

Capacity to Deliver

LP022-021

Bowraville Connections: healthy water, healthy people

Nambucca Valley Landcare Inc



Community river restoration day realises a vision for a healthier river

The issue

The beautiful and culturally significant Nambucca River meanders through Bowraville, meeting the town at well loved parks and access points. Despite its significance, the river has suffered degradation over many decades from clearing, stock access, gravel extraction, snag removal, weed infestation and the subsequent erosion resulting from this poor management. This has led to a river that was highly erosive and dominated by woody weeds, especially in public access areas. Prior to the Bowraville Connections Project, the problem was too large to tackle.

The solution

To meet these challenges, the Bowraville Connections Project formed as part of a collaborative multi-phase program of works to improve the health and function of the Nambucca River and its tributaries around Bowraville. With funding from the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust, the NSW Environmental Trust and Nambucca Valley Council, the community-driven project focused on enhancing habitat for fish and other fauna around the freshwater – saltwater interface at Bowraville by protecting against further bed level lowering and bank erosion, reducing weed cover and increasing the extent of native vegetation cover.

The project also aimed to improve recreational opportunities for local people by increasing the water level, improving water quality and creating better access points to the river for fishing and swimming.

School students and members of the Aboriginal community were engaged to work on country, empowering local people to take action in improving their waterways.

Secondary, but no less important benefits, have been increasing the availability of groundwater in the alluvial aquifer for agriculture and the town water supply, which is increasingly under threat from a reduction in winter rainfall and salt water inundation as a result of sea-level rise.

The impact

The project has developed a comprehensive plan to better understand the river's condition and prioritise structural works; implemented structural works, including bed control rock ramp structures, rock revetment, groynes and river access, and has engaged the community, students and contractors, employing Aboriginal land managers where possible, to reduce weed cover and increase native vegetation through planting and strategic weed control.

Most importantly, the project has created a better connection between the community and their river, local fish and other fauna to foster a stronger sense of responsibility to protect our local waterways.

Key facts

- Community driven Bowraville Connections project enhances fish habitat and biodiversity along 3km of river at Bowraville
- Multiple stakeholders and funding bodies combined to extend the reach and effectiveness of Nambucca Valley Landcare's work