



November 2013 Edition 16

In this issue

- Roadside Environmental Management Award
- Protecting the Grey-Crowned Babbler in rail corridors
- Roadside vegetation rehabilitation in Orange LGA
- Managing weeds in Blue Mountains rail corridors
- Watch out for Paraquat resistant ryegrass
- Qld transport corridor program uncovers Australia's most eastern desert
- New Native Vegetation Regulation
- Review of weed management in NSW

Latest news from the REC

- Through a special meeting at the Natural Resources Commission office, the REC provided input into the Review of Weed Management in NSW (see details below).
- Copies of the REC's 2012-13 Annual Report are available from the REC Executive Officer (contact details below).

Roadside Environmental Management Award presentation

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 2013 Awards will be presented on Tuesday 3 December at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

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).

The finalists for the 2013 Roadside Environmental Management Award have been announced and are:

- Hornsby Shire Council - Restoration of Roadside Corridors and Vegetation Linkages in Hornsby Shire
- Bathurst Regional Council - Protecting and Connecting Bathurst Copper Butterfly Habitat
- Hunter & Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy (HCCREMS) - Regional Initiatives to restore threatened species, improve water quality and constrain exotic grass dispersal.

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

Protecting the Grey-crowned Babbler in rail corridors

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



The Grey-crowned Babbler (eastern subspecies) is listed as a Vulnerable Species under Schedule 2 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

The Grey-crowned Babbler formerly ranged throughout eastern Australia from South Australia, through Victoria and

broadly through NSW and central Queensland up into southern New Guinea. The Grey-crowned Babbler is now extinct in South Australia, coastal Victoria and the ACT. In NSW, the Grey-crowned Babbler occurs on the western slopes and plains but was less common at the higher altitudes of the tablelands. Isolated populations are known from coastal woodlands on the North Coast, in the Hunter Valley and from the South Coast near Nowra.

The Grey-crowned Babbler is threatened by clearance and the fragmentation of habitat including removal of dead timber. The species occupies woodlands on fertile soils of plains and undulating terrain. Therefore, Grey-crowned Babbler habitat has been disproportionately cleared for agriculture. Isolation of populations in scattered remnants is exacerbated by the apparent reluctance of birds to traverse tracts of cleared land.

Fuel-reduction burning, grazing, weed invasion and removal of timber lowers leaf litter build-up, which then reduces the amount of invertebrate food available for the Grey-crowned Babblers. Increased abundance of competitors, such as Noisy Miners, and nest predators, including the Pied Currawong and Australian Raven threaten Babbler foraging efficiency and breeding success.

The Grey-crowned Babbler is known to have isolated populations in West Wyalong, near Junee and in the Boorowa and Wagga regions including on rail corridors managed by the Country Rail Network (CRN). If a Grey-crowned Babbler or a nest matching the description are observed, staff do not clear, grade or burn at the site until CRN's Environmental Team assess the site for species.

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



Roadside vegetation rehabilitation in Orange LGA

In 2011, Orange City Council received \$25,000 through the Local Government NSW Roadside Vegetation Implementation Project funded by the NSW Environmental Trust.

The project site nominated was the road reserve between the Pinnacle Road and Walker Lane (opposite the Pinnacle Reserve), an area of 29,053 m². The site is acknowledged as a very valuable tall forest, consisting of *Eucalyptus dives*, *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, *Eucalyptus viminalis*, *Eucalyptus dalrympleana*, *Eucalyptus canobolensis* and *Eucalyptus rubida*, a mid-story of *Acacia dealbata* and *Acacia melanoxylon* and understory of *Themeda*, *Poa* and *Microleana* species.



Sign erected at the Orange rehabilitation site

The site is surrounded by pristine pockets of native bushland and is utilised by bushwalkers and nature lovers. The project site had become a dumping ground for garden refuse over the years. Most of the refuse had propagated and become established garden weed escapees including English Ivy, Cotoneaster, Honeysuckle and Laurel.

The implementation of the project will prevent further infestation by the garden escapees into the adjacent bushland areas and also enhance the immediate area for user groups and reduce potential infestation of adjacent properties.

