

Development of Byron Shire Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2020-2030

COUNCIL NAME

Byron Shire Council

WEB ADDRESS

byron.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

566 km²

POPULATION

34,574

Overview

Byron Shire Council has prepared a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) with extensive engagement with the community, stakeholders and local ecologists, to reflect local knowledge of the environment, and the needs and capacity of the community to help protect it. The Strategy includes a plan of 90 measurable actions to support conservation across all departments of Council, on private land and in adjacent Local Government Areas, and updates their 2004 Strategy.

Background

The Strategy is a plan of action for 2020-2030 to identify the actions and priorities for both Council and the community to protect and enhance the unique natural biodiversity. The approach taken engages an already passionate, active community who care about the natural environment and want to protect it, encouraging them to participate in a coordinated approach to manage and protect the Shire's unique biodiversity.

The Strategy provides leadership and support to the community and enables Council to:

- Manage operations to minimise impact on biodiversity;
- Use legislated powers and resources to protect Byron's biodiversity;
- Respond to the aspirations of the community to safeguard biodiversity through partnerships and community engagement; and
- Build community capacity to understand the natural environment and minimise individuals' ecological footprints.

It builds on Council's first Biodiversity Conservation Strategy in 2004, reflecting changes in the community, environment and governance structures and providing an update to reflect current best practice and new legislation. It also aligns with Byron Shire Council's Community Strategic Plan and Operational Plan which also identifies the importance of partnerships to manage biodiversity.

The updated Strategy provides an overarching approach for several related Council plans and strategies, all of which are currently being implemented under Council's Operational Plan, including: Integrated Pest Management Strategy, Flying Fox Camp Management Plan, Coastal Koala Plan of Management and Pest Animal Management Plan.

Implementation

The community of Byron Shire, including residents, landholders, traditional owners, businesses, visitors, Council staff and neighbouring local and state government agencies are both the target audience, and the project partners in Council's Strategy, 2020-2030.

It was developed with the following objectives:

- To reflect current legislation, policies and plans.
- To reflect current science and best practice biodiversity conservation and enhancement approaches.
- To support, and be supported by, the community and other stakeholders.



-
- To be relevant to the whole of Council and align and works with other relevant council plans and strategies, as well as work being done by other local Councils and agencies in the broader Northern Rivers region.

These objectives were identified through consultation with key stakeholders, including Council staff, traditional owners, Council's Biodiversity Advisory Committee, other local governments (through the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation), and the community. The review of the achievements of the previous Strategy, also helped to identify what had been successful and where updates were required.

Stakeholders indicated strong support for our collective responsibility towards biodiversity conservation, but also the need for leadership from government. The Strategy has been developed to reflect these four aims: Lead, Inform, Support and Manage. Governments to lead, information provided to the community on actions to protect native wildlife, support provided to landholders to improve ecological sustainability of their properties, and other local and regional organisations partnering with local government to manage landscape-scale habitat connectivity and resilience.

Outcomes

Council adopted the Strategy in June 2020 after extensive stakeholder engagement and peer review. The new Strategy has created a measurable Action Plan that will enable Council and the community to work together to protect and enhance biodiversity in Byron Shire and work towards implementing some actions.

Engagement with local ecological experts during Strategy development and peer review enabled identification of issues and opportunities unique to the local area. The contributions of well-respected local ecologists not only improved the content of the Strategy, but also helped to garner community support and facilitate the public exhibition process.

Key Learnings

Engaging stakeholders early in the development of the Strategy enabled efficient delivery of the project through identifying locally-specific issues, information gaps and opportunities to be considered in the strategy development.

The review of the 2004 Strategy presented challenges due to staff turnover over the lifetime of that strategy. As a result, the 2020-2030 Strategy will include an annual actions audit to improve Council's capacity to review and update the strategy in future. Next steps are to implement the 90 actions listed in the BCS Action Plan, based on identified priorities. Implementation of some of these actions are in progress, including updates to mapping, development of a Biodiversity Development Control Plan, supporting restoration activities on private land and identifying strategies to manage wildlife road strike.

Contact

Name: Liz Caddick
Position: Biodiversity Officer
Phone: 02 66267324
Email: lcaddick@byron.nsw.gov.au

This project was the 2020 winner of the Innovation in Planning, Policies and Decision Making Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards