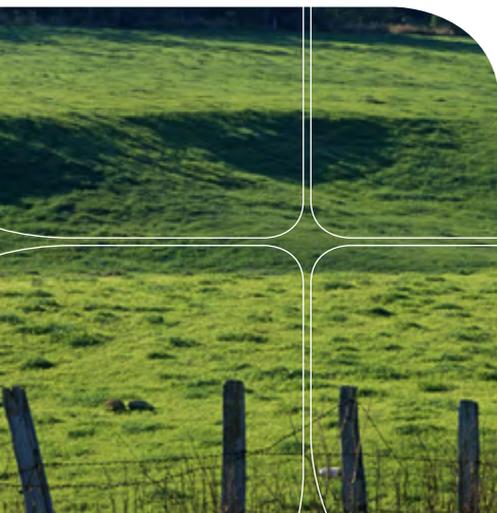




Local Land
Services
North Coast

Local Annual Report 2015



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Published by the Local Land Services
First published March 2016
ISBN:

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of the report January 2015 to December 2015. However, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.

Foreword

As we complete our second year of operation, the Board and staff of North Coast Local Land Services have strengthened relationships with ratepayers, landholders and communities and continued to deliver services and projects that meet the diverse needs of our Region.

North Coast Local Land Services focuses on delivering programs to the Region that improve natural resources, help producers raise productivity, protect our agricultural industries from pests and disease and respond with the community to regional and state wide emergencies. These include emergencies such as the Hunter floods and the response to the detection of Red Imported Fire Ants at Port Botany in Sydney and Panama tropical race 4 disease in south-east Queensland. This work has been complimented by the delivery of projects supported by the NSW Government Catchment Action Funding and the Commonwealth Government funded National Landcare Programme.

The North Coast is unquestionably the most agriculturally and environmentally diverse in the state. It is home to the third most biodiverse area in Australia, it is the most biodiverse region in New South Wales, and supports a progressive, diverse and engaged community.

Our response to meeting these diverse needs has been to develop an integrated approach to service delivery. We partner with public and private organisations to achieve our goals and this collaborative approach greatly assists in serving the needs of the Region. Local Land Services ratepayers and our NSW and Australian government investors expect and deserve outcomes that demonstrate 'value for money' supporting a range of triple bottom line outcomes.

We have a team with experience and expertise who are genuinely committed to providing services tailored to the needs of our local agricultural industries, the communities in which they operate and the natural systems on which we all depend.

North Coast Local Land Services staff come from a range of backgrounds and training and can work across a range of topic areas. They live and work in the local area so are familiar with local landscapes and natural resources of the North Coast Region.

The Board and staff of North Coast Local Land Services also engage with the North Coast community through our very active and positive Community Advisory Group and our strong partnerships with industry and diverse range of community and environmental groups.



The North Coast Local Land Services team is committed to a triple bottom line approach to our work – we strive for sustainability underpinned by a balance in social, economic and environmental outcomes in everything we do.

Mark Bulley
Acting Chair North Coast Local Land Services

North Coast region at a glance



The North Coast Local Land Services Region is located in north-eastern NSW, including Lord Howe Island, and covers an area of 32,050 km². The Region includes 568 km of coastline and extends three nautical miles out to sea.

There are approximately 506,000 people who reside on the North Coast, including around 21,000 Indigenous Australians. The major population centres are located on the coast and are connected primarily by coastal transport routes — they include Tweed Heads, Lismore, Murwillumbah, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Nambucca Heads, Kempsey and Port Macquarie.

The North Coast Region supports a diverse and distinct mixture of landscape, livelihood and lifestyle values. We recognise three unique and discrete 'areas' within the region (Northern, Central and Southern) as they have differing combinations of social, economic and environmental characteristics.

Landscapes

A diversity of natural landscapes and a mix of temperate and sub-tropical climates provides for nationally and internationally recognised biodiversity, wilderness and wetland areas; combined with complex and diverse soil systems.