The project focused on rehabilitating the roadside reserve where infestations of woody weeds were destroying the native vegetation and habitat values of this forest type and impacting on biodiversity in the area. The assessment carried out on the site recommended using the "cut and paint" method to control exotic species.

The project was carried out over 12 months and utilised the services of a Sydney-based bush regeneration team, Bush-it. In May 2012, the team spent two weeks at the site cutting and painting the majority of the woody weed infestation, (8.5 tonnes of weed matter removed) with a two week follow up in April 2013 (a further 3 tonnes removed).

Community engagement was encouraged throughout the project with 19 volunteers contributing a total of 92 hours toward the project. Interpretative signage describing the project was also installed adjacent to the site.

The Rural Fire Service was a partner in the project and planned a cool burn of the site but due to weather patterns and workload last season the burn never occurred. It is scheduled for next autumn.

For more details contact David Waddell, Orange City Council on (02) 6393 8261.

Managing weeds in Blue Mountains rail corridors

Earth Repair Ecology Pty Ltd recently completed a project for Sydney Trains (formerly RailCorp) in the Blue Mountains rail corridor that involved control for a list of target weeds that included Blackberry, English broom, Montpellier broom, Cotoneaster and Pampas grass.



Works were carried out between October 2012 and April 2013. The project boundaries were Linden to Blackheath and Mt Victoria to Oakey Park, an outer suburb of Lithgow. Woody weeds including Blackberry were treated by high volume herbicide spraying with Gazon. Pampas grass was sprayed with Glyphosate at a dilution of 3%.

The team consisted of two Earth Repair Ecology staff equipped with a 4WD mounted twin reel 600 litre QuikSpray unit and one Rail Safety Officer following in a separate 4WD vehicle.

While it was possible to drive through sections of the rail corridor, it was often necessary to access weeds from adjacent roads such as the Great Western Highway, the Darling Causeway and Bells Line of Road. This was made easier as each reel was equipped with 200 metres of high pressure hose.

Target weeds were also treated along a section of the corridor that runs through a series of tunnels at Zig Zag. This work involved a team of three Earth Repair Ecology staff equipped with back packs and telescopic spray wands walking along the track during a weekend.

For more details contact Chris Brogan, Earth Repair Ecology, phone (02) 9774 3200



Watch out for Paraquat resistant ryegrass

Annual ryegrass (*Lolium rigidum*) plants at a southern Western Australian vineyard were not behaving as they should following a hefty dose of paraquat. Specimens were submitted for testing and the official Quick-test® results show it is BOTH paraquat AND glyphosate resistant.

The virtual loss of the two main knockdown herbicide modes of action begs the question about our general approach to weed management in all situations, not just vineyards.

There are currently over 90 confirmed cases of glyphosate resistant annual ryegrass confirmed from NSW, South Australia and WA roads. Victorian roads haven't been surveyed so who knows what is happening there. There are confirmed cases of glyphosate resistant flaxleaf fleabane (*Conyza bonariensis*) from NSW, Queensland and SA roads, and glyphosate resistant windmill grass (*Chloris truncata*) along roads in NSW, Victoria and WA.



Testing for paraquat resistance

So what is the first thing land managers want to do when confronted with herbicide resistance? Grab another herbicide from a different mode of action. This vineyard is an excellent example of how rotating herbicide modes of action only delay the development of resistance while creating multiple resistance in the longer term.

What road managers must use is a series of tactics within a season that ensures that potentially resistance survivors of the previous tactic are prevented from setting seed. This is the ONLY way you manage herbicide resistance. This will normally include surveillance of weed control effectiveness and systems in place within the organisation to deal with any spray failures.

Effective application of herbicides is also critical so ensure the higher end of the herbicide label rate is used with the best possible application methods and under the best possible conditions.

Source: Australian Glyphosate Sustainability Working Group
<http://www.glyphosateresistance.org.au/>

Qld transport corridor program uncovers Australia's most eastern desert

The Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has progressed implementation of its Significant Environmental Areas (SEA) program for transport corridors. The program is designed to conserve the highest priority areas, and not all areas with endangered ecological values are included. The program also aims to compliment the Queensland Government's nature conservation and tourism programs.

