



Conservation Milestone: a Bega Valley Shire First

Concerns over the preservation of some 30 hectares of their land prompted local landholders, Russ and Lorraine McGowan, to apply for a Conservation Property Vegetation Plan (PVP). The agreement is the first of its kind in the Bega Valley Shire.

The McGowan's land encompasses over 30 hectares of forested land, with several locally significant vegetation communities, threatened flora and fauna in addition to remnant gallery rainforest along Desert Creek adjacent to South East National Park.

A Conservation PVP is a legally binding document that is tied to the title of the property and designed to ensure good conservation and land management outcomes in perpetuity. The process involves fieldwork, consultation and negotiation with the landowner. The McGowan's PVP agreement is actually two agreements, one with Russ and Lorraine over their freehold land and another, jointly held with the Department of Lands, over a leasehold section of the property.

This Bega Valley Shire first was celebrated with a morning tea on site where the McGowans were presented with a Conservation PVP sign to display on their property.



"The PVP process is a boon to landholders who wish to conserve remnant habitat on their property. A Conservation PVP is a quick and simple process and I urge people to consider one for their property. I would like to congratulate the McGowan's on their land management decisions throughout the PVP process and for being the first to do so in the Bega Valley".

Brett Miners, Landscape Manager
Southern Rivers CMA

The McGowans believe that the benefits of their Conservation PVP are numerous.

"We would like to thank the staff at the Southern Rivers CMA Bega office for their support and balanced approach in managing the native vegetation on our landholding" said Lorraine McGowan. "We feel we have benefited personally as well as having contributed to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Bega Valley, and encourage other landholders to consider applying for a PVP".

Page five has contact details and more info about what a conservation PVP is, what it is for and how to apply for one. Going through the process of a PVP and the contact you'll have with staff at Southern Rivers CMA can help you better understand, manage and conserve the bushland on your property and protect it into the future.

Photo: Left to right. Laura Babi-an and Liz Clarke from the CMA, Lorraine and Russ McGowan and Justin Gouvernet also from the CMA

CONTENTS

Conservation Milestone	1
Coordinators Column	2
Who is Behind the CMN	2
Sustainable Futures Forum	3
Conservation Research in NSW	3
SPECIAL FEATURE:	
Conservation Options	4-5
Botanic Gardens Trip	5
Community Seedbank	6
Ask an Expert	7
Conservation Survey	7

Contact the FSCCMN

Dan and Vickie Williamson
 PO Box 816
 Bega NSW 2550
 (02) 6492 5558
 info@fscm.com.au
 www.fscm.com.au

Coordinators Column

This edition has a focus on conservation options for your property. It was inspired by a question sent in for 'Ask an Expert'. It made me realise that there are options many of you may not know exist. I've presented the main three. If there are others, which I'm looking into, ill be sure to let you know. You'll find there are some differences between them. The info I could present here is very limited and brief so drop me a line if you want to talk more about the options or just call the relevant project staff.

Since the Federal Government change there have been some big changes to the way natural resource management is focused and funded. This may mean changes to the CMN and how it is focused, but we are yet to see that. Before this happens I'm keen to hear from you what is valuable about the CMN. More importantly what could be more valuable? How can our service better support you to manage the native vegetation on your property? Any thoughts will help shape the future of the CMN. I am always open for a chat about how the CMN can support you, so drop a line or email.

This newsletter is slightly different in the way it's presented. Hopefully it makes it easier and more readable for you. Let me know your thoughts on the changes.

I have to also admit that our last newsletter, titled issue 13, was actually issue 12. This is the real 13, hope you follow!

Hey it's spring. That warm snap we had a week or so ago will have signaled an end to the colder weather and caused many winter dormant plants to 'spring' into action. For the next few months you'll see some pretty spectacular displays of native ground covers, herbs and shrubs. Get out there before the heat of summer arrives.....

DAN

Who is behind the CMN ?

The Far South Coast Conservation Management Network (CMN) supports landholders to manage native vegetation on their property and caters to all land holders and vegetation types.

The CMN is funded and supported in various ways by the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, Department Environment, Climate Change and Water and Bega Valley Shire Council.

These agencies are working with landholders to protect native vegetation on private as well as public land. The CMN's role is to provide motivation, knowledge and skills support to landholders to ensure ongoing management and care is worthwhile for the landholder and the environment.



Sustainable Futures Forum August 09

Forum Review by CMN member, Tasia Livaditis

On August 6 in Cooma, the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources at the University of Sydney held a Sustainable Futures Forum on the theme of Carbon – Water – Food.

The group's research was focused on the high country above 1300 metres altitude. Whilst none of the Far South Coast is at that altitude their findings provided food for thought on how we manage our landscape down here.

