

Palerang Council's Oallen Road restoration project

COUNCIL NAME

Palerang Council

WEB ADDRESS

palerang.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

5,143 square
kilometres

POPULATION

15,053

Overview

The Oallen Roadside Restoration project improved the ecological condition, extent and connectivity of native vegetation along the Oallen Road, Palerang. Oallen Road includes largely undisturbed forest connecting several national parks, however historical pine plantations in the area and heavy traffic between the coast and central NSW have introduced a range of weeds that threaten the corridor, endangered ecological community and threatened species.



Before and after photos of Oallen Road radiata pine removal site.

Background

The project location is Oallen Rd, a 14 km stretch of road between the intersection with Nerriga Road and the Shoalhaven River at Oallen Ford. The road traverses a diversity of native vegetation communities, agricultural use and forestry operations. The native vegetation is mixed age grassy woodland and dry sclerophyll forests in moderate to good condition, including Tableland Snow Gum Woodland Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) and Box Gum Woodland EEC, as well as threatened species such as the endangered orchids *Genoplesium superbum* and *Corunastylis superba*.

Weed mapping along Oallen Road was completed early in the project. Initial roadside vegetation surveys were conducted in collaboration with Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to identify high conservation value sites. Photo points were established and a weed removal plan was developed.

Implementation

Weed control and site rehabilitation

The project weed control focussed on the felling of pine trees and management of debris on-site, including use in erosion gully control. Council's noxious weed program coordinated with this project to treat the prevalent Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), which was also impacting on the site.

During the delivery of the project an infestation of Fireweed, a new incursion species in Palerang, was detected and managed. It is unlikely that this weed would have been detected without the on-ground survey work being undertaken in association with this project, enabling early treatment of the weed.

Five sites were identified as suitable for rehabilitation and natural regeneration, and a revegetation plan developed. Straw bales were installed to reduce sheet and gully erosion, trap sediment and promote germination of seedlings from existing soil seedbank and seed fall. A total of 500 endemic native trees and shrubs were planted.

Roadside signage

Two roadside signs were installed to promote awareness of the project and the local roadside vegetation values. The signs are based on the Significant Roadside Environment Area (SREA) template provided by LGNSW.



Oallen Road signage installed.

Improved roadside vegetation information

Detailed vegetation mapping and assessment was undertaken along Oallen Road using the Ecological Integrity Index developed by Cooma-Monaro Shire Council and endorsed by Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and Roads and Maritime Services (RMS). This was the first time such detailed mapping has been undertaken by Palerang Council and the results are being evaluated as part of the design for a new Draft Palerang Roadside Vegetation Management Plan.

Outcomes

The works have improved the ecological condition, extent and connectivity of native vegetation along the road corridor. The additional 500 native trees and shrubs have been planted strategically, using appropriate local species, to complement the surrounding EEC, grassy woodlands and dry sclerophyll forests. This assumption is based on visual observation, assessment of key threatening processes for grassy woodland communities (such as weed invasion, which has been controlled), and current research on the value of roadside vegetation (Carthew et. al. 2013).

The main outcomes of the project include:

- No readily visible weeds along 14km of roadside after the completion of environmental weed control, specifically removal of 300 *Pinus radiata* trees.
- Areas with major weed removal have been replanted with native species. Five degraded sites have been restored along Oallen Road.
- Installation of roadside signage to identify high priority vegetation sites to road workers and the wider community.
- Digital mapping of the Ecological Integrity Index has also been completed as a trial in the broader development of the Draft Palerang Roadside Vegetation Management Plan.
- Some further roadside vegetation survey and assessment undertaken along Oallen Road for input to the Draft Palerang Roadside Vegetation Management Plan.

Key Learnings

The project involved collaboration between state agencies, local government and vegetation management contractors. Threatened species information was provided by Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), land ownership and management advice provided by Crown Lands, while Southern Rivers CMA assisted in vegetation surveys and provided specifications for revegetation and erosion and sediment control measures. Specialist contractors removed the pine trees and provided revegetation design advice prior to planting in the rocky and challenging soil surface.

The project has provided the stimulus needed for the development of a new Draft Palerang Roadside Vegetation Management Plan, to extend the roadside vegetation surveying. Several council staff have been involved in providing information and feedback on the methodology, research into the previous vegetation roadside surveys and plans prior to amalgamation (such as the Tallaganda Shire Council Roadside Management Plan 1997) and developing appropriate mapping software. The value shown by this mapping has inspired Council to seek funding for priority activities for roadside vegetation management across the 1500 km road network.

The Council and OEH have been actively working together on the threatened species *Genoplesium superbum* and *Corunastylis superba* which have been recorded in the project area. OEH and CMA staff have also offered to undertake further field training on-site for council officers and outdoor staff involved in roadside vegetation management, further building the local knowledge and good management practices in the local area.

References:

Carthew, Susan M., Liesl A. Garrett, and Laura Ruykys. "Roadside vegetation can provide valuable habitat for small, terrestrial fauna in South Australia." *Biodiversity and Conservation* (2013): 1-18.

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