The escarpment ranges and foothills to the west support the headwaters of the nine large river systems that drain onto extensive coastal alluvial floodplains, which have strong

connections to headland, beach, estuarine and marine environments.

While a significant proportion of the Region is within terrestrial and marine protected areas, there are many threatened species and ecological communities that occur on private land.

Livelihoods

The North Coast has a diverse economy that reflects the provision of services to an ageing population, and the popularity of the Region as a tourist destination.

The North Coast supports a range of natural resource-based industries which underpin the prosperity of the Region. These include the beef, dairy, blueberry, macadamia, intensive horticulture, fishing and aquaculture, timber production and tourism industries.

The Region has a large and capable natural resources management community and industry base that is actively engaged in the sustainable management of the Region's natural resources.

Lifestyles and culture

The North Coast has many vibrant towns, villages and communities that support diverse coastal and hinterland lifestyles. An iconic, growing and densely populated coastline provides a focus for recreational pursuits and much sought after sea change lifestyles. The Aboriginal community is a major landholder within the region.

2015 local achievements

517

PROPERTY VISITS BY VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS FOR ANIMAL BIOSECURITY INVESTIGATIONS



794

GENERAL CONSULTATIONS BY VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



306

SALEYARD INSPECTIONS

34

LIVESTOCK EXPORT CERTIFICATES ISSUED



1,728

PROPERTIES INVOLVED IN WILD DOG SPRING BAITING

5,325

NEW PLANTINGS ESTABLISHED UNDER CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS



1,829

PARTICIPANTS AT TRAINING EVENTS

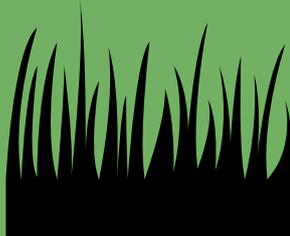


1,138

HECTARES PROTECTED THROUGH VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

605

HECTARES OF WEED MANAGEMENT



450

HECTARES OF RIPARIAN NATIVE VEGETATION REHABILITATED



Local Land Services goals

Local Land Services aligns all of its work with its mission of being a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources. The strategic direction of Local Land Services is summarised in four organisational goals.

Resilient,
self-reliant and
prepared local
communities

Biosecure, profitable,
productive and
sustainable primary
industries

Healthy, diverse,
and connected
natural
environments

Board members
and staff who are
collaborative,
innovative and
commercially-focused

Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities



Agricultural Productivity

We support our agricultural industries through services and information that are designed to improve their productivity and long term sustainability.

In 2015 our achievements include:

- Partnerships with the Dairy and Macadamia industries that will build collaborative opportunities to grow the productivity and sustainability of these industries.
- Coordinated Beef Producer Groups in Casino, Grafton, Nambucca and Hastings. The Groups offer a network for beef producers to share information, learn and progress innovation in an informal way.
- The release of the Characterisation of the Socio-economic Landscape of the North Coast Region NSW report to facilitate a greater understanding of factors that are driving change within industry, community, and environment, and how these drivers interact to provide future opportunities for agricultural growth and ecological sustainability across the region.
- The Organic Food in the North Coast Region of NSW report was developed to gain a better understanding of the size, scope and potential for organic farming on the North Coast.

Emergency management and natural disaster relief

In partnership with the Department of Primary Industries, we help manage livestock disease, emergencies such as bushfires and floods and biosecurity events involving plants, animals and pest insects.

We also work alongside other agencies to provide support in emergencies where agricultural industries are impacted. We help build landholders' capacity to plan, prepare, respond and recover from such events.

We help people to prepare for natural disasters and the impacts of a changing climate, and play a key role in producing regional seasonal conditions reports.

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- Implemented the Australian Government's Drought Recovery Program funding to help North Coast landholders manage the impacts of wild dogs.
- Coordination of two flood emergency response exercises designed to demonstrate the capability of NSW DPI and North Coast Local Land Services to establish and operate an incident management team (IMT) in response to a natural disaster.

