


Coastal Open Space System (COSS) Committee Meeting Record 2 March 2021



Location:	Zoom Meeting	
Date:	2 March 2021	
Time	Started at: 3.31pm	Closed at: 5.40pm
Chair	Luke Sulkowski – Unit Manager Environmental Management	
File Ref	F2018/00099	

Present:

John Andrews, David Holland, Deb Holloman, Paul Links, Douglas Williamson, Barbara Wills

External Representatives present:

Steve Atkins – NPWS Central Coast Area Manager, Leah De Bastos – DPIE (left 4.16pm), Jesse Gollan – Hunter Local Land Services (left 4.16pm), David Green – Local Land Services (Greater Sydney), Joe Thompson – Director Hunter Central Coast Environment Energy and Science DPIE (left 4.16pm)

Guests present:

Leif Arnebeck, Jackie Pearson - CEN

Council Staff present:

Luke Sulkowski – Unit Manager Environmental Management, Larry Melican – Section Manager Natural Assets and Biodiversity, Dr Anumitra Mirti – Section Manager Environmental Strategies (left 5.08pm), Rochelle Lawson – Senior Ecologist, Kelly Drover – Advisory Group Support Officer

Item 1 Welcome, Apologies and Acknowledgement of Country

Apologies received: Gary Chestnut

The Chairperson declared the meeting open and completed an Acknowledgement of Country and Connection to Land Statement.

Item 2 Disclosures of Interest

The Chair called for any declarations of interest. No disclosures were received.

Item 3 Confirmation of Previous Meeting Records

The Advisory Group confirmed the Meeting Record from 1 December 2020.

The Advisory Group discussed the Action log.

Item 4 Compliance Matters regarding vegetation removal on deferred matters lands in Central Coast LGA (Action 119)

Joe Thompson (Director Hunter Central Coast Environment Energy and Science DPIE), Leah De Bastos (Senior Operations Leader Compliance DPIE) and Jesse Gollan (Team Leader Land Services Local Land Services) attended the meeting to discuss compliance matters regarding vegetation removal on deferred matters lands.

Jesse advised that the Local Land Services Land Management Unit performs a regulatory role under the *Local Land Services Act* and provided details of allowable activities such as clearing for boundary fences, access tracks and maintaining farm infrastructure on deferred matters lands and sensitive and vulnerable lands.

Deferred Matters lands will be regulated by the *Local Land Services Act* unless approval is required under the *EP&A Act*. In regard to the use of allowable activities, the guidance in the legislation is "*till the minimum extent necessary*". The *Local Land Services Act* does apply to the property of concern and these allowable activities can be utilised. Joe and Leah confirmed that a number of inspections have been carried out and no breaches of the legislation have been found.

Leah provided a presentation on the Department of Planning, Industry, and Environment Biodiversity Conservation Division including:

- Compliance Responsibilities
- Hunter Central Coast Compliance Team
- Reporting Illegal Clearing
- Compliance Procedures
- Flowchart Project

Action: The Wollondilly Native Vegetation Clearing Flowchart to be distributed to Advisory Group members.

Action: The Advisory Group request advice from Council's Compliance and Regulatory Unit regarding opportunities to utilise the *EP&A Act* to regulate issues with native vegetation clearing at properties of concern. Advice is also sought on the difference in compliance approaches on Deferred Matters zoned lands vs lands zoned in accordance with the standard LEP.

Action: The Advisory Group seek clarification from DPIE and LLS on opportunities for strengthening of policy and legislation to enable better regulation of tree and vegetation removal and clearing activities on Deferred Matters zoned land in order to avoid the unregulated significant impacts as has been experienced in locations on the Central Coast.

Recommendation: The Advisory Group recommends to Council that the Administrator write to the NSW Premier requesting strengthening of legislation to allow prosecution of tree removal and land clearing on deferred matters lands.

Item 5 Land Acquisition and Prioritisation (Standing Agenda Item)

Larry Melican (Section Manager Natural Assets and Biodiversity) advised that Environmental Land Acquisitions are currently on hold given Council's current financial situation.

The question was raised as to why it's on hold as we shouldn't be constrained by Council's current financial situation because it has nothing to do with Council's mismanaged funds. Luke Sulkowski advised that the most recent information provided by Finance is that we do have just over \$10million in the COSS restricted reserve and former Wyong Clause 14 restricted reserve, however we don't have capacity to buy land or spend the money at this stage due to Council's current financial situation. Staff will continue to work with Finance to pursue opportunities for environmental land acquisitions as they arise, and when Council's financial position can facilitate those purchases.

Transfer of Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) land at Green Point and Erina to Council's ownership is proceeding.

Item 6 Update on Porters Creek Wetland Conservation Agreement (Action 121)

Rochelle Lawson (Senior Ecologist) advised that Council is seeking feedback on a proposed Conservation Agreement for the Porters Creek Wetland Conservation Area.

Internal stakeholder consultation and a risk assessment was undertaken during November/December. External agency consultation occurred during December/January to ensure that existing and planned infrastructure was incorporated into the agreement or excluded, as appropriate.

Community consultation is scheduled to run from 1 March to 29 March on the [Your Voice Our Coast website](#).

The agreement is anticipated to be ready for the CEO to sign in May 2021.

Item 7 Action Plan from Biodiversity Strategy (Standing Agenda Item)

Rochelle Lawson (Senior Ecologist) provided an update on the 54 actions from the Biodiversity Strategy as to whether they are complete, ongoing or not completed/not commenced.

