The REC Newsletter

February 2012 Edition 9

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

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Latest news from the REC

❖ The REC recently sponsored the Hunter Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy (HCCREMS) to pilot a roadside environmental management training program with three councils: Wyong, Singleton and Gloucester. The objectives of the pilot training program were to:

- Build awareness and capacity to implement a suite of HCCREMS products
- Involve staff across management and operation levels to promote a 'whole-of-council' approach
- Focus on implementation of the Roadside Marker Scheme.

HCCREMS reported that 39 'indoor' staff and 33 'outdoor' staff participated in the training across the three councils. Most participants believed that the training increased their understanding of roadside values and available support resources. The findings of the pilot could be used by other local councils in the training of their staff.

Councils share $1.3 million for local roadside vegetation management projects

Thirty one councils from across NSW will share in almost $1.3 million of funding through the Roadside Vegetation Implementation Project (RVIP), to undertake priority roadside vegetation management works in their local area.

The RVIP is a twelve month project, funded through the NSW Environmental Trust and managed by the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW. The RVIP provides assistance to councils to deliver on-ground works, consistent with the Roadside Vegetation Management Plans.

The President of the Shires Association of NSW, Cr Ray Donald, said there was a great response to the Roadside Vegetation Implementation Program with 45 applications from across NSW.

"I'm particularly pleased that of the 28 projects receiving funding, 11 of those were for projects in council areas with populations less than 20,000 people," Cr Donald said.

"The grants will provide a terrific boost for smaller rural and regional councils, allowing them to carry out vital roadside conservation works and help regenerate ecological corridors in the their local area."

The President of the Local Government Association of NSW, Cr Keith Rhoades AFSM, said the Program benefits many threatened and endangered plants, birds and ecosystems in NSW which are found on roadsides and often span a region – not just one council area.

"It's good to see many of the regional councils banding together in their applications to tackle common roadside vegetation issues, such as protecting the Weeping Myall woodlands – an endangered ecological community found in the Hunter region" said Cr Rhoades.

"Other projects to receive funding include removing environmental weeds, bush regeneration, improving signage of environmentally sensitive areas and staff training to ensure roadside vegetation areas are protected now, and in the future."

A complete list of successful projects is available on the Associations website: www.lgsa.org.au/roadgrants

For further information please contact:
Kirsty McIntyre, Project Manager - Roadside Vegetation Implementation Project, LGSA on 9242 4055 or kirsty.mcintyre@lgsa.org.au.

Winner of the Inaugural Roadside Environmental Management Award announced

The Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards were initiated by the LGSA in 1998 and are held annually. The Awards are open to all councils in NSW and aim to recognise outstanding achievements by NSW Local Government in managing and protecting the environment.

The 2011 Awards included 13 sponsored categories, with a new category - the Roadside Environmental Management Award - sponsored by the REC.

Image: Shireen Murphy, Environment Manager at Mid-Western Regional Council, with the trophy for the overall winner of the 2011 Roadside Environmental Management Award

The winners in the 2011 Roadside Environmental Award category were:

❖ **Winner A Division** - Cooma-Monaro Shire Council: Cooma-Monaro Shire Council Native Roadside Vegetation GIS Layer

- ❖ **Winner B Division & Overall Category Winner** - Mid-Western Regional Council: Roadside Corridor Management Project

- ❖ **Winner C Division** - HCCREMS: Regional Roadside Vegetation Marker Scheme

More details about the Mid-Western Regional Council project can be found at http://www.midwestern.nsw.gov.au/Planning_and_Development/Environment+and+Heritage/Environment+Homepage.html

New website for Atlas of NSW Wildlife

On 18 November 2011 the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage launched the new BioNet website. Replacing both the old Atlas and BioNet websites, the new site provides access to government held information on flora and fauna in NSW.

A two phases approach will be implemented for the complete website rollout:

- ❖ **Phase 1**, which was deployed on November 18 2011, delivers a public website with improved search and mapping functionality, the ability to download the record set returned by your search and the ability to search on OEH's VIS Flora survey ('YETI') database module.