- All members of North Coast Local Land Services first response team have now completed the base level Emergency Management Training, with key staff undertaking specialist training as required.
- In partnership with NSW DPI undertook disaster relief assessment for storms that occurred in September and November resulting in funding being made available for affected North Coast producers, particularly in the blueberry industry.

Working with Aboriginal Communities

The North Coast is home to an extensive network of Aboriginal communities and we support Aboriginal people to care for Country, share traditional land management knowledge and help protect and strengthen Aboriginal cultural heritage. In 2015 North Coast Local Land Services developed a range of partnerships that will help deliver our objectives but also opportunities for employment and training of Aboriginal people, including those with:

- Madhima Gulgan Community Association Inc. based in Mullumbimby.
- Booroongen Djugun Ltd based in Kempsey.
- Coffs Harbour, Dorrigo Plateau and Grafton-Ngerrie Local Aboriginal Land Councils and EnviTE Environment.

Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

Biosecurity is the protection of the environment, economy and community from the impacts of pests and diseases. We work with landholders, industry and the community to minimise biosecurity risks and their impacts on agricultural production, international market access or environmental health.

Our biosecurity team continued its work with landholders, community, industry and government to identify, prevent, eradicate and manage biosecurity risks of pests and diseases.

Our team of District Veterinarians has made field visits to many producers diagnosing a range of animal health issues including the more serious notifiable diseases. The management of endemic diseases and contaminants in partnership with land managers also remains an important aspect in managing biosecurity risks. It enables our staff to maintain rapport with the community and to hone skills in diagnosis, management, prevention and eradication of diseases.

During 2015 we undertook regular sale yard inspections and supported NSW DPI in compliance and enforcement of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) while managing the regional Property Identification Code (PIC) procedures.

Our District Veterinarians and Biosecurity Officers deliver a range of national, state and local programs, all aimed at safeguarding market access and improving livestock productivity.

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- 306 sale yard inspections
- 517 visits by vets and biosecurity officers for animal biosecurity investigation
- 794 general consultations by vets and biosecurity officers
- 34 livestock export certificates.

Pest animal control

Pest animals cause serious economic losses to agricultural production, pose a risk of exotic disease, threaten the survival of many native species and cause environmental degradation. We work with landholders to minimise the impact of pests on agricultural production and the environment.

We provide education, training and support and help coordinate group control programs, particularly for wild dogs.

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- 1,728 holdings undertaking 1080 baiting
- 394 landholders undertook the Vertebrate Pest Induction Training course delivered by Biosecurity Officers.

Hastings Wild Deer Working Group

At the request of the Minister for Primary Industries, North Coast Local Land Services is coordinating the Hastings Wild Deer Working Group to focus on developing a strategic approach for wild deer management in the Port Macquarie region. The Working Group consists of key stakeholders and interest groups and has three planning meetings to date.

An extensive community survey was undertaken in the Port Macquarie-Hastings region in 2015, with the community providing 194 survey responses. Impacts such as traffic hazard and significant damage to gardens, along with concerns over threats to native species were identified along with key locations of concern. The Hastings Wild Deer Management Strategy has been finalised and will guide the development of Wild Deer control and management programs in the area.





Healthy, diverse and connected natural environments

Healthy ecosystems underpin successful, productive primary producers and communities.

With investment from Catchment Action NSW and the National Landcare Programme, we support maintaining and improving the health of landscapes and seascapes on the North Coast.

We help landholders and communities improve the quality of our land, soil, vegetation and water through funding for on-ground projects, partnerships and training and education.

In 2015 our achievements included:

- Completed stream one spatial modelling that will direct where we invest on the North Coast to promote the ongoing adaptation of biodiversity to our changing climate.
- 1,138 hectares of Voluntary Conservation Agreements area (ha)
- 5,325 new plantings established under conservation agreements
- 605 ha of weed management
- 220 ha of threatened shorebird habitat protected
- 450 ha of riparian native vegetation rehabilitated.

