metropolitan Greenspace Program: \$66,030
- NSW Roads & Traffic Authority (2002): \$2,669

Status

The project has been rescoped to include: (1) design of a broader family of regional wayfinding and identification signage for the foreshore path, and (2) preparation of an implementation strategy to guide the councils in locating the new signs and in managing signage generally along the path. In addition to the existing design consultant, AG Design, Sustainable Transport Consultants was engaged in March 2006, to prepare the implementation strategy. It is hoped that both the design guidelines and implementation strategy can be finalised by the end of 2006, so that implementation can begin in early 2007.



Draft concept designs for a new regional family of Cooks River Path signage (Anne Gordon Design)

Implementation of the Cooks River Foreshores Signage Strategy

2005 –

Project Description

This project will implement some of the new regional wayfinding and river identification signs that have been designed and planned through the Cooks River Path Signage Strategy Project. The new signs will make it easier for path users

Regional projects

to find their way to, from and along the foreshore path and will help raise the profile of the River by providing an attractive and unified style of signage along the entire route.

Partners

- CRFWG
- Burwood, Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils

Funding

- DOP, CRFIP (Round 2): \$35,000
- Burwood, Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils: \$35,000 plus in-kind

Status

Implementation of the new signs is expected to begin in early 2007, following finalisation of the implementation strategy, design specifications and map artwork.

Development of a Cooks River Open Space Plan

2005 – 06

Project Description

This project will prepare an overall Open Space Plan for the Cooks River Corridor as a connected river-based open space system. A key part of the plan is to develop an understanding of the extent, open space hierarchy and characteristics of the corridor as a regional system. The outputs will include a report and a flexible and updateable GIS electronic database, that build upon previous documents, studies and open space plans prepared by the individual Councils for the study area.

Partners

- DOP (Project Management)
- CRFWG
- Project Advisory Group including councils, the CRFWG Coordinator and other stakeholders, including Sydney Water.

Funding

- DOP (Sydney Regional Development Fund, 2005/06): \$50,000

Status

In June 2005, in conjunction with Round 2 of the CRFIP, the Department of Planning approved the allocation of Sydney Regional Development Fund monies for this project to support the

Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program. The consultant, HM Leisure Planning Pty Ltd, has completed an extensive review of open space associated with the River, including issues regarding its future development, management and use. The review included workshops, interviews and site visits with council and State Government officers and a review of past planning and management reports. Further work is required to design a GIS database and obtain additional data. It is expected that the Plan will be completed in late 2006 or early 2007.

NATURAL CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION PROJECTS

NEW

Improving Biodiversity in Streetscapes

2006 -

Project Description

This project aims to improve ecological and environmental quality in the urban landscape through the use of alternative local native species in street and park plantings.

To achieve this outcome, the project will produce species lists and information, develop and refine decision-support tools, identify test planting sites and work to increase the involvement of local communities in urban ecological projects.

Partners

- Strathfield Council
- Sydney Metro CMA
- University of Technology
- CRFWG

Funding

- Sydney Metro CMA: \$38,000
- University of Technology (in-kind)
- Strathfield Council (in-kind)

Status

The project was chosen for funding under the CMA's Catchment Initiatives Icon Projects Program in September 2005, based on consultations between the CMA and CRFWG Councils, facilitated by the CRFWG Coordinator.

Regional projects

Strathfield Council has taken the lead role in its implementation. Strathfield Council and the CMA are working with Dr Jane Tarran, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Environmental Sciences at University of Technology Sydney, to scope out the project and develop a consultant's brief.

CONTINUING

Planting the Seed

2005 -

Project Description

Planting the Seed addresses the need to strategically manage local provenance indigenous plant resources to ensure there will be enough plant materials available to meet the growing demand for local species in future local and regional ecological restoration, revegetation and foreshore improvement projects.

The project will (1) assess the current capacity of existing seed collection and nursery resources to produce local provenance plants; (2) estimate demand for these plants in all Cooks River Foreshore council areas for the next 5-10 years; and (3) recommend actions to address gaps and meet future demand.

Planting the Seed builds upon the work started under the Cooks River Seedbank and Remnant Restoration Project (1998 – 2003).

Partners

- Marrickville Council (Project Management)
- Canterbury and Rockdale Councils
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- CRFWG
- DOP
- Sydney Metro CMA

Funding

- Councils: \$109,000 (cash and in-kind)
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 1): \$109,000

Status

Work commenced on the project in July 2005, with the recruitment of a part-time project officer and the engagement of a consultant to design a GIS mapping database and undertake the vegetation mapping. Assessment of Marrickville Community Nursery's capacity to meet future requirements for plant stock has begun.

Unfortunately due to circumstances beyond our control, after completing the initial design work

for the database the consultant was not able to complete the mapping component of the project. The project has been placed on hold for 5 months from February to July 2006, while the Project Officer is on maternity leave.

WATER AND RIVERBANK MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

NEW

Turella Weir Fishway

(August 2006 – July 2007)

Project Description

A fishway will be constructed on the downstream side of the Turella Weir to assist the passage of native fish across the weir. The weir forms the tidal limit of Wolli Creek and currently acts as a barrier to fish passage. The fishway will extend the habitat of native fish, thus enabling species needing to move seasonally between salt and freshwater to complete their life cycle.

The site was given top priority for remediation in the Cooks River / North Botany Subcatchment, in a review of fish passage within urbanised waterways in Sydney catchments prepared by the NSW Department of Primary Industries for the Sydney Metropolitan CMA in 2005.