Item 8 Update from External Representatives (Standing Agenda Item)

David Green – Local Land Services (Greater Sydney)

- Local Land Services are planning a cultural burn for 7/8 April at Calga. This event is funded by Central Coast Council Bushfire Recovery funding that came from the State Government. It will be a public function for 50 – 70 people and the target audience will be rural land holders who may be considering cultural burning rather than a hazard reduction burn.
- Currently running a deer control program at Peats Ridge with Council with another shoot planned for Thursday night. There are significant numbers of deer throughout the Central Coast that are

difficult to manage including near Sparks Road at Wyong with significant risk that they are very close to the freeway.

- Dog baiting program kicking off again in April and will run for a few months. Slight reduction in number of enquiries regarding wild dogs.
- Released RHDV virus for rabbits 2 weeks ago.
- A number of projects on the go including a project with Council involving the grey headed flying fox community at Everglades. The project involves the automation of the watering system that is on the site for that colony.
- Fox and wild dog trapping workshop held late last year, and a pastures workshop and soils workshop to be held in the next few weeks.
- David acknowledged the great relationship over the years with Council's former Senior Planner – Emergency Protection and Natural Assets David Lemcke who will be greatly missed by LLS.

Action: Once details of the cultural burn go live, David Green to send details to Advisory Group Support Officer who will pass on to the Advisory Group members.

Steve Atkins – NPWS Central Coast

- Steve echoed David's sentiments about David Lemcke who has been a great support to NPWS and will be missed.
- The busy summer period is coming to an end. Throughout the COVID pandemic levels of visitation to all parks and reserves increased significantly. With this also came an increase in compliance and management issues to be dealt with.
- Capital works update – government funding on the coast for improving access to National Parks program for high visitation precinct areas including Somersby Falls and Crackneck lookout. About to go out for consultation on Somersby falls works to work towards finalised design on that project.
- Track renewal program – the first 2 stages of the Bouddi Coastal Walk are completed. About to go out to tender for stage 3 with works continuing over the next 12 – 18 months.
- About to go out to tender for upgrade of Piles Creek walking track and Coast Track in Wyrabalong National Park.
- Fox control program currently happening in Bouddi National Park with plans to undertake work in Popran, Brisbane Waters and Palm Grove after the April school holidays.
- Post bushfire recovery funds – successful in getting funding in refuge areas of the brush tail rock wallaby for pest control and weed control works.
- NPWS are revising their cycling policy as well as the mountain biking and cycling strategy.
- Bouddi Plan of Management was recently adopted back in December and there are discussions about preparing a mountain biking plan for Bouddi.
- Currently working on the Bushfire plan for the upcoming autumn season.
- The question was asked about an Aerial spray being required in Bouddi. Steve advised that there are no current plans in place for this but will take the question on notice.

Item 9 Findings of COSS Report undertaken by CEN

Jackie Pearson – Community Environment Network provided the Advisory Group with a presentation on COSS with the following objectives:

- to explore the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities of the Coastal Open Space System (COSS)

- To present a recommendation on the possibility of expanding the COSS into the former Wyong local government area.
- To present a recommendation on establishment of a Regional Park for the existing COSS.

Luke Sulkowski raised a number of questions about the identified differences between the COSS Report and the Biodiversity Strategy that Council adopted in September 2020 following extensive community consultation as it appeared that all of the concerns and opportunities raised within the COSS report are already addressed in the Biodiversity Strategy. Luke also confirmed that the matter of expansion of COSS into former Wyong LGA has also been addressed in the Advisory Group before, through reports provided to Council and within the Biodiversity Strategy itself, and that the Biodiversity Strategy is consistent with the objectives of the Central Coast Regional Plan and the Community Strategic Plan.

Luke Sulkowski also advised the Advisory Group that the Biobanking funding mechanism referenced in the COSS report is no longer a scheme supported by the Biodiversity Conservation Trust or the legislation, and that the new process is via Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements. Luke advised that a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement is being considered by Council over 2 reserves at Glenning Valley at the next meeting of Council.

Action: Gary Chestnut to liaise with Luke Sulkowski to clarify the points of difference in the COSS report compared to the Biodiversity Strategy.

Action: Jackie Pearson to arrange for the COSS report to be sent to the Advisory Group Support Officer for distribution to Advisory Group members.

Item 11 General Business and Close

- a) Larry Melican provided information on Thompson Vale Road Doyalson that has been listed for sale (Action 117) and provided a map of operational land north of Link Road Doyalson, a map of where the endangered local ecological community is, examples of threatened species and a map of the Biodiversity Corridor.

Jackie advised that in a meeting with CEN, in regard to the Biodiversity Corridor land at Thompson Vale Road, the Administrator did say he would look at withdrawing it from sale.

The Committee noted that whilst this is not currently COSS land, it was on the radar to be future COSS and it is unsuitable for any future development and should be rezoned to E2 zone.

Action: The Committee would like to reinforce to Council the conservation values of the land at Thompson Vale Road Doyalson and request the Administrator consider retaining it in Council ownership.

- b) **Action:** Staff to follow up on the James Norton Road vehicle access crossing with relevant Council departments.
- c) Larry advised that the Biodiversity Stewardship report is going to Council on 9 March seeking the Administrators endorsement on the proposed Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement.

The Mountain Bike Feasibility Study discussion paper is out for consultation till 22 March on the [YourVoiceOurCoast website](#).

Winney bay plans were put on public exhibition and closed 15 December. Report expected to go to Council in April.

The Central Coast Bushfire Management Committee have prepared and had authorised the Bushfire Risk Management Plan and Fire Access/Fire Trail plan (FAFT). The FAFT is yet to go through the final endorsements so is not yet publicly available.

- d) Leif Arnebeck advised he is involved with the Central Coast Trail Alliance and is Secretary for Central Coast Mountain Biking Club. If anyone wants to contact him to discuss Mountain Biking, he is more than happy to provide his details.

The meeting closed at 5.40pm

Next Meeting: May 2021 (following return of Councillors)
Date, Time and Location TBC