



MEETING MINUTES

Byron Shire Wildlife Corridor Map – Expert Stakeholder Workshop

A Meeting was held as follows:

Venue	Conference Room Byron Shire Council Office Mullumbimby and Zoom			
Date	Friday 26 November 2021			
Scheduled Time	Commence:	10.00am	Conclude:	12:00PM

The meeting was opened at 10:05am by Liz Caddick.

Items discussed were as follows:

1. **Welcome to Country** by Steve Kelly.
2. **Introduction** to meeting and project by Liz Caddick.
3. **In Attendance** – Liz Caddick, Gene Mason, Rebecca McNaught, Andrew Murray, Annette McKinley, David Milledge, Steve Kelly, Andy Baker, Zofie Lahodny-Gecso, Chris Larkin, Kate Singleton.

Online – Luke Houghton, Leon Kelly, Jenny Hartigan, Ross Tregidga.

Apologies – Joe Vescio, Ivan Holland, Leonie Walsh, Shannon Burt, Andy Parks, Sharyn French, Joe Davidson, Rochelle Merdith, Karina Vikstrom, Malcolm Scott.

4. **Presentation by Landmark**

- 4.1. Aim – To identify a corridor system that re-establishes the connectivity of native vegetation across the Byron LGA, to aid dispersal of plant and animal species, particularly species with restricted dispersal capability and to avoid genetic bottlenecks that lead to local extinctions and ultimately species extinction.
- 4.2. Present Situation – There are existing gaps in the native vegetation cover that present barriers to plant and animal dispersal, largely caused by past clearing for agriculture, current urbanisation and associated infrastructure developments. This has resulted in isolation of hinterland from coast and lack of connectivity.
- 4.3. Process – Sixty-two (62) threatened and conservation priority fauna species were identified with core habitat in Byron LGA. Mapping considered multiple mapping sources of differing age and detail. Priority fauna species were selected based on their distribution being centred on NE NSW, zoogeographical origins, and restricted dispersal capability. These were grouped and ranked based on zoological origin and dispersal capability, resulting in a priority of biota groups and 10 priority fauna groups.

Once priority fauna was identified, 65 threatened flora species were identified with core habitat in Byron LGA. Priority flora species selection was based on habitat in broad vegetation types occurring on differing geologies, small populations, and restricted dispersal mechanisms. Eleven (11) broad vegetation types were ranked as habitat for priority fauna groups and were used to derive the first cut of the corridor system. They were then identified as on different geologies as habitat for priority flora species which derived the second cut of the corridor system. Finally, these eleven (11) vegetation types were used for corridor selection to cater for priority flora and fauna species.

4.4. Outcome –

- A final corridor system of
 - 11 blocks,
 - 26 minor connectors with a minimum of 300m width attempted,
 - 27 major connectors with a minimum of 500m width attempted and with major connectors which include main east-west and north-south drainage systems.
- A final corridor system incorporating
 - an emphasis on riparian corridors as connectors, particularly using minor corridors to link major connectors,
 - other riparian corridors buffered and linking connectors,
 - Threatened Ecological Communities,
 - Coastal SEPP,
 - Big Scrub remnants,
 - vegetation in high condition,
 - inclusion of buffers and sheltered gullies to counter climate change effects,
 - existing areas of native vegetation regeneration,
 - existing pathways through infrastructure barriers, and
 - identified koala habitat.
- A final corridor system catering for
 - previous corridor systems incorporating Byron LGA,
 - links with corridors in adjoining LGAs,
 - avoidance of flood-prone land,
 - avoidance of existing and planned development areas, and
 - avoidance of prime agricultural land.

4.5. Use – Each block and connector will assist users with functionality to select for listings of values such as habitat, threatened species records, which vegetation types have been captured in this area and existing koala management.

4.6. Review – Various existing mapping was considered and compared to for a review of consistency, including DEC Key Habitats and Corridors for Forest Fauna (Scotts 2003), links to Lismore LGA corridors, OEH 2019 Climate Change Corridors and Byron Shire 2004 Wildlife Corridors.

5. Workshop Aim

Historically, wildlife corridors have been a controversial subject in this community. We are seeking feedback from local experts and professionals in the shire on:

- the corridor map,
- how we use this map to benefit our natural environment and the community, without detrimentally impacting on local industry, and
- how we communicate the map to the public in a positive way.

6. Items for Discussion

6.1. Planning Scheme and DCP Changes

- The corridor map is not an LEP overlay but is to encourage a perspective of the bigger picture of land use.
- There is work to be done on the DCP to change from a definition to reference the wildlife corridors map.
 - Table 3 in the DCP is potentially the most controversial – currently a blanket 20m set back from wildlife corridors. Proposed change to “set back from native vegetation in wildlife corridor”, but not from other land uses – cleared, agricultural etc.
- ACTION – Luke to send written feedback.

6.2. Incentives

- An incentive-based approach is more effective than a constraint approach.
- Suggested possible incentives –
 - Red flags in residential zones to incentivise in the DCP.
 - ACTION – More feedback from MO & CTs to come from Luke.
 - Reduced rates for landholders who plant native vegetation. However, this raises issue for council operations in the long term such as an in-perpetuity arrangement with State Government

- how could it be administered and monitored as changes are made in the future.
- Reducing development contributions - discounts for those with larger setbacks from vegetation and who introduce vegetation to support the wildlife corridor.
- Challenges to financial incentives due to limits to council funding for restoration through grants which needs to be strategic and is less reliable for consistent funding.
- DA impacting on red flag areas - some requirements can be conditioned on a DA, giving them more flexibility by decreased work required and achieving better impacts for corridors.
- E-zones and biodiversity mapping are included in corridor mapping.
- Support to corridors through Development Controls, in alignment with many already in place such as riparian zone controls. It is important to strike a balance of control and support.