One of the recent additions to the register is the Yelarbon Desert. Situated between Warwick and Goondiwindi, the Yelarbon Desert is about 10 ha in size and is considered one of the most unique ecological areas in Queensland. A remnant desert hundreds of kilometres from central Australia and only 350 km from the coast, Yelarbon is the most eastern desert in Australia. It is the only regional ecosystem of its type in the entire Brigalow Belt bioregion and is only a few kilometres from the Queensland-New South Wales border.



A section of the Yelarbon Desert

It is thought that the cause of the desert is a geological unit that has been vertically displaced 30-70m, with the western block moving upwards relative to the eastern block. This fault has caused saline ground water to leak up into the soil zone preferentially at this location. As a result other investigations have been undertaken on the flora, fauna and soils of the areas.

During the SEA investigation process, a number of flora and fauna species were uncovered and it was noted that the desert conditions also appear to be occurring over the border in the NSW road reserve. The Yelarbon Desert is home to the "Desert Jewels" Biodiversity Walk, a tourism activity which highlights the diverse uses of our road reserves and TMR is interested in how this iconic area is being preserved in NSW.

Maintaining this area is important not only for continued effective road purposes but also for the tourism which is vital to the economic development of nearby small regional communities. The management of the Yelarbon Desert under the Significant Environmental Areas program will ensure the conservation of this ecologically unique and important road reserve.

Other sites currently under investigation for the SEA program include the most endangered regional ecosystem in Queensland where it is estimated that at least 65% of the total areas remaining are in road reserves managed by TMR, and a habitat for a species thought to have been extinct for decades. Our road reserves are diverse and vibrant areas and we look forward to sharing what we learn through the program with all our contractors and third parties who use our road reserves. In return, some of the most interesting things we learn are discovered through what the third parties share with us.

For more details contact Kathryn Mahony, Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, (07) 46390868

New Native Vegetation Regulation

The NSW Government recently commenced a new native vegetation regulation.

Environment Minister Robyn Parker said the new regulation will deliver a common sense approach for landholders by lifting regulatory burden and delivering a balanced regime of environmental protection and efficient agricultural management.

"Many farmers found the previous regulation excessively complicated and ambiguous," Ms Parker said. "These changes are not about winding back environmental protection. The regulation will deliver real and practical differences, giving farmers the trust they deserve and providing them with advice and support to get on with sustainable farming.

"The new regulation will reduce the need for dual consents, facilitate good land and vegetation management practices for councils and landholders and reduce impediments to adopting more efficient agricultural systems. A farmer wanting to remove a single paddock tree to put in place more efficient agricultural systems will be able to follow a self-assessable code instead of waiting to get a property vegetation plan." The first of the self-assessable codes for managing invasive species, clearing paddock trees and thinning native vegetation will be exhibited in 2014.

Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources Troy Grant said the changes follow extensive consultation and the recommendations of independent facilitator Joe Lane. "These changes address many concerns about the way native vegetation is currently regulated in NSW and will be further enhanced following the introduction of the self-assessable codes next year," Mr Grant said. "It's important the codes are sensible and practical and there will be an opportunity for the community to provide comment. There has been extensive consultation in the development of these changes and we will make sure the farmers are engaged in the development of the codes."

Source: NSW Government media release

Further information on the Native Vegetation Regulation and the changes is available at:

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

Review of weed management in NSW

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) invites community and stakeholder submissions on the Issues Paper for the review of weed management in NSW.

The Minister for Primary Industries has requested the NRC to undertake an independent evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of weed management arrangements in NSW, with the view of informing the further development of the proposed *NSW Biosecurity Act*, and other relevant strategies under the NSW Biosecurity Strategy.

The purpose of the Issues Paper is to:

- clarify priority issues
- get stakeholder and community views about barriers and opportunities for more effective weed management
- seek to identify any additional issues
- identify relevant evidence to inform the review.

The Issues Paper and instructions for making a submission can be found at the following link:

<http://engage.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/weed-management-review>

Submissions close 6 December 2013

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 develop roadside vegetation management plans, go to:

<http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/environment/roadsideenvironcommittee/>

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



For more information contact:

Neil Dufty - Executive Officer - (02) 9354 0300

ndufty@molinostewart.com.au