

NRM UPDATE



For NSW Local Government

MARCH 2016
ISSUE 101

The Natural Resource Management (NRM) Update provides council elected representatives and staff with information across the broad spectrum of Natural Resource Management policy and programs

NSW Government

Biodiversity Legislation Reform Update

The NSW Government is developing a comprehensive biodiversity reform package, including new biodiversity legislation. The drafting of a Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2016 is underway with an expectation that public consultation will commence in March/April 2016.

Background to the reform

In June 2014 the Minister for the Environment appointed the independent Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel to conduct a comprehensive review of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*, *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, *Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001* and those parts of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* that relate to native plants and animals and private land conservation. The panel presented its [final report](#) to the Minister for the Environment in December 2014 with 43 recommendations.

In March 2015 the NSW Government announced it would implement all the panel's recommendations and the relevant agencies have been advancing the reform process with targeted consultation occurring with key groups such as LGNSW. The current system is to be replaced with:

- A new framework for managing native vegetation clearing. Clearing to support existing agricultural land management activities will be incorporated into the *Local Land Services Act 2013*. Clearing for agricultural development that is not otherwise allowable or not a code-based land management activity will be assessed in the planning system

- An enhanced and strategic approach to private land conservation supported by increased government investment
- An expanded biodiversity offsetting scheme, including a single method for assessing development impacts on biodiversity
- An approach to threatened species conservation that maximises the number of threatened species that can be secured in the wild supported by funding of \$100 million over five years
- A new framework for regulating activities that impact on native wildlife.

Impact on Local Government

There are key recommendations which will impact local government. The proposed new framework will be underpinned by a map which shows areas where clearing is regulated (category 2 land) or not (category 1 land). Category 1 areas would be able to be cleared without the need for approvals. In regulated areas (category 2) clearing would be approved under the LLS Act or the EP&A Act.

LGNSW has raised concerns in relation to vegetation clearing being included under the EP&A Act where council would be a consent authority. Dialogue is continuing with the NSW Government in relation to this panel recommendation. Once the draft Bill is publically available in early 2016, LGNSW will be working with OEH to hold regional workshops with councils to discuss these issues further.



Stage 2 Coastal Management Reform

LGNSW has made a [submission](#) on the [coastal management reforms](#) broadly supportive of the reforms (at a high level), however we have raised a number of issues relating to the need for the draft legislation to demonstrate a true partnership and consistent allocation of responsibility between state and local government. All coastal land managers must be compelled to work with councils and abide by the same rules that councils must abide by.

Of utmost concern to local government is the higher threshold being set to meet the statutory defenses to liability by the proposed changes to the Local Government Act, as well as the potential creation of enforceable obligations to implement coastal management programs.

The NSW Government has confirmed the draft Coastal Management SEPP and the maps of the coastal management areas will be publicly exhibited later in the year.

Marine Estate Management - Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregion Assessment

The Assessment is being undertaken in accordance with the Government's new framework for marine estate management, and aims to enhance the conservation of marine biodiversity while achieving balanced outcomes for a range of recreational and commercial uses. A [Discussion Paper](#) has been released, which outlines community engagement to-date, the outcomes of the Threat and Risk Assessment and 8 suggested management initiatives. Submissions from the community and stakeholders are being sought via an online [submission form](#) until Sunday 24 April 2016. Submissions will be used to inform the final package of measures to be provided to the NSW Government in mid-2016.

Survey on environmental volunteering

The NSW Environmental Trust is planning new initiatives to better support environmental volunteers and volunteer programs, and to inform this process they are conducting a [survey](#) of environmental volunteers. The survey should be completed by anyone who has done ANY kind of unpaid work ('on-ground', administrative or other support, advocacy, fundraising) that benefits the environment, with an organisation (government or non-government) or group, in the past 12 months. Survey closes **7 March**.

Australian Government

Species added to Threatened Species Strategy

The Federal Government has added 16 more threatened mammal and bird species to the [Threatened Species Strategy](#). The announcement follows the Threatened Species Commissioner's [second progress report](#) on the Strategy. The Strategy sets out an action plan for selected species over a five year period, from 2015 to 2020.

Data on significant species updated

Version 3 of the Species of National Environmental Significance [10km gridded maps and data](#) has been released. The updated product contains over 200 new or revised distributions. The database contains maps and data on the distribution of species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Biodiversity

Flying-fox Management

Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) has released a [Flying-fox Camp Management Policy](#) and to support this policy detailed [fact sheets](#) addressing management options including disturbance, licensing and flying-fox ecology, case studies of camp management and information on health issues are now available. A Flying-fox Land Managers' Network, an online forum for those land managers dealing with flying-fox camps, has also been established. Councils with an interest in these issues are encouraged to join by contacting mike.roache@environment.nsw.gov.au



Australasian Bat Night

This public awareness [program](#) is designed to raise the profile of bats, achieve better conservation outcomes and assist people to live with bats. Councils, land-care groups, field naturalists, eco and wildlife tourism operators, wildlife carers, zoos, sanctuaries and wildlife parks, museums and other community groups are invited to participate by running bat activities during March and April (and even into May). Any activities or events being undertaken in a council area can be registered at: batnight.ausbats@gmail.com



Flying-fox Response in Eurobodalla

Eurobodalla Shire Council is providing subsidies to mitigate flying-fox impacts on local residents.

Council is offering practical help to residents affected by the Batemans Bay Water Gardens flying-fox camp. Residents living within 250 metres of the Water Gardens reserve, the site of a flying-fox camp have been offered a free rental of a high pressure cleaner to clean faecal drop from their outdoor furniture and patios. Residents can also apply for the following assistance: a free car cover, clothesline cover, and the removal of cocos palms, which attract flying-foxes. This assistance represents actions from the [Water Gardens Grey-headed Flying Fox Management Plan](#) adopted by Council.