Partnership with Landcare

In 2015 North Coast Local Land Services signed a major partnership agreement with North Coast Regional Landcare who represent 13 landcare networks across the North Coast.

With more than 270 Landcare and community groups as members, North Coast Regional Landcare provides a forum for the Landcare community across the region to come together and share ideas, experiences and issues.

The partnership agreement assists North Coast Local Land Services achieve outcomes in natural resource management, sustainable agriculture and biosecurity.

2015 – The International Year of Soils

North Coast Local Land Services celebrated the 2015 International Year of Soils through a range of projects and activities that focused on the importance of soil. Sustainable soil and land management is central to ensuring a healthy environment, productive food systems and improved rural livelihoods.

The UN General Assembly declared 2015 the International Year of Soils which aims to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions.

2015 also saw the conclusion of a major project that established 27 demonstration farms across a range of industries including grazing (beef, sheep and dairy) and cropping (vegetables, herbs and fodder) extending from the Richmond catchment in the north to the Hastings catchment in the south and inland to the Tablelands.

The project, Action on the Ground – Best Management Practices of Carbon Management on Northern Rivers Farms, was supported by North Coast Local Land Services and Landcare Networks through funding received from the Australian Government.

Each farmer involved in the project was offered a financial incentive to adopt and implement land management practice changes with the aim of increasing soil carbon, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, particularly nitrous oxide, and implementing innovative practices.

Native vegetation

Native vegetation benefits both on farm production and environmental health. Healthy native vegetation can increase land values and productivity while reducing operating costs. We work with land managers to develop native vegetation clearing consents.





Neil Hing is a Senior Biosecurity Officer with North Coast Local Land Services and there isn't much that Neil doesn't know about wild dogs. Neil commenced with the Rural Land Protection Board in 1995 and over the last twenty-one years has worked tirelessly on wild dog control on the North Coast.

Neil demonstrates a high level of professionalism and has a remarkable ability to actively engage landholders. He has a natural ability to communicate with a broad range of individuals from diverse backgrounds from landholders through to Landcare groups.

The enormous increase in landholders participating in group ground baiting programs is a testament to Neil's ability to connect with people. He encourages new landholders to get involved and is responsible for training 215 landholders at over 24 VPIT training sessions in 2015.

Neil is a team player who will take the time to mentor new staff, he will happily attend night meetings to meet the needs of landholders and personifies the values of Local Land Services.

In our community

Focus on healthy soils

The challenge

North Coast Local Land Services celebrated the 2015 International Year of Soils through a range of projects and activities that focused on the importance of soil. Sustainable soil and land management is central to ensuring a healthy environment, productive food systems and improved rural livelihoods.

Work undertaken

The Best Management Practices of Carbon Management project was developed to investigate innovative ways to increase soil organic carbon levels and reduce nitrous oxide emissions. There were 27 demonstration farms across a range of industries including grazing (beef, sheep and dairy) and cropping (vegetables, herbs and fodder) extending from Richmond catchment in the north to the Hastings catchment in the south and inland to the Tablelands.

Benefits

- 127 demonstration farms participated.
- Excellent capacity building with many participants involved in soil samples and analysis for the first time.
- Increased knowledge and awareness of the potential agronomic benefits of increasing soil organic carbon.
- Soil organic carbon percentage change found in the surface 10 cm of soil over the life of the project.
- Results indicated a positive response to organic soil amendments applied and adoption of innovative practice.
- Farms using an on-farm resource for benefit rather than waste, eg, irrigating dairy effluent onto pastures.
- Farmers able to choose a change of practices that interested them and that suited their farm, operation and landscape.
- The project did not force change but rather offered an opportunity for the landholder to experiment, to trial, without the need for full cost recovery.