There were several interesting points made by the presenters on the day. The first was about carbon capture in soil. The general rule is that forest soils store a lot of carbon. Under pasture carbon is still very high but much less than forests. For areas under cropping and irrigation stored carbon is further reduced.

This science has a range of applications, the ability to estimate carbon capture of pastures in different areas, and for conservation purposes, the understanding that forested areas provide the maximum opportunity for carbon capture in the soil.

The research went on to the discussion of food, in particular the growing of stock on native pastures. In one experiment on a site of basalt soil with approximately 80 species of native grasses dominated by Poa, researchers introduced stock and proceeded to measure a range of variables. The researchers found that with fertiliser application, including the use of introduced legumes, the available green herbage rate did not change, but measures of the stock feeding on the pasture showed that the animals did better (in terms of weight gain presumably) in a fertiliser regime than stock on pasture with no fertiliser.

Without an increase in available herbage the reason for the improved stock performance seemed to be increased nutrient and protein levels in the pasture.

On the same fertilised site the researchers measured the frequency of plant types when they were subjected to different stocking regimes. The frequency of plant types did not change as stocking regimes varied. In fact a counter intuitive finding was that the only section of paddock where biodiversity decreased was the one where stock was excluded entirely.

All in all there was a lot of interesting findings, but the findings are focused on the high country. Acquiring similar scientific facts for the Bega Valley region would be a useful addition in our understanding to help make choices about best use of the land and managing land for the best outcomes.



Conservation Research in NSW

The Biodiversity Wildlife Survey team, part of the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change, is undertaking a statewide web based survey of wildlife sightings. The survey follows up on a similar survey conducted in 2006 concerning several important species that you may have seen in NSW.

I know many of you who read this newsletter take note of the wildlife moving through or living around your properties. It's that kind of intimate detail that helps statewide agencies understand the extent, health and management of particular species. Community information goes a long way to help manage biodiversity. Lets face it, governments sometimes get community consultation wrong, so here is a way to have input.

This survey in particular focuses on four different classes of wildlife.

- koala
- flying-fox
- feral cat
- three bird species; emu, bush stone curlew and barking owl

The survey is now open, and can be started from

www.conservationresearch.com.au

You are invited to participate. This survey is entirely online and hosted at the Conservation Research web site. All the details are securely stored and all identifying material will NOT be made available to anyone outside the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Conservation

Protecting Your Property's Future. What's Right For You?

Many of you spend a lot of time, money and effort on restoring and protecting the natural landscape on your property. Many of you would also like to know that your efforts will be protected along with the land into the future. There are options for permanent protection depending on your property, your situation and your level of commitment. All can be catered for and are outline here for consideration.

Conservation Agreements

A 'Conservation Agreement' (CA) is a voluntary commitment by a landowner to protect and conserve an area of their land with significant conservation value such as state or federally listed endangered species or communities. Conservation agreements were introduced in 1987 in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act).

Each conservation agreement is individually negotiated between the landholder and The Dept. Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) and can only be finalised once all parties are willing to formally commit to its terms and conditions.

The agreements are often known as 'Voluntary Conservation Agreements'. They are in-perpetuity agreements and once entered into are registered on the land title, and binding for all current and successive landowners. This is the major advantage of conservation agreements.

A conservation agreement could be entered into for areas that contain:

- Conservation of critical habitats or threatened species, populations or communities
- Sites of buildings, objects, monuments or events of national significance
- Aboriginal objects or places of special significance

A standard part of each conservation agreement is the development of a management plan to maintain and enhance the conservation values and condition of the land.

Conservation agreements usually apply to part of a property and different terms and conditions can apply to specific 'zones' within the area covered by the agreement. The key aim of any clause in a conservation agreement is to ensure the land is managed to maintain and improve its conservation values.

If you are interested in a Conservation Agreement DECCW staff will be in touch to arrange to meet you on site to discuss

the covenant process, to conduct a field assessment and to discuss management practices that will be appropriate for the area under an agreement. DECCW also provides funding to help implement the agreed conservation area management plan.

Wildlife Refuges

Dedicating land as a 'Wildlife Refuge' is also voluntary and aims to protect and conserve native wildlife and its habitat and also has legal status under the NPW Act. They are also developed and agreed upon with the DECCW.

Land can be proclaimed as a wildlife refuge for:

- Preserving, conserving, propagating and studying wildlife
- Conserving and studying natural environments
- Creating simulated natural environments

Wildlife refuge proclamations are noted on the land title and this status stays in place for current and future owners unless formally revoked by the NSW Governor and/or the landholder.