Turella Weir sets the tidal limit and currently inhibits fish passage up and down Wolli Creek. (Photo: David Bell)

Partners

- Canterbury and Rockdale Councils
- Sydney Metropolitan CMA
- NSW Department of Planning
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society

Regional projects

Funding

- Canterbury and Rockdale Councils: \$15,000 (cash and in-kind)
- Sydney Metro CMA: \$30,000
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 3): \$20,000

Status

The project was chosen for funding under the CMA's Catchment Initiatives Icon Projects Program in September 2005, based on consultations between the CMA and CRFWG Councils, facilitated by the CRFWG Coordinator.

Project work will commence with an environmental impact assessment in late 2006. Construction is expected to begin in early 2007.

CONTINUING

Cooks River Enviro Workers (CREW)

2004 -

Project Description

CREW represents the first collaborative ongoing regional effort to remove litter and other gross pollutants from the Cooks River and its tributaries. It responds to community dissatisfaction with the large quantities of litter, which end up in the river system due to persistent littering behaviour and the limitations of existing gross pollutant traps.

Modelled on the successful Georges River clean-up program, CREW brings a team of trained volunteers, from the Periodic Detention Program of the NSW Department of Corrective Services, to the River two days a week to remove rubbish from the waterway and foreshores. Participating councils provide tools and supplies for the workers and dispose of the rubbish collected. The Georges River Riverkeeper and PDC staff train the team and coordinate and supervise their work. The CRFWG Coordinator administers and assists with coordination of the project.

The CRFWG gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Georges River Combined Councils Committee in making available the resources of the Georges River Riverkeeper to help us continue to run this program on the Cooks River.

Partners

- CRFWG (Project management)
- Canterbury Council (financial administration)

- Bankstown, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils
- Georges River Riverkeeper Program, Georges River Combined Councils Committee
- Periodic Detention Program, NSW Department of Correctional Services
- Sydney Water Corporation

Funding

- Periodic Detention Program, NSW Department of Correctional Services: (in-kind)
- Georges River Riverkeeper Program, Georges River Combined Councils Committee: (in-kind)
- Bankstown, Burwood (2004/05 only); Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils: \$5,000 (2004/05); \$3,700 (2005/06) (plus in-kind)
- Sydney Water Corporation: (in-kind)
- CRFWG: (in-kind)

Status

CREW removed more than 20 tonnes (an estimated 81m³) of litter; four tonnes of dumped materials such as shopping trolleys, tyres, wheelie bins, car bodies and parts, etc; and over 230 syringes from the foreshores and River during 2005/06. Since CREW began in July 2004, to the end of June 2006, the project has extracted over 4,286 bags of litter (257m³ or 64.3 tonnes), and well over 6.2 tonnes of dumped materials from the River and foreshores.

Based on the success of CREW's initial trial year (2004/05), all but one of the project partners agreed to continue supporting and participating in the project. A new Memorandum of Understanding is now in place - extending the project until 31 October 2007, with the option to renew. With the help of the Georges River Riverkeeper, we are also seeking to expand the scope of the project by obtaining a second team of volunteers from the PDC to undertake weeding and revegetation works along the foreshores.

Due to concerns about safety and indemnity, permission for the CREW team to work in the concrete-channelised sections of the River, which are owned and managed by Sydney Water, was delayed pending completion of a work safety plan acceptable to Sydney Water. The Georges River Riverkeeper has been working closely with Sydney Water to develop

Regional projects

this plan, and it is expected that access will be granted early in FY 2006 – 07.

RiverScience

Project Description

RiverScience is a scientific research program to establish, benchmark and monitor the ecological health of the Cooks River and its main tributaries. The objectives of RiverScience objectives are to:

- provide information for councils, State Government agencies, universities and other stakeholders regarding the ecological health of the River;
- develop a monitoring framework that will contribute to State of the Environment reporting and long-term management of the Cooks River;
- develop a set of key indicators consistent with the National SoE indicator framework, which will allow better understanding of the ecological attributes and processes of the Cooks River;
- guide the management of aquatic and riparian habitat; and
- inform future capital works along the riverbanks.

The RiverScience project aims to determine the ecological health of the River using indicators specific to the Cooks River. The indicator set includes:

- aquatic plants (macroflora): salt marsh, sea grass and mangroves;
- sessile aquatic invertebrates; molluscs, oysters and barnacles and soft sediments fauna; crabs and other yet to be determined animals; and
- sediment characterisation, sediment geochemical analysis and sediment micro-organism analysis.

By establishing baseline data on the indicators, such as the population of oysters at a specific sampling site, councils will have a reference point for all future sampling with which to gauge changes in ecological health. The health of the River is directly connected to the way the catchment and the various activities occurring within it are managed, many of which can be influenced by local government.

Partners

- Canterbury, Kogarah, Marrickville and Rockdale Councils

- University of New South Wales
- Sydney Water
- NSW Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries
- NSW Department of Natural Resources
- RailCorp
- The Australian Museum
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society

Funding

- Canterbury, Kogarah, Marrickville and Rockdale Councils, University of New South Wales, Sydney Water, NSW Department of Natural Resources, NSW Department of Primary Industries - Fisheries: \$30,000 (cash and in-kind)
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 1): \$30,000
- Landcare Australia Ltd. and Australand/Landcom: \$15,000
- RailCorp: \$5,000
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society: \$500

Status

The project consultants, Australian Catholic University, delivered a draft report on the monitoring framework and baseline monitoring data collected in December 2005. Findings are expected to be incorporated into Council SOE Reports for 2006-07. Finalisation of the report has been delayed due to problems at the consultant's end, and completion is now expected in late 2006. A second round of monitoring is expected to take place in late 2007. A donation from Australand/Landcom to Landcare Australia Ltd, was granted to Riverscience in December 2005.



Brackish swamp located on Wolli Creek, containing *Phragmites australis* and *Suaeda australis*. (Photo: ACU)

CHARACTER AND CULTURAL HERITAGE PROJECTS

CONTINUING

Cooks River Foreshore Landscape & Access Guidelines

2005 – 06

Project Description

Guidelines are being developed by the Department of Planning, in consultation with the CRFWG, the foreshore councils and Sydney Metro CMA, to provide a tool to help the councils and the Department ensure that future foreshore improvements achieve a level of quality and consistency that is appropriate to a regional open space corridor.