- ❖ **Phase 2** is scheduled for completion in February 2012. Phase 2 provides a revised license granting login access to the new Atlas System. Login access allows users to:

  - Download up to 200,000 records that are only available to licensed clients, including sighting and location notes, and more accurate geographic co-ordinates for sensitive species
  - Upload your own spreadsheets of Atlas sightings
  - Access, and if authorised, enter data into both the VIS Flora survey module and Fauna survey module.

BioNet is supported by National Parks and Wildlife Service, Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, the Department of Primary Industries Forests and Fisheries, and the Australian Museum.

An Atlas search will retrieve species records across the entire database of records, regardless of the user (public or licensed). You do not need to query the VIS Flora survey or Fauna survey modules separately in order to retrieve species records.

The new site can be accessed at http://www.bionet.nsw.gov.au/

2011 Australia State of the Environment Report launched

On 12 December 2011, the Hon. Tony Burke, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, launched the fourth national assessment of the state of Australia's environment. Written by an independent committee of experts, the report covers nine aspects of the Australian environment – atmosphere, inland water, land, marine environment, Antarctic environment, biodiversity, heritage, built environment and coasts.
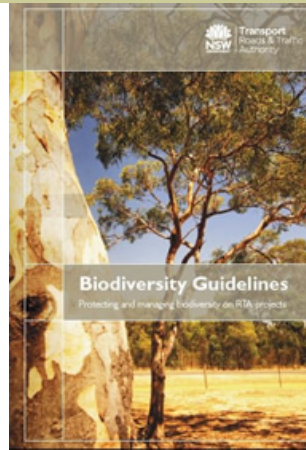*Image: Cover page image for Chapter 5: Land, of the SoE*

For the first time in national environmental reporting, SoE 2011 goes beyond a descriptive summary of evidence to include graded 'report-card' style assessments of environment condition and trends, pressures and management effectiveness. Also new to national State of the environment reporting in 2011 are discussions of the drivers of environmental change, resilience, risks, and future projections or 'outlooks'.

Chapter 5: Land, notes that land clearing is one of the most significant pressures affecting the land environment. From 2000 – 2010, on average approximately 1 million hectares of land, predominantly native vegetation, were cleared each year. The SoE states;

'the condition of much native vegetation is deteriorating, particularly that remaining as fragmented remnants in intensive and settled landuse zones, and that subjected to persistent pressures such as inappropriate grazing or fire regimes.'

Although the SoE doesn't refer specifically to roadside environments, it does mention vegetation fragmentation and the changes this can cause to a natural environment.

NSW Roads and Maritime Services Biodiversity Guidelines Released

NSW Roads and Maritime Services (formerly RTA) has developed guidelines to minimise impacts on biodiversity during construction projects and maintenance works. The *Biodiversity Guidelines: Protecting and managing biodiversity on RTA projects* are intended for RMS project managers, staff and contractors (including ecologists and landscape designers).

The Biodiversity Guidelines will assist with preparation of preliminary environmental investigations or environmental assessments under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 197*9 (NSW). The Biodiversity Guidelines can be referred to when preparing environmental specifications and developing construction environmental management plans (CEMPs), including flora and fauna management sub-plans.

The Biodiversity Guidelines are comprised of 10 separate guides that cover the following topics:
1. Pre-clearing process
2. Exclusion zones
3. Re-establishment of native vegetation
4. Clearing of vegetation and removal of bushrock
5. Re-use of woody debris and bushrock
6. Weed management
7. Pathogen management
8. Nest boxes
9. Fauna handling
10. Aquatic habitats and riparian zones

Filled with useful photos and information boxes, the Biodiversity Guidelines provide a clear understanding of the management issues surrounding construction and maintenance works.

Download the Biodiversity Guidelines here
http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/biodiversity_guidelines.html

Do you have an article on Linear Reserve Environmental Management to share?

The REC encourages readers to submit ideas and information to the REC newsletter. If you

have a project, idea or any other piece of news regarding linear reserve environmental management that you would like to share with others from around the State, we would love to hear from you. Email your ideas or articles to abryce@molinostewart.com.au

For more information or if you wish to be added to the REC newsletter mailing list contact:	Links:
Neil Dufty **Executive Officer** **(02) 9354 0300** ndufty@molinostewart.com.au	**REC Website** **Molino Stewart**