The ability to have multiple land uses within a wildlife refuge suits many landowners who are keen to protect wildlife habitats while managing for agricultural production, industrial uses, utilities or tourism. A wildlife refuge also suits landowners who carry out native animal release programs.

Unlike conservation agreements, wildlife refuge proclamations usually apply to the whole of a property. They involve the development of broad management objectives which identify areas of high habitat value as well as other land use areas.

For more details on Conservation Agreements or Wildlife Refuges, contact Maya Beretta - Community Programs Officer, Dept of Environment, Climate Change and Water. Ph: 6229 7037 maya.beretta@environment.nsw.gov.au

Options

- Property Vegetation Plans
- Conservation Agreements
- Wildlife Refuges

Property Vegetation Plans

In 2003, the NSW Government introduced legislation to overhaul the management of native vegetation in NSW. The Native Vegetation Act 2003 is the centrepiece of the reform and aims to protect and invest in healthy and productive landscapes. A major part of this is the availability of Property Vegetation Plans (PVPs). Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's) were established to administer PVPs under the Act.

There are two types of PVPs, a PVP for clearing consent and a conservation PVP. Both are negotiated and agreed on between the relevant CMA and the landholder. This brief outline is concentrated on Conservation PVPs which are in-perpetuity agreements that are designed for conservation of native vegetation on private land. They can be used to manage vegetation communities, threatened species and also provide cultural protection. Conservation PVPs are legally binding and listed on the title of the property, although there is no rate relief associated with them. The agreement, like VCAs, remain on title for all successive owners.

Conservation PVPs are not targeted at specific threatened species or vegetation communities. This provides a real option for landholders who don't have state or federally significant species/communities to place permanent protection over the land they work hard to restore.

If you are interested in a Conservation PVP, Southern Rivers CMA staff will arrange a visit to undertake a site visit, conduct field sampling to determine vegetation types present on the property, threatened species habitat and also start to work with you to identify management practices that will be appropriate for the area under the agreement. These management practices will often include grazing management, required infrastructure such as tracks and fencing, ecological burning regimes and so on.

For more details on Property Vegetation Plans, contact Laura Babian or Liz Clark, Catchment Officers, Southern Rivers CMA 6491 8200 Laura.Babian@cma.nsw.gov.au Liz.Clark@cma.nsw.gov.au



Getting to the Point

Conservation Agreements (CA)

- CAs are for properties that have a significant biodiversity value. Their approval is based on the properties contribution to the survival of threatened or endangered species or communities
- Is a permanent covenant on the title of the land that is passed on to any future owners
- The area of land under agreement is exempt from rates and can attract tax deductions
- The agreement is a plan of management for the future of the land that the landowner has responsibility for

Wildlife Refuges (WR)

- WRs are easier to obtain, not reliant on significant species or communities. They are for the protection, restoration or study of plants animals and their habitat
- May include areas outside native vegetation such as grazed areas, woodlots or farm dams
- Are a permanent agreement that is recorded on title and is passed on to future owners
- WR's do not attract rate relief or tax deduction

Property Vegetation Plans (PVP)

- PVPs are for any property, not species targeted and usually apply to the part of land managed for biodiversity conservation.
- Are a permanent agreement that is recorded on title and is passed on to future owners.
- There is no rate relief for PVP's
- A PVP includes a management plan that is negotiated between the landowner and CMA staff, is flexible, cost free and provides good management advice and guidelines.



CMN trip to Botanic Gardens

Have you been to the Australian National Botanic Gardens? Have you ever seen a plethora of native plants from all over Australia in the one place? Have you spent a good amount of time wandering around admiring the beauty of the Australian landscape and its magnificent flora lately?

If you answered no to all or some of these questions, why not join the CMN for a field trip to Canberra to the Australian National Botanic Gardens. The CMN has never left the confines of the Bega Valley before to explore vegetation types other than our own. The botanic gardens give us the chance to see vegetation from all over Australia.

Dan and Vickie (CMN coordinators) spent a day there recently and know that many CMN members would be as inspired as they were.

Saturday 31st October 2009

Car pooling from Bega departing 7.30am sharp, returning to Bega 5.30pm

Contact Dan for more details 6492 5558 – info@fscmn.com.au



Far South Coast Landcare Association Community Seedbank

The CMN would like to thank Liz Clark, long standing coordinator and founder of the Far South Coast Landcare Association Community Seedbank, for her outstanding dedication to the seedbank and native vegetation management in the Bega Valley.

The Seedbank has a new coordinator, Karen Walker who describes here how the Seedbank can help you. Good luck Karen!

What is the Seedbank and how can it help you?

In this case we're talking about the Far South Coast Landcare Association (FSCLA) Community Seedbank, not the great article on soil stored seedbank in the most recent issue of CMN. The FSCLA seedbank has been in existence for 10 years, mostly under the able direction of Liz Clark. Liz has taken on another role within the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, still within the vegetation field.