The guidelines will provide consistent principles of design and management for the development of spaces and landscape elements along the foreshore corridor. Because of the need to balance landscape consistency with the different identities of individual Councils, their focus is on achieving quality results rather than specifying exactly what a particular space or element should look like.

The guidelines are designed to complement and be read in conjunction with other strategic documents currently being finalised, including the *Cooks River Path Signage Strategy*, *Cooks River Integrated Interpretation Strategy*, *Cooks River Pathway Development Strategy* and the *Cooks River Open Space Plan*. They may be used by the Department to help assess the merits of CRFIP and other grant applications, as well as providing a reference point in the implementation of projects.

Partners

- DOP (Project management)
- CRFWG
- Burwood, Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils

Funding

- DOP, CRFIP (Round 2): \$20,000

Status

The Guidelines will be completed as a final draft and circulated in July 2006 to assist councils in preparing CRFIP Round 4 applications. The final

Guidelines will be distributed to all foreshore councils and other stakeholders upon completion. While the document has been prepared as part of the CRFIP, it is intended that it will have a life well beyond the conclusion of this program.

INTERPRETATION AND PROMOTION PROJECTS

CONTINUING

Cooks River Interpretation Strategy

2005 – (2007)

Project Description

This project aims to develop an integrated interpretation strategy, which will inspire and guide the foreshore councils and other stakeholders in interpreting, conserving, protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural values of the Cooks River and its foreshore corridor. The strategy will guide the development of signage, arts, events, etc, aimed at increasing public enjoyment and appreciation of the River and understanding of the impacts of human activity upon it.

Partners

- CRFWG (Project management)
- Burwood Council (Financial Administration)
- Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils
- DOP

Funding

- Burwood, Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils: \$25,000, plus in-kind
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 2): \$25,000
- CRFWG: in-kind

Status

A forum was held in September 2005, with CRFWG council officers and invited guest experts in interpretation, to help identify the best way to approach the development of an interpretation strategy for Cooks River. Based on the advice received, a Consultants' Brief was prepared and distributed in February 2006. Unfortunately, the preferred consultants, who were selected in May, had to withdraw their proposal suddenly in mid-June due to matters

Regional projects

beyond our control. The Brief was reissued at the end of June, with submissions due in late July 2006.

RiverLife Interpretive Tour Program

2003 -

The RiverLife Interpretive Tour Program helps connect the community to the Cooks River through a program of guided tours that promote leisure while increasing understanding of the natural and cultural values of the Cooks River and of issues relating to its sustainability.

RiverLife tours are designed and led by volunteer community educators who have been trained in interpretive guiding skills with a focus on the Cooks River and sustainability. The various walking, cycling, kayaking and sketching tours offered, including tours designed specifically for children, cover a range of topics, such as local history, industrial landscape, flora and fauna, wetlands and foreshore restoration.

The RiverLife Interpretive Tour Program arose out of the original RiverLife stormwater education project funded by the NSW Government's Stormwater Trust in 2002 – 2003.



Riverlife Project Officer, Sarah Whittington (on left), running the Riverlife stall at the Riverworks Environmental Sculpture Competition, March 2006. (Photo: J Pincus)

Partners

- Marrickville Council (project management)
- Canterbury and Strathfield Councils
- Community volunteers
- NSW Department of Environment and Conservation
- CRFWG

Funding

- NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, 'Our Environment: It's a Living Thing' Program grant (June 2005): \$64,919
- Marrickville Council (in-kind)
- Community Volunteers (in-kind)



RiverLife tour at Kendrick Park, Tempe. February 2006. (Photo: Marrickville Council)

Status

A third group of community volunteers were trained as guides in April 2006. Funding secured in June 2005, from the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation's 'Our Environment: It's a Living Thing Program' was used to provide their initial training in interpretive tour guiding and subsequent sustainability training.

This funding has also enabled the employment of a temporary part-time project officer to coordinate the program and support the volunteers' efforts.

Since completing their training, the fifteen new guides have been conducting various tours in the Cooks River Catchment area. All tours have had a focus on sustainability.

Guides trained in previous years still maintain their involvement with the program and contributed to the 38 tours that were delivered between July 2005 and June 2006. 428 members of the community participated in the tours during this period and guides received very positive feedback.

Since its inception in 2003, there have been over 50 RiverLife tours with 591 participants.

A stable long-term source of funding is vitally needed to ensure the continuity of this popular and invaluable program.

Regional projects

PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION PROJECTS

COMPLETED

Councils Collaborating for Cooks River

2004 - 06

Project Description

By increasing the CRFWG Coordinator's working hours, this project has expanded the capacity of the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group to facilitate regional collaboration, assist councils in translating strategic objectives into on-ground results and assist the Department of Planning and the councils with implementation of the CRFIP.

Partners

- CRFWG (Project management)
- Ashfield, Bankstown, Burwood, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils

- NSW Department of Planning
- Sydney Metro CMA
- Sydney Water
- RailCorp

Funding

- Bankstown, Burwood, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils: FY2004/05 - \$33,360; FY2005/06 - \$41,000 (cash and in-kind)
- DOP, CRFIP: \$33,360 (Round 1), \$35,000 (Round 2)

Status

Thanks to an increase in member council contributions and the receipt of a second and larger CRFIP grant from the NSW Department of Planning for FY2005/06, it was possible to increase the CRFWG Coordinator's working hours from four to five days per week from September 2005, thereby increasing the capacity of the Coordinator to facilitate the achievement of CRFWG, CRFSP and CRFIP objectives, including the management of a number of regional projects.