At 11:07, Chris Larkin and Kate Singleton joined the meeting with a late apology due to scheduling conflicts. Liz noted that the presentation and discussion on DCP and incentives had occurred.

ACTION – Kate to provide written feedback on previously discussed items and the discussion paper.

6.3. Bushfire

- A Strategic Planning Workshop took place with councillors where concern was raised on the affect to bushfire risk.
- Group discussion, feedback and suggestions –
 - The risk can be considered with improving trails for emergency service access, decreasing need to access and damage corridors, e.g. landholders should be encouraged to incorporate fire trails into restoration planning.
 - DCP controls for consideration of fire risk in planting and for wildlife corridors incentives.
 - Challenges with landholders planting to support wildlife corridors and addressing bushfire risk. Landholders need clear guidance on what to plant where, and where to locate fire management trails.
 - Setbacks from houses are an important control and require site specific assessment of fire risk due to slope and direction. Possible fire breaks to be included.
 - Enquiry whether inclusion of information to landholders on bushfire hazard management could be included with rates notices.
 - Concern raised that eucalypt forests on southern slopes are unmanaged and are a large risk due to lack of control. Northern slopes with open forests have more potential for control of fire risk.
 - Fire trail management – Fire trails aren't led by Council due to limited land ownership. Most commonly trails are privately done and in local agreements between farmers. Rural Fire Service manages the section of the trail used as many private trails put in are a work around to get an access road on their property.

6.4. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

- Arakwal have their own cultural mapping which is used as a confidential resource during their consultation process, case by case.
- Cultural heritage sites are unpublished, and consideration occurs through consultation of the surrounding area on a case by case basis.
- A Cultural Heritage Report is in process which aims to flag but not detail cultural heritage criteria and considerations.
- Potential to include Bush Tucker identification in mapping, but this would add extra complexity.

6.5. Agriculture

- A meeting recently took place with the Agriculture Cluster Group where wildlife corridors were presented for feedback. More engagement would be beneficial for more conservative members of the Agriculture community.
- Reiteration that this is not an LEP overlay but instead to encourage with incentives such as support with grant applications.
- Suggestions from group discussion –
 - Focus on benefits recorded such as inclusion of tree belts on property for animals and land.
 - Farmers to have meetings with staff for further information – perhaps in groups of 5. This may decrease fear on the back of E-Zones, to be on the front foot with messaging that this is an opportunity rather than a challenge.
 - Contact for consultation -
 - Farmers Association which sits with BFMC,
 - Kim Stefan, who will be a good contact for local land services,

- Cane Growers Association, and
 - John Nagle.
- Opportunity exists for further support to assist with grant applications for carbon credit funding.

6.6. Community Engagement

- Consultation suggestions from group discussion –
 - Positive timing of introduction of wildlife corridors due to current goodwill, post strong and successful e-zone works with supportive media and landholders.
 - Methods suggested
 - Importance of message communicated.
 - Use of Social media as successful connection with council information.
 - Suggested short and sharable video.
 - Letter.
 - Advertised to community by listing in DCP for clear communication of incentive options.
 - Naming as Wildlife Corridor is suggested by the group – lessons have been learned from previous controversial project, communication is key.
 - Importance that this is not a control process. Concern foreseen by land holders that when planting has occurred, an E-Zone may be placed over the area.
 - Potential session with local nurseries to encourage species to be stocked and potential distribution of species lists and mapping.
 - Information to be available for people to access themselves – pull methods.
 - Consideration that not all are online or proficient to use the tool. Suggestion for booklet and imagery with clear and simple messaging.
- Discussion and suggestions on access and use of mapping by community –
 - Functionality in development – simple web map for community with use by clicking mapped zones and pop up for species to plant and wildlife with habitat in the zone, as well as the native planting guide.
 - Include an address for a listing of soil and vegetation, however this would need to be case by case with site inspections due to the level of detail.
 - Release layers for use in a Google Earth type of functionality, to expand from 2D mapping.
- Ongoing use and support once the project is implemented. Potential community networking for support in planting for wildlife corridors or by applying for grant funding and noting being next to wildlife corridor.

Jenny Hartigan left the meeting at 11:07am.

Luke Houghton left the meeting at 11:40am.

Leon Kelly left the meeting at 11:50am.

Andy Baker left the meeting at 11:54am.

7. Other business

- Recent resolution to include the shire wide rail corridor in the wildlife corridor map for the expert stakeholder group. To consider whether this shire wide rail corridor should form part of the wildlife corridor network.
- Group discussion and feedback -
 - Rail corridor not being maintained and carries a high fire risk.
 - Much of it is covered in the mapping already such as bats under bridges and with inclusion use of council's mapping in place.
 - Rail corridor of 20-40m width was noted.
 - International comparison that rail corridors are important for animal travel in the UK, which is a notably higher urban density.

The meeting was closed at 12:09pm by Liz with encouragement to get in touch with more feedback.

Summary of Actions

- Luke to send written feedback on Planning Scheme and DCP Changes (6.1.) and feedback from MO & CTs (6.2).
- Kate to provide written feedback on previously discussed items and the discussion paper.