Key achievement

The project showed an increase in soil organic carbon levels in most sites and, while it may not have been statistically relevant, the results were sufficient to encourage the farmers to continue those practices, modify those practices or seek alternatives to achieve increased soil organic carbon levels.

In collaboration with

Northern Landcare Services, Clarence Landcare Inc, Bellingen Landcare Inc, Macleay Landcare Inc, Hastings Landcare Inc, Southern New England Landcare, GLENRAC, Granite Borders Landcare, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Woodlots and Wetlands.



Textbook nil tenure approach to wild dog control reaps benefits in Macleay Valley

The challenge

Commonwealth Drought Support Assistance Packages for the Kempsey local government area provided an opportunity for increased direct wild dog control. The challenge was to effectively coordinate control activities of a large range of stakeholders to ensure that maximum impact was achieved from this funding.

Work undertaken

Four community meetings were held with landholders committing to large scale ground baiting programs. Parallel to this, an aerial baiting program was coordinated to target wild dogs in the more inaccessible areas of the Macleay Valley. At the conclusion of both aerial and ground baiting programs, a trapper was engaged to target rouge or bait shy dogs left in these areas. The program was undertaken over a 15-month period.

Benefits

- Four public meetings held to engage landholders and encourage participation.
- Six Vertebrate Pest Induction Training Courses for landholders.
- 135 km aerial baiting, including 69 km private land, 53 km State Forest managed land and 13 km National Parks and Wildlife Service managed land.
- 132 days of trapping.
- 63 properties engaged in trapping.
- 82 wild dogs destroyed as a result of trapping.
- Purchase and installation of remote cameras to monitor wild dog movements in key areas.
- Funding facilitated 15 months of comprehensive wild dog management.

Key achievement

Landholders reported a significant reduction in dog sighting and attacks, highlighting the benefits of using a coordinated range of tools to manage wild dogs such as aerial baiting, ground baiting and trapping. In addition, new landholder groups have been formed which will increase the effectiveness of future programs.

In collaboration with

National Parks and Wildlife Services, State Forests, the Upper Macleay Wild Dog Association and landholders across the Macleay Valley.



Northern Corridors Connections Project

The challenge

The Border Ranges and Wollumbin World Heritage areas and the Ballina Coastal Corridor contain populations of and habitats for a large number of threatened plant and animal species. These areas and their connecting corridors have the highest concentration of marsupial mammals, birdlife, reptile and frog species in eastern Australia.

Work undertaken

The project undertakes a range of activities that focus on protecting wildlife corridors, threatened species recovery and maintaining native vegetation remnants. Activities focus on improving core biodiversity corridors, improved farm production and on-ground biodiversity success stories. Project works also engage Indigenous organisations through a working on Country approach, and supporting on-ground efforts that address environmental threats and provide skills and capacity building.

Benefits

- Over 200 hectares in natural resource management works and activities achieved.
- Engaged with and built the capacity of more than 50 landholders.
- Employment of Indigenous bush regenerators involved in planning and implementation.
- Animal species protected include Black Bittern, Eastern Bristle Bird, Grey Headed Flying Fox and Koala.
- Plant species protected includes Stinking Cryptocaria and Swamp Orchid.
- Coordinated and planned weed control over 80 hectares in collaboration with landholders.
- Coordinated and planned baiting programs with involvement of surrounding landholders.
- Fire management of habitat programs with planning and site prioritisation underway.

Key achievement

This project has been an excellent opportunity to draw together diverse landholder groups and build partnerships to increase capacity for natural resource management as well as delivering a range of targeted land management methods to protect and improve core biodiversity corridors.

In collaboration with

WetlandCare Australia, Tweed and Ballina Shire Councils, Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), Gugin Guddaba LALC, Githabul Rangers, Bushland Restoration Services, Northern Landcare Support Services, Lantana Master, Environmental Training and Employment, Wildsearch and Reconeco.



Office locations

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