

Blue Mountains City Council

Bushcare Annual Report



2007 - 2008





Introduction

Welcome to the Bushcare Annual Report for 2007-2008 Financial Year for what has been another exciting period of growth.

This year we reached a total of 63 Groups in the Blue Mountains LGA, with at least one group in every Blue Mountains township. Volunteer participation has also increased this year by 13% over the previous year.

A revised second edition of the *Weeds of the Blue Mountains Bushland* booklet has been produced. Our Weeds Website www.weedsbluemountains.org.au continues to be popular with over 14,000 visits a month.

We look to the future by developing an even stronger partnership with community. We wish to improve and refine the training and volunteering experiences we offer.

This report focuses on all the key areas of the 2005-08 Service Level Agreement and records our achievements in each area.

Lyndal Sullivan
Bushcare Team Leader

Bushcare Groups

At the end of June 2008, there were 47 active bushcare groups working each month on public land which were supported by on-the-ground supervision and training each work day.

In addition to bush regeneration activities, some groups have undertaken track work and erosion control works during the year.

Other Bushcare events

Remote Bushcare recommenced during the year with 3 activities. Two events were held in conjunction with NPWS as part of the Great Grose Weed Walk:

- Popes Glen, Blackheath, downstream of Bushcare site,
- Blue Mountain Creek, Wentworth Falls downstream of the Water Nymphs Dell, Bushcare site

Another activity was held on Long Angle Creek, Springwood, following up on work undertaken in previous years.



Photo 1- Cumberland Walkway Bushcare Group installing a Site Sign

Landcare Groups

At the end of June 2008, there were 16 active Landcare groups working on private land which were supported by on-the-ground supervision. Whilst the SLA requirement is to support groups on a quarterly basis, this has not been found to be satisfactory for most groups. Following a review of the high attrition rates of Landcare Groups, all groups have these are being offered monthly support. When new Landcare or Bushcare Groups commence, this level of support will need to be reduced with the most experienced groups.

One new Group has commenced during the year, Woodford Glen in Woodford., which commenced in February.

Another Group has been transferred from Community & Corporate – Kihilla in Hazelbrook.

Other activities supporting private landholders have included residents attending Biodiversity Workshops and Bushcare days to learn more about how to manage their own land. One example of the flow on effects are the 13 properties in Glenbrook surrounding the Bellata Court and Alexander Crescent, Bushcare/Landcare sites. Weed removal and bushregeneration has been the result of establishing relationships with landholders and neighbours being inspired to clean up their own properties. Whilst some property owners are involved with the Bushcare/ Landcare Groups, most were not active participants.

