

Practical Soil Erosion Techniques Workshop – 28 May 2022



The Upper Shoalhaven Landcare Council Soil Erosion Workshop, the second as part of the Araluen Creek Restoration Project, gathered about 15 people to hear Andy Taylor of Local Land Services share practical advice on controlling small-scale soil erosion with simple techniques. We then ‘walked the talk’ and installed some practical on-site soil erosion measures on a patch of seriously degraded land that was previously mined for gold. Erosion control ingredients included coir logs, jute mesh, mulch, found materials like rocks and branches as well as elbow grease, and Andy’s extensive experience of how to fit them together to make water work for you.

A key element of the Araluen Creek Restoration project is landholder and community engagement to expand understanding of soil erosion restoration and remediation measures. The overall aim is building resilience back into our landscape. The project’s main activity involves some big scale soil erosion measures, big machines and big logs and rocks to stabilise the Araluen Creek and its tributaries. Andy is organising this side of the project. However, as he pointed out at the workshop, while there are different control techniques the process of soil erosion is largely the same whether it is large or small scale. Andy was able to demonstrate the principles of erosion using an example of a trickle of water on a vehicle track as we walked towards the main site.

The workshop took place at Wisbey’s Orchard owned by Robyn Clubb, who is also Treasurer of the Upper Deua Landcare Catchment Group. The area where the soil erosion remediation took place was formerly mined for gold, using dredging or hydraulic mining. The area was left almost completely denuded with no vegetation or topsoil remaining. Mining finished around the 1930s and no remediation was done. Now, decades later, while there is still a deficit of topsoil, the area is slowly regenerating with some native trees and some grasses. However, there are still points of active erosion and Andy explained it is better to get onto them sooner rather than later, to prevent them becoming larger, more costly issues. And that was the aim of the day, doing things that can be done by hand before you need to do them by machine.

“Water always wins” said Andy many times! However, his mantra was to think like water, think where it will flow, what will make it divert to places where you want it to go, think of ways to slow it down or think of how you can spread it, without creating new erosion points. Also, look more broadly at the site, the answer to preventing more erosion may be simpler than it seems. If you have any questions, contact Andy andy.taylor@lls.nsw.gov.au

His other top tip for livestock producers was: “the measure to address most soil erosion is fencing. Ninety per cent of soil erosion can be fixed by keeping livestock out of areas with erosion issues. It then gives plants a chance to do their bit.”

Who’s Who on the Araluen Creek Restoration Project

> Andy Taylor is the South East Local Land Services Senior Natural Resource Management Advisor for the Queanbeyan-Palerang region. For the Araluen Creek Restoration Project Andy is working with Soil Conservation Service co-ordinating the earth works needed to restore the creek. Big job. Lots of logistics.



Lots of materials to be moved about. Ironically, all being currently hampered by ongoing wet weather events and their impacts, the latest being the landslide on Araluen Road and the subsequent decision to defer the big earthworks to reduce additional impacts on the road.

In July 2021 Andy said: “with the fires, then the floods... this project is all about rebuilding a bit of resilience, not only in the landscape but in the community as well, it’s really about trying to support the community as a whole. It’s focused on the creek, that central lifeblood that runs through the whole landscape here, which affects everybody. And is of benefit to everybody here. Some will be in agriculture; others will be in conservation and feeling for the nature and wildlife that has been damaged. We need to build resilience into all those things so this valley can prosper.”

Andy Taylor has been living and working in the Braidwood area for over 20 years. He’s worked on a range of projects, partnering with landholders and community groups, to improve the decision making and management of the natural environment on private land. He encourages an integrated approach so that any given management action considers the uniqueness of its particular landscape and works towards achieving multiple outcomes for soil and water, native flora and fauna and farm goals. Andy’s take-home message is that all of these things are connected, and we must work together to make a difference at the landscape scale.