



The REC Newsletter

March 2010 Edition 1

The aim of this newsletter is to profile the NSW Roadside Environment Committee (REC) and share information about the management of NSW linear reserve environments.

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Welcome to the first REC email newsletter

This newsletter will be used to inform readers about the environmental management of linear reserves across NSW. Linear reserves include roadsides, rail and utility corridors and travelling stock routes. The newsletter will update and inform readers on important topics such as training opportunities, best practice case studies, news and projects from around the State.

About the REC – The REC was established in 1994 by the NSW Government to help coordinate and improve the management of NSW linear reserve environments.

The member organisations of the REC are:

- ❖ Roads and Traffic Authority NSW
- ❖ Nature Conservation Council
- ❖ Country Energy
- ❖ Rural Fire Service
- ❖ Rail Corp
- ❖ Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia
- ❖ Local Government and Shires Association of NSW
- ❖ Livestock Health and Pest Authorities
- ❖ Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW
- ❖ Land and Property Management Authority
- ❖ Catchment Management Authorities

Committee meetings are held on a quarterly basis in Sydney and in regional locations throughout NSW.

The objectives of the REC are:

- ❖ to achieve consistent, high quality management of vegetation and other environmental aspects in NSW linear reserves
- ❖ to improve the management of linear reserves in NSW through the engagement of key stakeholders
- ❖ to facilitate the resolution of issues related to the management of linear reserve environments in NSW

For more information about the REC, including how to develop roadside vegetation management plans go to:

www.rta.nsw.gov.au/environment/roadsideenvironcommittee/index.html

Latest news from the REC

The REC has developed its strategic plan for 2010-13 and annual work plan. The main strategies in the plan are:

1. Develop, and support the development of, best practices in the environmental management of linear reserves
2. Assist and support training on best practice environmental management of linear reserves
3. Build awareness and adoption of consistent best practice in linear reserve environmental management in NSW
4. Facilitate discussion and, if possible, develop an approach to resolve conflicts relating to the management of linear reserve environments
5. Promote the REC and its activities

Significant Roadside Environment Area (SREA) Signage

Significant Roadside Environment Area

Call (02) 6023 8111 before commencing any works in this area



www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au

The REC encourages the identification of significant roadside environment areas using signs. Sites of significance can be based on ecological, historical, geological or cultural attributes (or a combination of these).

The Significant Roadside Environment Area (SREA) signs identify areas to:

- ❖ warn roadside workers to take care when operating in the area
- ❖ highlight the features of the roadside to the public and promote awareness
- ❖ provide a contact for further information

Local councils are encouraged to produce and erect SREA signs in appropriate locations along their roadsides. Councils should first complete the SREA sign registration (available from the REC Executive Officer – details below) and then the REC will provide details of sign manufacturers and some examples of signage design.

HCCREMS Regional Roadside Environmental Management Strategy



The Hunter & Central Coast Regional Environmental Strategy (HCCREMS) Team has released a comprehensive Regional Roadside Environmental Management Toolkit which aims to maintain and improve the important ecosystem services and environmental values that high quality and well managed roadsides contribute to the landscape.

Unlike most other roadside projects around Australia, this initiative goes well beyond focusing on the protection of remnant vegetation in linear reserves and seeks to address the whole range of natural resource issues commonly affected by roads and their management. At the same time, it is sensitive to the issues and challenges experienced by councils and other authorities when managing roadside environments, and provides a full suite of planning and management tools and products including:

- ❖ A Regional Roadside Environment Policy - which aims to promote a consistent approach by councils to the protection, management and remediation of roadside environments
- ❖ GIS Mapping layers - designed to allow council staff to immediately access natural resource attribute information for every road segment within their local government area they are responsible for
- ❖ Review of Environmental Factors template software - to make it easy (and automated) for council staff to accurately complete Review of Environmental Factors assessments for common road maintenance activities.

- ❖ Detailed Technical Guidelines - addressing 17 different natural resource management issues (from remnant vegetation to salinity and water crossing design) and the protection and mitigation of the potential impacts of road management practices on the landscape. The guides assist road managers in the protection and enhancement of roadside environment values as part of their day-to-day road management activities.
- ❖ A laminated pocket Field Guide – to support each of the technical guidelines
- ❖ A comprehensive Training Resource Manual for staff on the key environmental issues relevant to roadside environments and the use and application of the toolkit

The Toolkit is able to be used by any council in NSW, and with some legislative adaptation, any council in Australia. It won the 2008 LGSA Excellence in Environment Award for Environment Protection & Restoration.

The HCCREMS team is now working on the implementation of an innovative regional roadside marker system to complement the kit.

For more information: Phone 02 49784020 or log on to www.hccrems.com.au

Lismore City Council Operational Plan – Roadside Vegetation Management



Lismore LGA has a road network of 1,200 km. Council developed the roadside vegetation management plan which aimed to enhance routine roadside maintenance, maintain a balance between asset maintenance, traffic safety and environmental protection and conduct outdoor staff and contractor training. The project was funded through the NSW REC and Environmental Trust.

Lismore is a biodiversity hot spot which supports many threatened species and remnant vegetation. With the unique biodiversity, the roadsides have a disproportionate number of plant species protected under State law. Recent changes to the *Threatened Species Conservation Act* have reduced the escape clauses for damaging a threatened species or its habitat. The provision of “knowingly destroy” has been removed, offenders are viewed as guilty until you prove yourself innocent and there is increased liability at all levels of decision making, from operator to manager.

The project reviewed the routine maintenance of roadsides and the environmental impacts of incidental damage such as altering the habitat of threatened plant species, spreading weed propagules and removing soil binding vegetation increasing susceptibility to erosion.

The project has to also consider the implications of management on roadside hazards. With a third of all fatal accidents in NSW resulting from a roadside object crash, trees are the most frequently struck object in rural LGAs. Roadside vegetation hazards include woody weeds, overgrown road shoulders obscuring sight distances and road drains blocked with vegetation pushing water to run along the edge of road changing driver behaviour to travel closer to the centre line.

The management plan included a desktop assessment, roadside threatened flora survey, import of survey data to Council’s GIS and plan implementation that included staff and contractor training. There were several important outcomes that resulted.

- ❖ A threatened flora guide post system to identify to road workers individual or areas of protected plants that are recorded via GPS to allow easy replacement. The posts are ‘flexi-posts’ that allow them pop up if run over to maximise their life.
- ❖ A register of alphabetical road listings of roadside threatened plants including their GPS location, plant species and guide post arrangement.
- ❖ A glove box field booklet of threatened plant species around Lismore to raise awareness of staff and contractors. Nine main plant species were found that are protected under the TSC Act
- ❖ GIS mapping of threatened plants with a layer aimed at supervisors and managers who can print maps for outdoor staff, a layer which maps the appropriate vegetation treatment according to vegetation type and a layer which shows the location of invasive weeds and appropriate treatments.

Knowing the location of threatened plants allows Lismore City Council to aggressively control low value vegetation to maintain roadside clear zones whilst protecting significant vegetation.

The operational plan received an Environmental Award under the IPWEA (NSW) Excellence Awards in 2007 and the overall award for Environmental Excellence in the Biodiversity Management Category from the Local Government and Shires Association in 2007.

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(Editor: The REC inspected aspects of Lismore Council's Roadside Management Plan during its August 2009 meeting)

Do you have an article on Linear Reserve Environmental Management for us?

The REC encourages readers to share ideas and information through 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 Councils, CMAs, industry and NGOs from around the State, we would love to hear from you. Email your ideas or articles to akarwaj@molinostewart.com.au

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Links:

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