Currently the seedbank is funded for a co-ordinator 2 days a week with the major emphasis on collecting, storing and dispatching locally native seed. What makes this seedbank unique, as compared to larger seed companies, is the dealing in local provenance seed only. Provenance refers to the place of origin, or where the seed was collected from, which is well documented and recorded for each and every seed lot. Ideally, if you were wanting to grow plants, you could request seed from/near the area in question, which in turn leads to better adapted, more robust plants.

People who use the seedbank include landholders, landcare groups, nurseries, councils and government authorities involved in revegetation. If you are thinking of planting seedlings, or have the desire to try growing your own and want advice about how to collect; how to sow and grow; or what species would be best for your area, the seedbank may be the answer. If you are contracting a nursery to supply seedlings you can request local provenance seed (if available).

With only limited money and resources, there is always a place for 'informants' or 'spotters' who may be able to advise the seedbank on when/where there is large amounts of seed (with permission from the landowner, of course). Seed collection is undertaken within strict ethical guidelines which preserve the plants and genetic diversity.

Please feel free to contact me on 6491 8224 (Tues & Wed), or email Karen.Walker@cma.nsw.gov.au

Resources



Ask an Expert

'Ask an Expert' questions to:
info@fscmn.com.au
or PO box 816 Bega

Q: Hey Dan, a question for your 'ask an expert'. I've lived on my property for years and done a lot to restore the natural systems that co-habit with me and my farming. I thought about a VCA a few years ago but was told there was no money for VCA's anymore. Someone else mentioned to me recently that the CMA was now doing them, or something similar. What's the story and who do I talk to?

A: Maya Beretta, Community Programs Officer, Dept of Environment, Climate Change and Water

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water still enters into Conservation Agreements (CA) with landholders who have properties that are of high conservation value. Properties that are approved for CAs have a number of values such as forming corridors through the landscape, contain threatened species or their habitats, endangered ecological communities, significant karst systems, cultural heritage or areas of significance such as RAMSAR Wetlands (www.ramsar.org).

There is still funding for approved projects on new Conservation Agreements where projects enhance the conservation value of the property. Other support mechanisms are rate relief, possible tax incentives, a newsletter and advice and contact with local National Parks staff.

For more detailed information see the DECCW website www.environment.nsw.gov.au/conservationprograms/ or contact Maya Beretta on ph: 6229 7037.

A: Laura Babian, Catchment Officer, Southern Rivers CMA

Southern Rivers CMA is able to provide a very similar agreement to the CA. This is called a Conservation PVP (which stands for Property Vegetation Plan). This is a negotiated agreement between the CMA and the landholder, designed to produce an in-perpetuity agreement that is listed on title to provide for the on-going management of environmental areas.

If a landholder contacts Southern Rivers CMA regarding a Conservation PVP, we will come out and undertake a site visit, some field sampling to determine vegetation types present on the property and threatened species habitat and also start to work with the landholder to identify management practices that will be appropriate for the area under agreement. These management practices will often include grazing management, required infrastructure such as tracks and fencing, ecological burning regimes and so on.

Conservation PVPs are not targeted at the moment, we are not searching to have particular areas, threatened species or vegetation communities protected via a Conservation PVP agreement. I would consider them to be another option for landholders.

To discuss the option of a PVP contact Laura Babian or Liz Clark, Catchment Officers, Southern Rivers CMA 6491 8200 Laura.Babian@cma.nsw.gov.au Liz.Clark@cma.nsw.gov.au

Conservation Options guide

The Environmental Defender's Office (EDO) is about to produce a guide for landholders considering private conservation options for their property.

This is interesting and timely considering the topic of this newsletter. So if you have a CA or another conservation contract, get onto it because I know many of you have 'critical' feedback.

However just as importantly, if this edition of the CMN newsletter has inspired thought about protecting your land, then your opinions, needs, wants etc would be most valuable to the development of the EDO's guide.

Invitation for Private Conservation landholders

The EDO is seeking to consult with landholders who have been involved in private conservation. The EDO is also interested in speaking with people who are in the process of investigating or carrying out private conservation or people who have looked at private conservation options and decided against implementing a private conservation program. If you fit into any of these categories please contact the EDO. Your feedback and experiences will be used as part of the research into a new free publication on private conservation.

Rosemary Bullmore (02) 9262 6989 or education@edo.org.au

HEY, don't leave us out. if you are considering adding a level of legal conservation to your property, we can help you find the right local people to talk to NOW.

CMN coordinator Dan Williamson
6492 5558 info@fscmn.com.au