LOCAL GOVERNMENT NSW

Council Roadside Reserves

Roadside Vegetation as a Natural Asset - A Pilot for Coffs Harbour City Council

COUNCIL NAME
Coffs Harbour City Council

WEB ADDRESS
www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au

SIZE
1,175 square kilometres

POPULATION
72,944

Overview of the project

Coffs Harbour City Council's (CHCC) project collated existing and new roadside vegetation data for input into Councils Asset Management System. Identifying the vegetation as an asset ensured that it could be considered when works in the roadside were being scheduled and the data viewed spatially by on ground staff in the same way that traditional 'hard' assets are viewed and maintained.

Roadside vegetation and their associated environmental values are not currently recognised within the CHCC Asset Management Systems. Council conducted a review of their management system, and as part of that review sought to incorporate natural assets along three key roads into their Asset Management System. This pilot project trialled the process, prior to rolling it out across the local government area.

Image taken from Coffs Harbour's system which can be accessed by field staff.

How the project was carried out

Although Council has excellent vegetation mapping, roadside reserves weren't recognised within asset management systems.This project collated data for roadside vegetation for input into Councils Asset Management System. Once the vegetation was recognised as an asset it could then be considered when works in the roadside are being scheduled and the data viewed spatially by on ground staff in the same way that traditional assets are viewed and maintained. Incorporating the vegetation into the Asset Register results in protection by default as it is integrated within the system, given an asset identification and management actions to ensure its on-going maintenance.

The project achieved the following:

- CHCC Natural Asset System updated with data from the three pilot roads
- Training for staff involved in roadside management and project planning and delivery
- All project data incorporated into the Enterprise Asset Management System which is part of the Asset Management Strategy in Council's Resourcing Strategy

Outcomes now and in the future

Council's Enterprise Asset Management System was updated to include natural asset data for the three key roads. The system already recognised the roads as a number of segments, each with its own asset identification. Data was able to be added into each asset, or segment and made available to inform management responses and on-ground works.

Staff with responsibility for scheduling works such as roadside manitenance can now access the data through the Asset Management System database or Council's GIS system. This is undertaken when planning future works such as mowing of areas, while on-ground staff see the information spatially to guide their activities in the field.

The success of the project relied upon the involvement of multiple staff and the need to overcome barriers including different systems and access to data. An understanding of the end user requirements was also necessary in the process. The project has been able to create a number of links between on-ground action and Council's asset management system to improve communication and delivery of actions across council staff and in scheduling activities.

Benefits and lessons learned

The project delivered an outcome where management actions were determined for the assets and both the vegetation assets and the management actions were included as categories within the Asset Management System. All the road segments identified in the pilot area now have management actions that will guide the ongoing management of these roadside areas.

Any data captured for the road segment, including data on ecological values are included in the register and linked through to a hyperlink to the full report so that actions can be researched in more detail when a road upgrade occurs.

The key learnings as identified by Council include:

- The need to ensure there is a project scope to ensure outcomes are achieveable.
- Prior to embarking on the project there should be a thorough understanding of how each section of council involved in the project works and what they needed and expected from the project.
- Council could utlise existing fine scale vegetation data, so using the Rapid Assessment Method (RAM) did not add more value to the project.
- Natural assets can be inclued in an asset register and actions listed to ensure their ongoing care, and these details then fed into systems used by asset managers, project schedulers, and on-ground staff.

More information

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