The outcomes of this work are reflected throughout this Annual Report.



Stakeholders traverse the route, identifying issues and opportunities for the foreshore path during one of the Group Rides held as part of the Cooks River Path Improvement Study. (Photos: © Judy Pincus & Dick van den Dool)

Member projects

The following is a partial listing of projects initiated, run and/or supported by individual CRFWG members during FY2005/06, to implement strategies from the Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan. All funding figures shown are cumulative from the start of the project to the end of June 2006, and include committed as well as expended funds.

ACCESS, RECREATION AND USE PROJECTS

CONTINUING

Kyeemagh Boat Ramp Reserve Foreshore Improvement Project (Stage 1)

Project Description

This project is to increase the open green space along an 80m length of the Cooks River Foreshore at the Kyeemagh Boat Ramp Reserve at Mutch Avenue, Kyeemagh, by the removal of an existing roadway and its replacement with landscaping, a pedestrian and cycle path and picnic facilities. The proposed works would enhance use of this regional boat ramp and raise community awareness and enjoyment of Cooks River foreshore open space.

The proposed works would implement the Kyeemagh Boat Ramp Reserve Landscape Improvement Plan (2000) and the Kyeemagh Boat Ramp Reserve Plan of Management (2002) previously prepared by Council.

Contributors/Partners

- Rockdale Council

Funding

- Rockdale Council: \$50,000 budgeted (pending receipt of grant)

Status

Following an unsuccessful application for funding under Round 2 of the CRFIP, Council is revising its proposal and plans to submit a new application for funding to assist with the implementation of works planned for the Reserve in Round 4 of the CRFIP.

Cooks River Pedestrian and Cycle Path - Holbeach Ave to Alexandra Canal

(Previously reported as 'Tempe Recreational Reserve - Pedestrian & Traffic Improvements')

2004 -

Project Description

This project will see additional pedestrian / cycle path and recreational facility improvements at Tempe Recreational Reserve, including establishing connections to new open space created at the adjacent Tempe Lands Remediation site and improving access along Holbeach Avenue to Kendrick Park.

Partners

Marrickville Council

Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$90,000
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 3): \$90,000

Status

Council has completed 50% of the planned new paths. Traffic management studies needed to complete design work for the remaining paths are still in progress. Council will be applying for funds in CRFIP Round 4 to do further path management, signage and vegetation works.

Dean Reserve River Crossing and Stage 3 Upgrade, Strathfield

2004 -

Project Description

Stage 3 of this four-stage project will see further enhancements to Dean Reserve, a former garbage tip site, which Council has rehabilitated and is gradually transforming into a regional public park. Park improvements will include installation of public amenities, a childrens playground, seating, barbeques and shelters. The project also includes the design and construction of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across Cooks River near Dean Reserve to improve access to the Bay-to-Bay Cycleway

Member projects

from the western side of the river. Associated works will include construction of a shared access pathway and planting of indigenous vegetation along the western bank.

Partners

- Strathfield Council

Funding

- Strathfield Council: \$150,000 (cash and in-kind)
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 1): \$150,000

Status

A Consultants Brief was prepared and, following selective tender, a Landscape Architect engaged, in August 2005, to develop concept landscape plans and detailed specifications for Stage 3 works. A detailed site survey was completed in November 2005, and concept plans and specifications were completed and approved by Council in April 2006. An engineer was engaged to design the proposed bridge in June 2006. Tendering documents for undertaking on-ground works associated with Stage 3 were prepared and tenders invited in April 2006. Council will be seeking additional funds in Round 4 of the CRFIP to enable implementation of the planned works in FY2006/07.

Cooks River Bike Path Improvement & Bank Rehabilitation Works - Homer Street to Bankside Avenue

2006 -

Project Description

Improvements to the foreshore path between Homer Street and Bankside Avenue, Undercliffe, including associated bank stabilisation works and improved access to the path and foreshore from Homer Street.

Partners

- Canterbury City Council

Funding

- Canterbury City Council: \$35,000 cash plus in-kind (in-house design work), plus \$100,000 for bank rehabilitation
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 2): \$35,000

Status

Grant funding to assist with project costs was awarded in Round 2 of the Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program in June 2005. Works are scheduled to begin in FY2006/07, following implementation of bank stabilisation works at Gough Whitlam Park.

Tempe Recreational Reserve Redevelopment

2000 -

Project Description

Redevelopment of Tempe Reserve as a major regional recreational facility, which incorporates water sensitive urban design features and provides foreshore access and environmental education opportunities.

Partners

- Marrickville Council

Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$6.2 million
- Grants: \$800,000
 - Metropolitan Greenspace Program
 - NSW Department of Sport and Recreation
 - NSW Government, Estuary Management Program
 - NSW Waterways Authority

Status

Built elements of the redevelopment were completed in 2003. Planting activities are ongoing to further enhance the landscape and biodiversity values of the site.



Sedimentation basin with a small area of *Sarcocornia* and *Sporobolus* saltmarsh re-establishing in artificial wetlands constructed at Tempe Reserve. Photo taken for Riverscience Project: ACU

Member projects

Cooks River Path Pedestrian Safety Improvement Study

2004 -

Project Description

This project involves a study of path safety in sections of the Cooks River Path within the Burwood LGA, to develop recommendations for improving paths and on-road traffic facilities for path users.

(NB. This project was previously listed, incorrectly as 'Cooks River Foreshore Master Plan'.)

Partners

- Burwood Council

Funding

- Burwood Council: \$30,000 (cash and in-kind)
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 1): \$30,000

Status

Traffic studies, surveying and a road safety audit have been completed. Further planning for this project is underway.

COMPLETED

Cooks River Cycle Way Upgrade and Extension

2006

Project Description

This project involves extending and improving the foreshore path within Walsh Avenue Reserve and Whiddon Reserve, as well as along Walsh Avenue between Walsh Avenue Reserve and Whiddon Reserve.

