



Upper Mooki Rehydration Project

In 2019, 13 landholder enterprises joined forces as a Landcare group partnering with North West Local Land Services on a \$660,000 project called the 'Upper Mooki Rehydration Project'.

Follow the journey of the Upper Mooki Rehydration Project

From early 2020, members of Upper Mooki Landcare carried out activities that will regenerate the functions and water holding capacity of the soil profile as well as increasing groundcover and ecosystem services.

"We are slowing the passage of water through the landscape so that moisture is retained in the soil, leading to a healthier catchment and greater farm productivity," said Craig Carter, one of the farmers and leaders of the project.

Activities taking place across more than 900 hectares include earthworks such as swales, contour banks and leaky dams, fencing, changes to cropping and grazing practices and revegetation to increase groundcover.

Myles Sevil, farms on 725 hectares at 'Hillview' near Willow Tree, usually running 2,000 breeding ewes. In the past he had problems with the speed of water travelling through and leaving his property.

"In my steep country, sheep tend to track down to the watering point and in a big storm, that little track would turn into a gully."

"Normally in those heavy storms we would see water come into the gully and then continue on down to a contour bank and into the creek and there'd be a rush of brown water, carrying off silt."

As part of the project, Mr Sevil employed a local contractor

to construct a series of swales, or shallow channels, on a hillside leading to several leaky dams. These dams have a rocky bottom so that water drains out into the landscape as well as through poly pipe installed.

Mr Sevil said the benefits of the earthworks, combined with his grazing practices were visible after recent rain.

"With the enhanced groundcover and the leaky dams, the volume of water entering the creeks leaving my place is not as much as previously.

"I've noticed that it is soaking in and we're retaining moisture on the place."

Maddy Pursehouse and her husband run a cattle trading business on their 1600 hectare property Rothesay.

As part of the project they have installed fencing to keep cattle out of the two creeks that run through the property to promote better groundcover and natural regeneration of casuarinas.



Maddy Pursehouse, one of the farmers taking part in the Upper Mooki Rehydration project.



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"Having more plants and diversity of groundcover will slow down the water and the trees that grow in the creeks catch debris, topsoil and seed and slow down the movement of water," Ms Pursehouse explained.

Ms Pursehouse said she is passionate about soil health and rehydrating the landscape but it also makes good business sense.

"At the end of the day if we can keep more water on the farm, we can grow more grass, we can run more livestock and be more profitable," she said.

North West Local Land Services Project Lead, Angela Baker, said as part of the project, the participating farmers will do before and after benchmarking in order to assess the changes.

"The project also requires the participants to share their results and a number of workshops or on-farm events were held, to help build capacity among farmers more widely," Ms Baker said.

In May 2021, the final event was held at the historic Windy Station woolshed. It was a sell out crowd with over 200 people attending. The day was facilitated by special guest Charlie Arnott and with farmers from across the region sharing their experience in regenerative farming.



Participating farmers in the project at the Windy Station woolshed event with Local Land Services staff.

This project was supported by North West Local Land Services through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and Catchment Action NSW. Catchment Action NSW provided funding for the on-ground works being the larger portion of the project and National Landcare Program supporting the events.



Tim Watts of Local Land Services and Myles Sevil discuss the leaky dam on Myles' property.

Fast facts: Upper Mooki Rehydration Project

- Cost of \$660,000 (over \$330,000 in funding provided and the remainder in in-kind and cash contributions from landholders)
- the project included 13 landholder enterprises
- over 900ha including revegetation and pasture plantings as well as earthworks entailing absorption banks, swales, sill spills and riparian works
- construction of more than 40 km of stock and riparian corridor fencing
- employment of local earthmoving, fencing and other contractors
- more than 25 stock watering points installed and laying of 10 km of piping
- three events held with peer to peer learning supported by experts
- the project includes a review and update of Upper Mooki Landcare's five-year Strategic Plan.

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