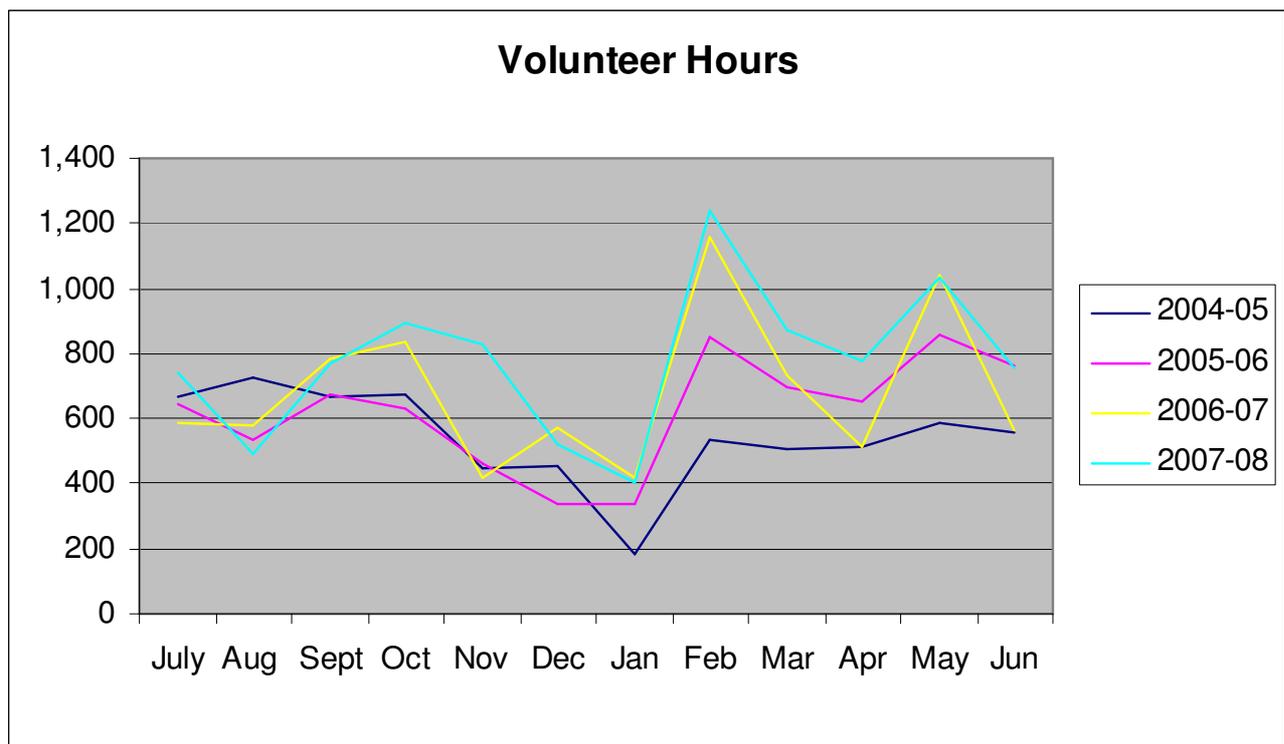


Photo 2 - Members of Woodford Glen Landcare Group at Work (Aug 08)

Total Volunteer Hours

The graph below shows the volunteer hours (Bushcare and Landcare) over the last 4 years. During the 2007/2008 year 9,327 volunteer hours were recorded across the 63 Bushcare and Landcare groups. This represents a 13 % increase in hours from last year with an average annual increase of 10.7% over the last 4 years.

These figures do not include an additional 550 hours of support from TAFE classes on Bushcare Sites (additional detail below)



A full and up to date list of all groups is available on the website:

http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/locate_bushcare_group.asp

Records of work undertaken are completed at the end of each month. The existing volunteer records have been updated and a new database developed over May/July 2008.

Promotional Events

Promotional activities included

- Bushcare “Thank You” BBQ Feb 2 2008 140 Attendees. Awards were given in recognition of the milestones reached by groups, and awards to individuals.
- Bushcare participated in Springwood Foundation Day stall
- National Tree Day - coordinated the supply of trees and shrubs to 28 schools, 6 community groups and nearly 20 Bushcare and Landcare groups.
- Featured in audiovisual made by Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens on bushregeneration in the Blue Mountains in April.
- Bushcare contributed to a promotional stall for Weedbusters Week.



Photo 3 - Birdwood Gully Biodiversity Event (Sept 07)

Bushcare Special Events

Educational events held over the year have included Biodiversity workshops, seed collection and threatened species activities.

14 Bushcare Biodiversity Workshops were conducted in association with Council's Threatened Species Program. The total attendance was 223 people; Topics covered were:

- Bird observation - Jamison, Horseshoe Falls, Knapsack Creek, Lone Pine, Darks Common,
- Spotlighting - Megalong, Sun Valley, Knapsack Creek
- Biodiversity - (eg aquatic, plant identification, botany, bushcare history) - Popes Glen, Sun Valley, South Lawson, Birdwood Gully, Redgum Park
- Swamp flora, fauna and ecology, threatened species, & community involvement - MinneHaHa Falls Reserve

Two Seed Collection Workshops were held which provided instruction on the collection, storage and preparation of seeds for propagation (25 participants)

Two weeding days held in conjunction with the Threatened Species Program to safeguard the *Microstrobos fitzgeraldii* at Katoomba Falls and Leura Cascades. Educational materials were available and a short presentation made on this threatened species.

The Swampcare program, run jointly with the Threatened Species program, held 7 Swampcare days with a total of 72 volunteer participant days (492 hrs). These activities were held primarily in a North Wentworth Falls swamp near Kittyhawk Avenue, and also at Marmion Swamp North Leura. Bushcare also supported the Blue Mountains Water Skink and Giant Dragonfly monitoring program which occurred in various swamps across the local government area.

An historic walk of on Knapsack Creek in November attracted 42 participants and 3 volunteer presenters.



Photo 4 - Sun Valley Spotlighting with Hawke Moth (March 08)

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

The *Weeds of the Blue Mountains* booklet has been revised with 10,000 copies of this 2nd edition printed in July 07 with over 7000 distributed across the mountains throughout the year. It has been distributed at promotional events, as well as through regular distribution locations such as nurseries, neighbourhood centres, libraries, railway stations and council offices.

TAFE and Greencorps

An additional 550 hours was contributed by Wentworth Falls TAFE over the reporting period. BMCC Staff are involved in site planning and on-site facilitation of these activities. Bushregeneration work was undertaken by students on the following sites:

Knapsack Park Lapstone
Summerhayes Park Winmalee
Gloria Park, Hazelbrook
Denis Kevans Reserve, cnr Valley Rd and Armstrong Sts, Wentworth Falls
Katoomba Falls Reserve, South Katoomba
Marmion Swamp, North Leura
Peter Carol Field, Leura
Maple grove, Cliff Drive Katoomba
Bureau Park, Katoomba
Community Gardens Katoomba
Corner Seventh Ave and South Street Nth Katoomba
Frog Hollow, Blackheath

Council supported and was a partner agency for two Green Corps Teams in conjunction with Blackheath Public School and Mountains Youth Services. Part of their work involved working in a Blue Mountains swamp in North Lawson, on the Bushcare site. Greencorps also contributed to stormwater projects in the Katoomba Falls catchment.