Partners

- Burwood Council

Funding

- Burwood Council: \$80,000
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 3): \$40,000

Status

Works were completed in 2006, including tree removal, path construction and shared-path stencils.

NATURAL CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION PROJECTS

NEW

Bush Regeneration in Wolli Creek Regional Park, Johnston Street, Earlwood

2006 – (2008)

Project Description

The Wolli Creek Preservation Society obtained an Environmental Trust grant for bush regeneration in an area known as the Western Section of the proposed Wolli Creek Regional Park. The grant totals \$39,318 to be spread over three years. Canterbury Council administers the funds on behalf of the Society. The project itself is managed by the Society.

The project is rehabilitating a 2ha area of bushland identified as a priority area in the Wolli Creek Regional Park Bushland Regeneration Operations Plan. The work area includes part of the associated creek bank where an innovative approach to long-term willow replacement will be undertaken. The project also includes a community education element.

Partners

- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- Canterbury Council
- Environmental Trust
- Conservation Volunteers Australia

Funding

- Environmental Trust: \$39,318 over 3 years
- WCPS & Canterbury Council: (in-kind)

Status

Primary weed removal and track work has commenced using contractors and volunteers. A successful community planting day was held in July 2006, and preliminary work began on rehabilitating a stormwater outlet below Johnston Street.

Member projects

Cooks River Bank Restoration, Freshwater Park, Strathfield (Stage 3)

2005 -

Project Description

This project involves weeding, revegetation and minor bank stabilization works along the final 400m stretch of the Cooks River slated for restoration work in Freshwater Park. It begins the final of three stages of work aimed at managing erosion to preserve natural embankments and enhancing biodiversity in Freshwater Park.

The works will involve minor rockwork to prevent further erosion adjacent to a stormwater outlet, widening of the riparian corridor and gradual replacement of weeds, including willows, with indigenous, local provenance species.

This project continues implementation of a demonstration project highlighted in the *Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan* and builds on the CRFWG's Cooks River Riverbank Restoration Project.

Partners

- Strathfield Council (Project management)
- Strathfield Golf Club
- DOP



Infill planting and weeding are underway to ensure the successful establishment of bank stabilisation and revegetation works in Freshwater Park. (Photo: © Strathfield Council, June 2006)

Funding

- DOP, CRFIP (Round 3): \$160,000
- Strathfield Council: \$150,000 plus in-kind

Status

Council is currently preparing tender documents for on-ground works. Strathfield Golf Club will

assist Council with ongoing revegetation, monitoring and maintenance works following completion of these works.

Double Award Winner!

Cooks River Foreshore Restoration Project, Freshwater Park

In September 2005, Strathfield Council's Cooks River Foreshore Restoration Project, Freshwater Park (Stage 2), was awarded Runner Up for the Community Facilities Award as part of the Keep Australia Beautiful 2005 Sustainable Cities Awards.

In December 2005, the project won the Division B (population based) and Category Awards in the Urban Waterways Restoration category, in the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW 'Excellence in the Environment Awards'.

Cooks River Freshwater Park Revegetation and Maintenance Project, Strathfield

2005 – (April 2007)

Project Description

This project aims to ensure the success of recently completed works undertaken to stabilise riverbanks and establish a riparian corridor of indigenous vegetation along the River in Freshwater Park, Strathfield. Work includes weed removal and replacement plantings of local provenance vegetation. Outcomes will include soil and bank stabilisation, improved water quality due to the filtering effect of riparian vegetation on nutrients and sediment, provision of habitat for aquatic and terrestrial fauna, and the establishment of a seed orchard for future plantings of local provenance indigenous vegetation.

Partners

- Strathfield Council (Project management)
- Strathfield Golf Club
- Sydney Metro CMA
- CRFWG
- Sydney Central Regional Weeds Committee (SCRWC)

Funding

- Strathfield Council: \$80,000 plus in-kind
- Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority: \$32,150

Member projects

- Sydney Central Regional Weeds Committee: \$2,000 (for Alligator Weed and Ludwigia variation works only)

Status

The project was chosen for funding under the CMA's Catchment Initiatives Icon Projects Program in September 2005, based on consultations between the CMA and CRFWG Councils, facilitated by the CRFWG Coordinator.

A contractor was engaged in November 2005 to carry out revegetation and maintenance works, and primary treatment and removal of terrestrial weeds and maintenance of previous restoration sites commenced in December. Secondary treatment of weeds and maintenance continues on a monthly basis and will conclude in April 2007.

Replacement and additional planting of local provenance vegetation will begin in late 2006, along with the removal of sediment from the riverbed.

A variation was added to the project for the treatment and removal of the aquatic weeds Ludwigia and Alligator Weed, in response to the Sydney Central Regional Weeds Committee's Alligator Weed and Ludwigia Management Project in the Sydney Central Region. Mapping of the aquatic weeds in Freshwater Park was funded by the SCRWC and carried out in November 2005. The maintenance contractor carried out the aquatic weed removal in April 2006.

CONTINUING

Ludwigia and Alligator Weed Control, Wolli Creek

2004 – (2009)

Project Description

As part of a five-year regional project focusing on implementation of Sydney-wide Ludwigia and Alligator Weed Management Plans in the Sydney Central region, Canterbury and Rockdale Councils are working to remove Alligator Weed and Ludwigia from Wolli Creek.

Partners

- Canterbury and Rockdale Councils
- NSW Department of Primary Industries

Funding

- Canterbury Council: \$1,000
- Rockdale Council: \$1,000

- NSW Department of Primary Industries: \$2,000

Status

Work commenced in March 2004. Follow-up Alligator Weed control was conducted over three applications commencing November 2005 and finishing April 2006.