Flying-fox network meeting

Councils are invited to attend a presentation from Eurobodalla Shire Council on their use of *Flying-fox Engage* in the development of the camp management plan. A new guide on creating and restoring foraging habitat for flying-foxes and other threatened pollinator species such as Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots will also be presented by OEH. Details are: 10-12pm, 23 March at OEH, Goulburn St Sydney. RSVP to: mike.roache@environment.nsw.gov.au

Sustainability

Sydney Food Futures

Local food production in the Sydney basin provides many benefits and underpins the resilience of the city. Yet competing priorities for Sydney's fertile farmland could threaten future supplies of fresh, local food.

The [Sydney Food Futures](#) project, funded by LGNSW's Building Resilience to Climate Change program, has developed mapping to indicate where Sydney's current and potential food producing areas are located. A range of scenarios were modelled and mapped to indicate how different situations – climate shocks, changes in diet and population growth, for example – will affect Sydney's food security. This creates an evidence base to support effective policies and innovations, so that Sydney can be a thriving and resilient city that provides a future for food producers as well as its growing population. The project produced a quirky [animation](#) to explain the pressures on Sydney's food system.

Local Government Case Studies

Tools to Prioritise Bushland Resilience

Ku-ring-gai Council has developed 3 tools to prioritise, implement and evaluate bushland resilience. With limited resources available for bushland management and biodiversity conservation, Council needed a mechanism to prioritise bushland reserves and guide investment decisions.

The three step process of the Bushland Prioritisation Matrix, Site Management Plans and Bushland Condition Ratings was created to fill that gap and promote transparency of decision making. Tools are:

1. Bushland Prioritisation Matrix (BPM) - prioritises bushland reserves and guides resources, investment and decision making through with non-arbitrary targets.
2. Site Management Plans - allow council to implement appropriate and effective resilience programs and break sites into relevant management zones.
3. Bushland Condition Ratings - facilitates monitoring and evaluation and allows for continual improvement of the program. Bushland Condition Ratings are then fed back into Bushland Prioritisation Matrix (Step 1).

The 3 step bush regeneration program provides an opportunity to resource conservation and regeneration activity and provides demonstrable results, to support natural environment policies, planning and decision making. For full details see the [case study](#). This project was recognised at the Excellence in the Environment Awards for Local Government 2015.

Tweed Coast comprehensive koala plan of management

[Tweed Shire Council](#) won the Natural Environment Policies, Planning and Decision Making Award at [LGNSW's Excellence in the Environment Awards 2015](#) for the council's response to the critical challenge of reversing the decline of koalas by providing an innovative, overarching strategy to coordinate recovery actions.

The plan combines both regulatory provisions through development control and statutory planning and non-regulatory provisions. The non-regulatory provisions involve the voluntary participation of the community to contribute to koala recovery and conservation, such as measures to increase and improve habitat, better management of fire, reducing road mortality and dog attack. The preparation of the plan has benefited from extensive consultation with the community and key stakeholders, as well as the sound scientific background of the Tweed Coast Koala Habitat Study. Full details in [case study](#).



Grants

Green Army

Round Five of the Green Army Programme – opening in March 2016. Councils interested in submitting a proposal can find more information in the [fact sheet](#). Information sessions are being held in each state with the NSW session planned for **29 March** in Sydney. RSVPs are [now open](#) for the information sessions.



Floodplain Management Grants

Applications are now open for funding under the [Floodplain Management Program for the 2016-17](#) financial year. Funding is available for projects that manage flood risk including: flood study (including data collection), preparation or review of a floodplain risk management study and plan, investigation, design and/or feasibility study for works identified in a floodplain risk management plan and implementation actions identified in a floodplain risk management plan. Applications close **17 March**.

Environmental Research Grants

The 2016 round of the Environmental Research program is now open for [applications](#).

The aim of the Environmental Research program is to support applied research projects that help address environmental problems in NSW. Applications close on **11 March**.

Recreational Fishing Grants

Grants are now [open](#) for funding from the Recreational Fishing Trusts. Councils are eligible to apply. A wide variety of projects can be funded including: recreational fishing enhancement, education, schools, fishing access and facilities, [aquatic habitat rehabilitation and protection](#), removal of barriers to fish migration, replanting & protecting river bank vegetation, restoring water flows and research. Applications close **21 March**.

Events and Training

[International Coastal Symposium](#),
6-11 March, Crowne Plaza, Coogee Beach

[Native Bee Seminar](#)
1- 4pm, 17 March, Ku-ring-gai Town Hall

[Flying-fox networking meeting](#)
10-12pm, 23 March, OEH Goulburn St, Sydney
RSVP to: mike.roache@environment.nsw.gov.au.

[Best Practice Ecological Rehabilitation of Mined Lands Conference](#), Singleton, NSW, 7th April 2016

[NSW Regional Contaminated Land Conference](#)
31 May, Dubbo

[6th National NRM Knowledge Conference](#)
6-8 June 2016, Novotel Pacific Bay Resort, Coffs Harbour, NSW. The theme is "People, Planet and Profits"

[2016 LGNSW Water Management Conference](#) – Call for Presentations Papers due by Friday, 8 April 2016.
Conference 28-30 August, Broken Hill, NSW

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MORE INFORMATION

Kirsty McIntyre
Senior Policy Officer – NRM
Local Government NSW
E kirsty.mcintyre@lgnsw.org.au
P 9242 4055

Denise Anderson
Senior Policy Officer – Environment
Local Government NSW
E denise.anderson@lgnsw.org.au
P 9242 4056