



**August 2013 Edition 15**

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**Latest news from the REC**

- The REC is currently developing its strategic plan for 2013-2016. The plan will be completed this month and will be available from the REC Executive Officer (contact details below).
- Copies of the REC's 2012-13 Annual Report are available from the REC Executive Officer (contact details below).
- The REC visited Tumut Shire for its August meeting (more details in the November newsletter).

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**Roadside Environmental Management Award – nominations open**

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The Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards were initiated in 1998 and are held annually. The Awards are open to all councils in NSW.

The Awards culminate with two prestigious Local Sustainability Awards: one for overall council performance, and one to recognise the individual achievements of a council staff member or elected Councillor in the field of sustainability.

For the third year, the REC is sponsoring the 'Roadside Environmental Management Award' category. Previous overall winners in this category were Mid-Western Regional Council (2011) and Albury City Council (2012).

Nominations are open and councils with roadside environmental management initiatives are encouraged to apply. Entries close **5pm Tuesday 3 September**.

For more details and entry forms go to <http://www.lgnsw.org.au/events-training/environment-awards>



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## Preserving the Pine Donkey Orchid in rail corridors

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Rail corridors are linear reserves that can house habitat including threatened species and endangered ecological communities.

The Pine Donkey Orchid (*Diuris tricolor*) is a small yellow flowered orchid. It is deciduous, losing its leaves over winter, with regrowth from a tuber (a type of bulb) near the end of spring. The leaves are 20-30 cm long, with flowers measuring 2.5-3 cm across and featuring yellow with red to purple and white markings, on a tall 20-40cm flower spike.



The orchid sprouts new leaves and flower spikes in spring, usually over two weeks in late October to early November and can be found as individual plants or in very large colonies.

The Pine Donkey Orchid grows on sandy to loamy soils, usually in Cypress pine forests with grassy understorey. It can sometimes also be found in Ironbark or Bimble Box (eucalypt) woodlands or Acacia (wattle) shrubland.

The Pine Donkey Orchid is listed under the NSW legislation as being

vulnerable. It can be found as part of a protected ecosystem, known as an Endangered Ecological Community (EEC). This EEC is called Sandhill Pine Woodland, and only approximately 25% of its original distribution remains.

The Pine Donkey Orchid is highly susceptible to clearing and grazing as it only flowers for very short times, once a year. If the plant dies without seeding, the genetic diversity of the population can get very low and makes it more susceptible to disease and climate change.

Activities associated with the railway line and easement maintenance, including actions such as herbicide use, constitute a major threat to the species.

On the Country Regional Network (CRN) it is known to grow in the Gillenbah State Forest rail corridor on the Narrandera to Tocumwal line. The CRN teams have been made aware of the importance of the preservation and identification of this fragile species and work closely with our Environmental Team to advise of any observations.

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The CRN will continue to work closely with partners such as the Office of Environment and Heritage to ensure appropriate signage and strategies are in place to protect this valuable species.

For more details contact Amber Gibbins on (02) 4028 9409



Source: John Holland Country Regional Network media release

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### Lending a hand to threatened biodiversity in the Hunter

The Hunter and Central Coast Regional Environmental Management (HCCREMS) team joined up with four of its partner councils to undertake three projects for the Roadside Vegetation Implementation Project (funded by the NSW Environmental Trust) that protect and rehabilitate roadside environments supporting threatened species or communities including:

- Hunter Valley Weeping Myall and *Acacia pendula* (NSW TSC and the EPBC listings)
- The federally critically endangered listed White Box-Yellow Box Grassy Woodlands and derived grasslands
- The critically endangered *Persoonia pauciflora* and threatened Grey-crowned Babbler



Populations of these species and communities are few and far between and road verges provide a great opportunity to restore and expand on small fragmented patches, which can increased the overall gene pool.

Bush regeneration and targeted weed control activities were completed at 16 sites. Site preparation, specialist knowledge and sensitive weed control methodologies were applied to minimise impacts on native vegetation. This was particularly stringent within the White Box-Yellow Box communities, as the team had to be trained in identifying native versus exotic grasses.

The results have been really impressive, with evidence of active regeneration of Weeping Myall at a number of the more degraded sites in just one year. The Box communities have also regenerated with native grasses now dominating many sites.

Training has been undertaken by council officers, to enable identification of the major species and ensure appropriate roadside maintenance takes place.

These and other projects are now imbedded into the Regional Roadside

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Vegetation Marker Scheme that is presently adopted by 12 of our 14 LGAs.

For more information contact Eva Twarkowski at HCCREMS on (02) 4978 4029

*Source: HCCREMS*

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### **Tumut Shire Council – Tree Trails**

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Tumut Shire Council was a successful applicant in the Roadside Vegetation Implementation Project (RVIP) funded by the NSW Environmental Trust. This project undertook environmental weed eradication, revegetation on roadsides with high conservation values and provided education to Council, staff and the community.

Part of the project was to educate and make the public aware of areas of conservation. Council created a 'Tree Trails' brochure, to provide the community and tourist with driving information on where to go and what you will find in the Tumut Shire. The 'Tree Trails' brochure has a map with the key roads of value listed, so that people looking for a scenic drive can find the locations. It shows photos from the sites, which are bursting with biodiversity and beauty.