Bush Regeneration – Campsie Bushland

2004 - 2006

Project Description

This project involves bush regeneration of a small patch of remnant bushland along the Cooks River foreshores, which has survived due to its isolated location between the River channel and stormwater drains. Work is based on actions identified in the Plan of Management prepared by Council for this site in 2005, and complements work over the last decade by a team from the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

Partners

- Canterbury Council
- National Trust of Australia (NSW)
- NSW Department of Planning

Funding

- Canterbury Council: \$7,500 cash
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 2): \$7,500

Status

A total of 234 hours of work was undertaken. Work primarily concentrated on weed control including primary weed control and boundary monitoring to limit weed incursions. Some boundary planting using locally provenanced stock was also undertaken. An s132 licence was obtained in order to continue bush regeneration in this endangered ecological community.

Wolli Creek Bush Regeneration – Bray Avenue, Earlwood

2003 - 2006

Project Description

The Wolli Creek Preservation Society (WCPS), with cash and in-kind assistance from Canterbury Council, has been undertaking a bush regeneration project at a site near the junction of Harthill-Law and Bray Avenues, Earlwood, since February 2003. The site is located within the Wolli Creek Regional Park

Member projects

and was given high priority in the Regional Park Plan of Management, as it contains the last remaining off-stream wetland in the Wolli Valley.

Partners

- Canterbury Council
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- NSW Department of Environment and Conservation
- NSW Department of Planning
- Conservation Volunteers Australia

Funding

- Canterbury Council and Wolli Creek Preservation Society: \$14,579 (cash and in-kind)
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 3): \$13,530

Status

Weed removal has continued in 2005/06, including the removal of large willows and privet. Work also began on removing weeds along the edge adjacent to the Hartill-Law Bridge. Designs were completed for the reconstruction of a stormwater outlet, which is currently impacting on the wetland. Plantings completed in July 2005 have grown well and further plantings are underway using locally provenanced stock.

A grant application is being prepared for CRFIP Round 4, seeking assistance with the construction of a new stormwater outlet and walking track and continuation of primary and secondary weed control.

Work at this site has continued to attract positive media coverage.

Nanny Goat Hill Bush Regeneration

1990s -

Project Description

Canterbury Council has contracted the National Trust (NSW) since the 1990s to undertake bush regeneration at Nanny Goat Hill, a prominent sandstone outcrop overlooking Wolli Creek, which contains a good example of Sydney Sandstone Heath vegetation.

Project Partners

- CCC
- National Trust (NSW)

Funding

- Canterbury Council: \$10,000 (2005/06)

Status

Works undertaken in 2005/06 included weeding, maintenance of existing walking paths and litter removal.

Cooks River Valley Garden

2001 -

Project Description

Located within Tempe Recreational Reserve, this living museum showcases over 80 plant species native to the Cooks River Valley. Plant selection has been based on the book, *Missing Jigsaw Pieces* (Sydney Royal Botanic Garden), produced by the CRFWG in 1999. Planting and maintenance works are performed by volunteers from the local community through the Friends of the Cooks River Valley Garden, with support from Council. Residents also have the opportunity to join the Friends of the Cooks River Valley Garden and contribute to the ongoing planting and care of the local native garden.

Partners

- Marrickville Council
- Marrickville Community Nursery (plants)
- Friends of the Cooks River Valley Garden



Volunteers planting at the Cooks River Valley Garden (Photo: Marrickville Council)

Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$50,000+ (cash and in-kind)
- Commonwealth Government, Natural Heritage Trust: \$9,900
- Greenweb Sydney (devolved NHT grant): \$16,800
- Community volunteers: in-kind

Member projects

Status

The garden is extensive and growing beautifully. Visitors can see and, with the help of informational signage, learn about local native species and find out which plants are suitable for planting in their gardens. The Friends of the Cooks River Valley Garden (est. May 2005) meets on a monthly basis as part of Marrickville's Environmental Volunteer Program. 300 new plants were planted in 2005/06, and a lot of weeding and tending was done.

WATER AND RIVERBANK MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

NEW

Cooks River Eco-Volunteers ('The Mudcrabs')

2005 -

Project Description

'The Mudcrabs' was established in July 2005 as an initiative of local residents in the Hurlstone Park - Earlwood area. The group undertakes litter cleanups along the foreshores and has adopted Rosedale Reserve as a bush regeneration project. The group works monthly (normally on the first Saturday of the month) in the Canterbury and Marrickville LGAs. Both Canterbury and Marrickville Councils provide tools and equipment for the group.

Partners

- The Mudcrabs
- Canterbury and Marrickville Councils

Funding

- Canterbury and Marrickville Councils: \$2,000 (cash and in-kind)
- The Mudcrabs: in-kind

Status

The Mudcrabs have over 100 members and regularly attract 30 - 40 people to Working Bees. In 2005/06, their first year of operation, the group removed over 400 bags (estimated 24m³) of rubbish from the river foreshore. Volunteers from the group also initiated and organised the first Riverworks Cooks River Environmental Sculpture Competition, held at Gough Whitlam Park in March 2006, which attracted over 300 people and included stalls and displays by a number of local environmental and service

organisations. (See Member Projects, Interpretation & Promotion, below.)



A Mudcrabs volunteer listens to the Welcome to Country at Riverworks 2006. (Photo: J Pincus)

Richard Avenue Stormwater Management, Wolli Creek

(2006-2007)

Project Description

The project seeks to rehabilitate a stormwater outlet below Richard Ave, Earlwood. This pipe currently discharges litter, sediment and organic material into bushland adjacent to Wolli Creek. The project also involves the construction of a series of litter collection devices adjacent to gutter pits that contribute stormwater to the pipe.

Partners

- Canterbury Council
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- Australian Government Water Fund

Funding

- Canterbury Council: \$10,600 (cash and in-kind)
- Community Water Grant: \$40,000

Status

Will commence in August 2006.