The projects provided a diverse range of activities that included;

- Landscaping and horticultural techniques
- Weed identification and removal
- Revegetation works incorporating mulching, weeding, and planting
- Basic natural area restoration techniques
- Soft engineering stormwater mitigation works

A number of Duke Of Edinburgh students have also worked at various Bushcare sites to increase their environmental knowledge as part of that program.

Quarterly Newsletter

Four “Gecko” newsletters were produced; in Winter (Issue #32), Spring (Issue #33), Summer (Issue #34) and Autumn (Issue #35). Circulation approx 900 copies.

An email system has been developed of volunteer addresses. Each Gecko newsletter is hosted on our website and over 350 people or organizations are sent an email with the appropriate link (http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/gecko_online.asp). The website is serving as a community archive for the newsletter.

In addition, an email bulletin is sent to over 340 people approximately monthly to update volunteers on events between Geckos.



Photo 5 - MinneHaha Falls Reserve Swamp (Nov 07)

Managing Contracts

Assistance has been provided to Community and Corporate Branch of Council in the application for grants and/or the management of subsequent contracts on the following 12 sites:

Coates Park, Hazelbrook
Central Park, Wentworth Falls
Cox's Reserve, Lapstone
Cross Street Reserve, Warrimoo
Katoomba Creek, Nth Katoomba
Leura Cascades, Leura
Linksvie Avenue Springwood
Marmion Swamp, Nth Leura
North Lawson
Tortoise Creek, Faulconbridge
Mount Wilson -Zig Zag and Waterfall Reserves
Wilson Glen Woodford

The following contracts have been managed by Bushcare:

Popes Glen, Blackheath
McCraes Paddock, South Katoomba
Kedumba, Sth Katoomba

Two further grants have been obtained, but not commenced:

- Kedumba, Katoomba - for stormwater,
- Brahama Kumaris Landcare Group, Leura

Website

The website continues to service sessions from over 10,000 users every month with an average of 14,445 over the January – June 2008 period. The website (www.weedsbluemountains.org.au) is now in its fourth year of operation and widely accepted as the benchmark for weed education on the Internet.

It is updated on a regular basis with news items and group details to keep the site alive and encourage return visitors.

Recent upgrades include:

- Updating the site to reflect the changes made in the new edition of the Weeds booklet. This involved revising and updating all the weeds text, and replacing photos where better ones were available. Full page descriptions of five more weeds were added. The Weed Control pages were extensively revised to reflect the most recent developments in weed control methods. The design and look of the new booklet were reflected in the web pages.
- The recent amendment of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 required the reclassification of all weeds on the site. Descriptions of the new Noxious Weed classes were included with each noxious weed, links were included to BMCC Noxious Weed Control Plans, and Weeds of National Significance were linked to the WONS website.
- The page *Other Blue Mountains Bush Invaders* has been updated and a number of environmental weeds were added.
- More information and images were added to the *Noxious Weeds* and *Other Bush*

Invaders sections. As suitable photos become available, they are placed on these pages along with a brief description, so as to make the identification of garden and bushland weeds easier for both volunteers and the general community.

- The Weeds website now includes the agenda and minutes of the Bushcare Network meetings, downloadable PDFs of the *Gecko*, as well as news and reports of groups and events. A large number of Bushcare groups have now developed their own web pages.



Photo 6 - Bird watching at Darks Common Birds with Jill Dark and Dick Turner (Mar08)

Future Recommendations

The Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program continues to show strong growth from within the community at both regular and special events. For the last two years there has been at least one group in every township of the Blue Mountains.

Options for further development are limited by budgetary constraints, as the existing team of 7 Bushcare Officers are almost at capacity for supporting regular groups. Two new groups are expected to commence during the first quarter of the 2008-2009 year. This will bring the program to full capacity, unless support to some existing groups is reduced.

Areas of development for the next 12 months could include:

- Development of more cross-agency partnerships - develop projects that work with other land management agencies. These would be annual or one-off events that target specific areas of land not reached by core Bushcare or BMCC programs.
- Development of training opportunities - to increase the skill levels of existing volunteers to assist them in being more actively involved in site strategy decisions, increase their sense of stewardship for their sites, and to assist in recruiting volunteers to their sites. Also to develop introductory training to recruit volunteers.
- Development of opportunities and appropriate training to increase the opportunities available to volunteers interested in site monitoring, biodiversity surveys or research into bushregeneration techniques.



Photo 7 – Burgess Falls Bushcare Group track building (Aug 07)