

# Wollombi Brook Rehabilitation Project

## Newsletter # 2

HUNTER LOCAL LAND SERVICES

October 2020

Hunter Local Land Services (HLLS) are working in partnership with Broke Bulga Landcare Group together with up to 15 landholders occupying a section of the Wollombi Brook at Broke to improve the condition and health of the Brook. Project activities include weed control, re-establishing native vegetation species, addressing erosion and where necessary fencing and structural works.

The Wollombi Brook Rehabilitation Project is supported by funding provided through the NSW Environmental Trust and Hunter Local Land Services. Additional project partners are Bulga Coal and Singleton Council.

This is the second newsletter for this Project. These newsletters aim to keep participating landholders as well as interested community members informed of project activities as they progress.

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### Project Aims and Activities

The Wollombi Brook Rehabilitation Project has been granted an extension of time to be delivered due to drought, fires and a pandemic virus. The Project is into its second year and will continue up to the end of 2021.

Project aims are to provide participating landholders with contract labour to assist with weed control, native tubestock/grass seed to revegetate and protect riverbank areas, contributions towards fencing where required, and minor material works to address erosion if necessary.



Project activities also include holding public events to promote the importance of the Wollombi Brook and improving the health of waterways, as well as future installation of educational signage within park areas.

The project area extends downstream from the Milbrodale Road Bridge to just beyond the first northerly bend of the Brook.

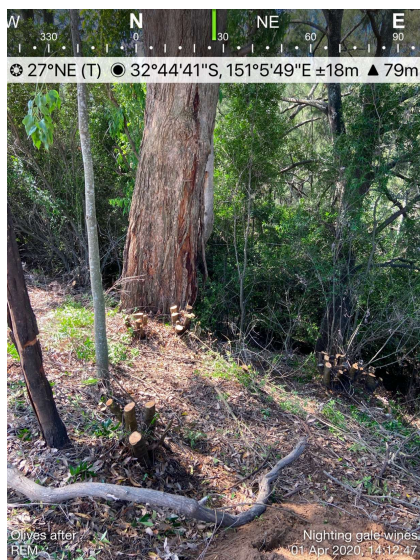
Eleven landholders have been participating in the Project so far. Weed control work has been completed along 1.2km of the west bank and along 600m of the east bank. Plantings of native species has occurred across six properties on either side of the Brook.

Figure 1: Wollombi Brook Project Area



## Weed Control

Six sites immediately downstream from the Milbrodale Road Bridge on the west bank have undergone initial weed control work with two of these sites also receiving follow-up treatments. The west bank has had the highest level of African Olive infestations and now these have been significantly reduced with two landholders undertaking some previous great work contributing to this reduction. A number of African Olive trees have been felled and chipped with the remainder being cut and poisoned or treated to die in place. Other weeds treated have been African Boxthorn, Green Cestrum, Bridal Creeper, Cassia and Tree Pear. Results of treatments have been very good with about a 98% kill rate after initial treatments.



*Left: African Olive treatment work along the Brook at Nightingales Vineyard – cut stumps, chipping material and Below: Dead African Olives after being treated in situ.*



*Right: Work on the east bank – African Olives felled and stacked*



Weed infestations are relatively lower on the eastern bank and six sites have undergone initial and follow-up weed treatments. An outbreak of Blue Heliotrope has been noticeable along the Brook in the last year and these have also been spot-sprayed. The Project will investigate the possibility of using a biological control for this weed in the form of a beetle as Blue Heliotrope has been very prevalent across adjoining pastures. A couple of properties on the east bank have also benefited from using a four-legged bio-control method to reduce other goat-edible weeds such as a young growth of Sticky Beaks (*Bidens pilosa*).

*Left: Princess Buttercup assisting in keeping some weed growth to low levels*



## Revegetation

The Project aims to establish up to 7,000 native plants where needed along the Brook. The bulk of the native plants will include the sedge *Lomandra longifolia* otherwise known as Mat Rush to help stabilize the sandy banks of the Brook.

Three properties on the west bank and three on the east bank have benefited from some plantings undertaken in 3 batches during Autumn last year and Autumn and Spring this year. Species planted included Mat Rush, Pink-Tipped Bottlebrush, Tea Tree, Forest Red Gum, River Red Gum, Sandpaper Fig and Red Ash.

Some early plantings needed to be replaced due to a fresh that inundated some sections. A total of 1,550 plants have been planted so far. Further plantings will be scheduled for Autumn 2021 for both sides of the Brook.



*Contractor Toolijooa Environmental Restoration planting across 3 sites on the west bank with Broke/Bulga Landcare members.*

## Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation structure

The defunct section of cable mesh Flood Mitigation structure on the eastern bank was removed by Soil Conservation Services in May this year. Some Willows and African Olive were also removed at the same time to assist with access to the structure. Geofabric was also laid in one area with *Lomandra*s in-planted across the fabric to assist with further stabilisation.



*Geofabric laid with *Lomandra*s planted in*

## Project Signage

Signage is currently being designed for installation in McNamara Park. Three signs relevant to the Project and the Wollombi Brook will provide visitors to the park an opportunity to read about the importance of the Brook, cultural values and the type of vegetation communities present.

The signs will also highlight the significance of riparian areas in general and the importance of restoring and keeping our natural Australian waterways in a healthy condition. Landholders and project partners involved in the Project will be credited for working together and helping to achieve this for the Wollombi Brook at Broke.

## Education Event

The Project committee has attempted to organise a local schools Enviro-Day at McNamara Park involving Broke and Milbrodale Public Schools. However, due to Covid-19 this event had to be postponed a couple of times and at this stage is anticipated – hopefully – to be held next year in March/April.

The Enviro-Day has already been fully planned with several activities students will participate in to learn more about the Brook, habitat, water quality, riparian areas and local animals.

## More information

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## Acknowledgments:

*The Wollombi Brook Rehabilitation Project is funded by the NSW Environmental Trust and Hunter Local Land Services.*