CONTINUING

Kendrick Park Foreshore Restoration Project

2002 -

Project Description

Detailed design and on-ground works for the rehabilitation of eroding banks and restoration of salt marsh and other local native riparian vegetation along the foreshores at Kendrick Park.

The design work builds upon preliminary studies and treatment recommendations provided during Stage One of the Cooks River Bank Restoration

Member projects

Project, which was initiated and managed by the CRFWG.

Partners

- Marrickville Council

Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$130,000 (cash and in-kind)
- DNR, Estuary Management Program: \$100,000
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 1): \$30,000

Status

A feasibility assessment and concept and master plans incorporating both foreshore restoration and refurbishment of the path network and park facilities were completed. Additional traffic planning is required prior to further progressing design work.

Cooks River Bank Restoration, Gough Whitlam Park, Undercliffe 2002 -

Project Description

Design and construction of works to stabilise and rehabilitate eroding banks along Gough Whitlam Park, Undercliffe. Ecologically sensitive treatments are proposed, including revegetation with salt marsh and other native riparian vegetation.

The design work builds upon preliminary studies and treatment recommendations provided during Stage One of the Cooks River, Bank Restoration Project, which was initiated and managed by the CRFWG.

Partners

- Canterbury Council

Funding

- Canterbury Council: \$150,000
- DNR, Estuary Management Program: \$150,000

Status

Council expects to finalise designs and complete tender documentation for construction by October 2006. It is hoped that works will commence in late November or early December and be completed in early 2007.

Steel Sheet Piling Removal and Replacement Program

2003 -

Project Description

Announced by the State Government in March 2003, this program aims to replace deteriorating steel sheeting embankments along an approximately 4.5km section of the River between Canterbury Road and Illawarra Road / Homer Street, with more ecologically viable, safe and aesthetic bank treatments.

The project is being managed by the NSW Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with a steering committee comprised of representatives from Marrickville and Canterbury Councils, the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority and the CRFWG Coordinator.

Partners

- DNR
- Canterbury and Marrickville Councils
- CRFWG

Funding

- DNR: \$2.92 million committed, of which \$1 million has been allocated to date

Status

DNR engaged a consultant in March 2006 to prepare briefs for an integrated series of landscape and ecology, geotechnical and structural, and contamination (soil and groundwater) studies. Following site visits and meetings with steering committee members, the consultant circulated draft briefs among steering committee members in June 2006 for comment.

The aim of these preliminary studies is to:

- determine the most appropriate course of action at various locations along the River;
- prioritise areas for treatment;
- define parameters for bank reconstruction designs.

Potential remediation methods being considered include removal of the sheet piling to the mud line and either:

- Construction of sandstone block revetment;
- Placement of loose rock riprap;
- Reshaping of the stream bank and revegetation; or
- Other appropriate techniques highlighted by the investigation process.

Member projects

It is possible that a number of different treatments will be trialled at different locations as part of the initial works undertaken.

DNR says it intends to consult with the community as part of the planning process.

Sydney Water Stormwater Pollution Management

(Sydney Water manages the stormwater trunk drainage system, consisting of 12 stormwater systems with a total length of 124 km, within the Cooks River Catchment. Thirteen local councils have responsibility for local drainage.)

Stormwater Quality Improvement Devices (SQIDs)

In 2005/06, Sydney Water's eight SQIDs within the Cooks River catchment collected 931m³ of litter and 1,051 tonnes of sediment from sub-catchment areas covering 2,245 hectares.

Sydney Water also completed its \$19.5 million Stormwater Environment Improvement Program (SEIP), which addressed 20 hotspots across Sydney. \$2.3 million of this funding was allocated to the Cooks River Catchment, resulting in the installation of four new SQIDs - capturing litter and sediment from an additional 370 hectares - at the following sites:

- Hillcrest Avenue, Wiley Park
- Flynn's Reserve, Bexley
- Boronia Road, Greenacre

- Leonards Reserve, Roselands

In the next 12 months Sydney Water is planning to improve stormwater quality entering the Alexandra Canal through the installation of two sediment control devices estimated to cost \$3 million.

COMPLETED

Tempe Lands Remediation and Revegetation

2004 - 2006

Project Description

Remediation, landscaping and revegetation of a former tip site to create a new public park. Remediation works included measures to prevent further contamination of Alexandra Canal by leachates from the site.

Partners

- Marrickville Council

Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$17 million
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 2): \$150,000

Status

Further planting and landscaping works were undertaken and Council will be applying for funding in the upcoming rounds of the CRFIP and MGP for additional works. The site was made publicly accessible in December 2005.



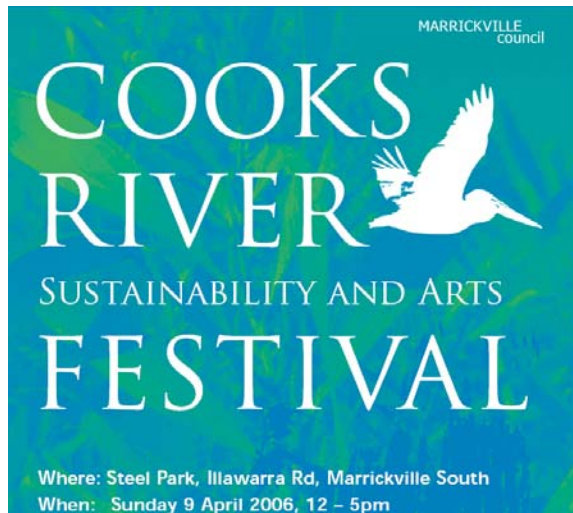
Eve Street Wetlands, Arncliffe, July 2005. One of two wetlands owned and managed by Sydney Water in the Cooks River Catchment.

