

Racing to Save the Mount Panorama Woodlands

COUNCIL NAME

Bathurst Regional Council

WEB ADDRESS

www.bathurst.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

3,820 square kilometres

POPULATION

38,519

Overview

Mount Panorama. A name so iconic in the Australian vernacular that there is no need to include the words 'motor racing circuit' to elicit an image of V8 Supercars for most people. While the very name Mount Panorama is synonymous with motor racing, the Mount – as it is affectionately known – is increasingly becoming known to conservationists as host to a very important vegetation community.

Box-Gum Grassy Woodland is listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and listed as an Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. This vegetation community exists in fragments within the Mount Panorama precinct.

This project is a partnership between Council and Boundary Road Reserve Landcare Group to improve the condition and linkages of more than 117ha of EEC woodland across four sites within the Mount Panorama precinct through a variety of on-ground and educational works.



Image: The Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands

Background

In 2013 Bathurst Regional Council was successful in receiving funding from the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust for a project titled "Racing to Save the Mount Panorama Woodlands". The project was designed to improve the condition and connectivity of four remnant populations of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland to create a landscape-scale project over 100ha in size, which is consistent with two of the priority projects as established by the Bathurst Vegetation Management Plan Reference Group.

It is understood that less than 5% of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland remains from pre-European settlement with less than 1% remaining in good condition, making this a nationally significant rehabilitation project.



Three project objectives were developed:

1. Improve the condition and connectivity of 1,173,300m² of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland including targeted works to improve habitat for, and increase the numbers of listed threatened species.
2. To increase community awareness of more than 30,000 Bathurst residents and visitors to Mount Panorama of the existence of Box-Gum Grassy Woodland, as well as listed threatened species that are present in the Bathurst Region, and the importance of both standing and fallen dead wood and the threat of weeds and predatory animals to the woodland community.
3. Protect and rehabilitate 600m of ephemeral waterways with a high propensity to erosion by eliminating stock access to project sites, as well as construction of ten targeted in-stream erosion control structures.

Implementation

It was critical to the implementation of this project that equal consideration was given to on-ground works and public education. On-ground works such as pest control, fencing, erosion control and revegetation works improve the habitat and condition of the project sites. However, by conducting a targeted education campaign regarding the importance of Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands, incidences of timber collection and other damaging behaviours in project sites have been reduced or prevented.

All works have been conducted in accordance with best management practices and individual site management plans. This has included developing integrated pest control programs for pest plants and animals and utilising new techniques such as “fauna friendly fencing” and “one rock dam” erosion control structures.

The education campaign specifically targeted recreational users and residents of Mount Panorama and attendees of the Bathurst 1000 motor race, and more generally was aimed at residents and visitors to Bathurst. A range of educational tools from print media to social media were used to reach as large an audience as possible.

Outcomes

The outcomes of this project to date have been tremendous both in terms of on-ground works and educational outcomes as detailed below:

- Removal of 1,410m of internal fencing to assist with fauna transit.
- Replacement of 1,890m of traditional fencing with ‘fauna friendly fencing’ to assist with fauna transit
- Planting of 400 native, endemic tubestock plants to replace habitat.
- Distribution of 23 posters and 1,478 flyers through Council environmental events, local pet stores and veterinary practices.
- Construction of five “One Rock Dam” erosion control structures consistent with techniques developed by Craig Sponholtz of Watershed Artisans: <http://www.watershedartisans.com/>.
- A full webpage dedicated to the project on the V8 Supercars website in the lead up to the Bathurst 1000 motor race.
- Racing to Save the Mount Panorama Woodlands Facebook page established with more than 600 “likes” and reach of more than 19,000 Facebook users: <https://www.facebook.com/MtPanoramaWoodlands>.
- Media releases resulting in five project-related articles in the Western Advocate newspaper with a readership of more than 8,000 people and 18,000 online users.

Key Learnings

This project represents the first time that Bathurst Regional Council has worked with a collection of community groups to implement a landscape-scale conservation project. While working with community groups has at times presented challenges, particularly in regards to the time required for committees to make decisions, the outcomes show that the effort is certainly worth the results. This project has now become a model for Bathurst Regional Council and others in how to successfully create and manage a project of this type in partnership with community organisations.

bathurst.nsw.gov.au/environment/managing-our-environment/racing-to-save-the-mount-panorama-woodlands.html

The development of the Albens Reserve Plan of Management has introduced a new method of monitoring to Council, specific to woodland environments that incorporates step point monitoring transects and photo point monitoring. The monitoring provides a score and ranking for Site Condition, Vegetation Condition and Habitat Condition with improvements in each category being seen in Albens Reserve following implementation of management actions. Both the Reserve Plan of Management and the monitoring model will be used as templates for future management plans involving Box-Gum Grassy Woodland in the Bathurst Region.

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This project was the 2014 winner of the Natural Environment Protection & Enhancement: On-Ground Works Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.