To further Council's education component, the brochures were posted to 30 Tourist Information Centres in New South Wales so that other regions can see the importance, value and beauty of this natural asset in Tumut Shire.

The RVIP improved the integrity of the reserves targeted and provided timely and valuable support to Council ensuring best practice for the management of road reserves. The community will benefit from the program well into the future as this program has set foundations, provided resources and educational material which will further assist the local environment.

The brochure can be found on Tumut Shire Council web site: [www.tumut.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tumut.nsw.gov.au). For more details about the project contact Jo Spicer on (02) 6941 2546



Tumut Shire Council

#### **TREE TRAILS**

Are you looking for a scenic drive to take?

Tumut Shire offers a variety of destinations where the roadside vegetation is bursting with biodiversity.

The area encompassed by the Tumut Shire contains a diverse mix of terrain, altitude, and vegetation communities, ranging from lush riverine flood plains to high, stoney ridges – some within the snowline.

A number of roads cross these areas showing marked changes in vegetation along their length, particularly those that climb from valley to mountains.



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### **Changes to the NSW Native Vegetation Regulation**

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The Minister for the Environment has announced changes to be made to the Native Vegetation Regulation. The proposed changes are based on the findings of the independent facilitator's final report.

Mr Lane's report focuses on cutting red tape and improving service delivery. The NSW Government will implement all 40 of the recommendations made by Mr Lane.

Key recommendations include:

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1. amending the Regulation to allow farmers to clear isolated paddock trees in areas previously cleared for permanent or rotational cropping, manage invasive native species and thin native vegetation using self-assessable codes
2. amending the Regulation to allow certain grass species to be listed and managed as feral native species, which will assist farmers to sustainably manage their native pastures
3. amending the Regulation to make it easier for catchment management authorities to change the regrowth date, allowing farmers to continue existing rotational farming practices
4. amending the Regulation to allow local councils to carry out land management activities without approval
5. reviewing the Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology (EOAM) to create faster and simpler assessment of property vegetation plans
6. developing a service level agreement between the Office of Environment and Heritage and catchment management authorities (soon to be Local Land Services) to ensure more timely responses to inquiries for advice and determination of property vegetation plans.

The Government will also pursue many of the proposed changes in the draft Native Vegetation Regulation exhibited in May 2012, including new exemptions for dwellings, telecommunication infrastructure on public and private land, and non-rural boundary fences and sheds.

For more information go to

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/ReviewofNVRegulations.htm>

*Source: Native Vegetation Regulation Review Update 9*

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### **Local Land Services details announced**

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The NSW Government has announced the final details of the new Local Land Services model, including the regional boundaries and governance structure.

Local Land Services (LLS) are the new regional service delivery organisations that will replace Catchment Management Authorities, Livestock Health & Pest Authorities and incorporate agricultural advisory services currently provided by Agriculture NSW. LLS will be regionally-based, semi-autonomous, statutory organisations, governed by locally elected and skills-based board members, delivering services for landholders.

From January 2014, Local Land Services will comprise:

- 11 regions
- Local Boards with seven members - with four Government appointments and three ratepayer elected positions (a five : four ratio in the Western LLS to account for its size)
- A Board of Chairs with an independent Chair

The LLS Stakeholder Reference Panel provided recommendations to the Government in late April, following extensive consultation. The Government accepted 21 of the 25 Reference Panel's governance recommendations, and a slight variation to the regional boundaries map.

According to the Government from January 2014, the advice and services from LLS or the Department of Primary Industries will be available from 139 towns

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across NSW, an increase of 22 locations.

More Information: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/localandservices>

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### **Biodiversity offsets policy and fund announced**

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Environment Minister Robyn Parker recently announced that the Government will develop a new biodiversity offsets policy for major projects in New South Wales that will include a new biodiversity offsets fund.

The aim of the new policy will be to deliver a consistent and transparent approach to biodiversity offsetting for major projects. It will be underpinned by a transparent methodology for calculating offsets that will ensure all developers assess biodiversity impacts and determine offsets in a consistent way.

The fund would be established to enable major projects to contribute money for offsets as part of their development approval, instead of locating and purchasing offsets sites themselves. The money from the fund would be used to improve biodiversity in a strategic manner that compensates for impacts of development.

This fund will apply to planning approvals for major projects in NSW (State significant development and State significant infrastructure).

It is intended that the new policy will build on learnings from BioBanking to allow for the establishment of biodiversity offsets on private land, which will encourage farmers and other rural landholders to receive payments to manage parts of their land to higher environmental standards.

The Minister has announced a set of principles that will underpin the new biodiversity offsets policy. Details of these principles are now on the OEH website at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biocertification/offsets.htm>

See the Minister's Media Release for more details:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/MinMedia/MinMedia13072001.pdf>

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*The aim of this newsletter is to share information about the management of NSW linear reserve environments and profile the NSW Roadside Environment Committee (REC). For more information on the REC, including how to create roadside vegetation management plans, go to: [www.rta.nsw.gov.au/rec](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/rec)*

*Please contact the REC Executive Officer (details below) if you wish to subscribe or unsubscribe.*

The logo is a diamond-shaped emblem. Inside the diamond, there is a stylized green tree on the left and a winding road on the right. The text "NSW Roadside Environment Committee" is written in green, stacked vertically in the center of the diamond.

For more information contact:

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