Photo: © J Pincus

INTERPRETATION AND PROMOTION PROJECTS

NEW

Revival of the Cooks River Festival



The Cooks River Festival was revived by Marrickville Council, in April 2006, as the 'Cooks River Sustainability and Arts Festival', after a ten-year absence.

More than 5,000 people visited the Festival, held at Steel Park in Marrickville South, to learn about sustainable water practices, take part in the sustainable art activities, join a Riverlife tour, enjoy entertainment and relax along the Cooks River.

The CRFWG Coordinator ran a stall as part of the Festival to raise the profile of the CRFWG and let the community know about the collaboration and many regional initiatives being undertaken on behalf of the River.

Cooks River Community Update

2006 -

Project Description

A 'Cooks River Community Update' brochure is being developed to increase community awareness of the many CRFWG, council, CMA and other State Government agency, and community initiatives underway to improve the catchment environment, and to encourage people to get involved in caring for the River and the Catchment environment.

Partners

- Sydney Metro CMA (planning, editorial, design and printing)
- CRFWG (planning, editorial)
- CRFWG member councils (distribution)

Funding

- Sydney Metro CMA: \$10,000 plus in-kind
- CRFWG: (in-kind)
- CRFWG member councils: (in-kind)

Status

Following consultations with the CRFWG, the CMA agreed to undertake development of a broadsheet Community Update for distribution by CRFWG councils. An initial planning meeting was held in June 2006, with CMA officers and the CRFWG Coordinator, to discuss the brochure's look and content. Publication is expected in early 2007.

Cooks River Catchment Bus Tour

2006

Project Description

A bus tour showcasing sites where local community groups and volunteers are undertaking bushcare and revegetation works sites in the catchment is being planned in order to promote and raise awareness of some of the extraordinary work being done by local community groups to restore and improve natural values in the Cooks River Valley.

Partners

- Sydney Metro CMA
- CRFWG

Funding

- Sydney Metro CMA: cash and in-kind
- CRFWG: in-kind

Status

The CMA Community Support Team is planning the bus tour, with assistance and advice from the CRFWG Coordinator and CRFWG member councils. The tour is scheduled for September 2006.

Member projects

Riverworks Cooks River Environmental Sculpture Competition

2006

Project Description

Riverworks was a one-day community environmental art competition held on the banks of the Cooks River at Gough Whitlam Park, Undercliffe. It was initiated and organized by members of The Mudcrabs, a dynamic new environmental group focused on the Cooks River.

Partners

- The Mudcrabs
- Canterbury Council
- WSN Environmental Services

Funding

- WSN Environmental Services: \$6,000
- The Mudcrabs: (cash & in-kind)
- Canterbury Council: (in-kind)

Status

The first Riverworks event was staged in March 2006, and attracted over 300 people. Entrants in the art competition selected media from a vast assortment of recycled materials (obtained from Reverse Garbage) to create 193 sculptures. There was also an environmental fair, featuring stalls and displays by a number of local environmental and service organisations, as well as a Welcome to Country delivered in the local Aboriginal dialect, speeches by public officials and musical entertainment by Ecopella. Winning works were displayed at the Cooks River Festival and in the gallery at the Dulwich High School for Visual Arts. Feedback received from participants indicates the day stimulated people to think more about the health of the River and its surrounds. Depending on funding, it is hoped to hold Riverworks again in 2007.



Photo: Bernadette Murray



Photo: © J Pincus



Entertainment by Ecopella.
Photo: © J Pincus

Scenes from a great
day by the River at
Riverworks 2006.



Photo: © L Shenley

CRFWG Members

MEMBER ORGANISATIONS & REPRESENTATIVES

Core Members

Bankstown City Council	Nerida Williams, Catchment Management Officer
Burwood Council	Peter Cormican, Manager Engineering
Canterbury City Council	David Bell, Team Leader Environmental Issues Louise Rhodes, Environmental Policy Officer
City of Sydney	Kathryn Cassidy, Environmental Development Officer
Marrickville Council	Angela Maier, Sustainability Project Coordinator
Rockdale City Council	Colin Mable, Executive Engineer Alice Bailey, Landscape Architect
Strathfield Municipal Council	Jon Stiebel, Natural Resources Officer Bernadette Murray, Environmental Projects Officer

Participating Members

Ashfield Council	Janene Harris, Environmental Officer
NSW Department of Natural Resources	Arthur Michos, Senior Natural Resource Officer, Coasts & Estuaries, Sydney/South Coast Region
NSW Department of Planning	Tom Sear, Grants Program Officer
Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority	Judy Christie, Regional Natural Resource Management Facilitator
Sydney Water Corporation	Guy Hodgson, Stormwater Programs Project Coordinator
RailCorp	Peter Semple, Senior Natural Resources Officer

Corresponding Members

Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation	Leanne King, Chairperson
Georges River Riverkeeper Program (Georges River Combined Councils Committee)	Simon Annabel, Georges River Riverkeeper
Hurstville Council	Cindy Cunningham, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator
Kogarah Council	Gina Spyrikis, Catchment Management Officer
NSW Department of Environment and Conservation	Kieran Horkan, Principal Officer Sydney Catchments Ray Fowke, Conservation Planning Officer, NPWS
NSW Department of Primary Industries	Jeanine McGregor, Fisheries Officer
NSW Maritime	Graeme Dunlavia, Operations Manager, Botany Bay Port Hacking
Total Environment Centre	Leigh Martin, Urban Campaigner

Outgoing Representatives

Belinda Rollason	Greenspace Programs Coordinator, NSW Department of Planning
Guy Hodgson	Stormwater Programs Project Coordinator, Sydney Water
Marnee Harlour	Environmental Project Officer, Burwood Council
Nell Graham	Acting Manager Environmental Services, Marrickville Council

Cooks River Foreshores Working Group



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