



The REC Newsletter

November 2010 Edition 4

The aim of this newsletter is to profile the NSW Roadside Environment Committee (REC) and share information about the management of NSW linear reserve environments. For more information on the REC, including how to create roadside vegetation management plans, go to: www.rta.nsw.gov.au/rec

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Latest news from the REC

- ❖ The REC website has had a makeover and been updated with new material. The new REC URL is: www.rta.nsw.gov.au/rec. The upgrade means that linear reserve management documents are more readily available online and you can download previous versions of the REC E-Newsletter in pdf format.
- ❖ The REC held its August meeting in Albury. At the meeting REC members learnt about and discussed local and regional linear reserve environmental management issues and achievements through presentations and a field trip. These learnings will help the REC better develop and implement its strategic plan across the State. The REC would like to thank Albury City Council for hosting the meeting and Murray CMA and Hume LHPA for their input. The 2011 REC regional meeting will be hosted by Bathurst Regional Council.
- ❖ During the Albury field trip, the REC went to the Hume Highway near Woomargama to take a closer look at the revegetation works being undertaken at Slate Hill. 'Slate Hill' is one of the offset properties for the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority's (RTA) Hume Highway Duplication Biodiversity Offset Package. Slate Hill lies within the DECCW Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, a continuous 2800 km 'biodiversity highway', aimed at protecting threatened species as climate changes. Slate Hill and the Squirrel Glider Monitoring Program (being undertaken by the Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology) are also being featured in the 100th edition of *Australian Geographic*.
- ❖ The REC has released its 2009-10 Annual Report. Copies can be obtained from the REC Executive Officer (details below).

Roadside Vegetation Management Plan Survey



The REC encourages local councils to develop and implement Roadside Vegetation Management Plans (RVMPs) or similar to better manage environments adjacent to their roads.

Image: A roadside environment near Albury which is included in Albury City Council's RVMP

The REC managed a NSW Environmental Trust funding program during 2004-08 that provided funds to local councils in NSW to prepare RVMPs. Many councils developed RVMPs as a result of this program, although some have developed them independently of the program.

The REC wished to gauge the currency and usage of the RVMPs by councils to help it assess needs and future support. The REC Secretariat sent out a letter in July 2010 to the General Managers of all NSW councils inviting them to fill out a survey regarding the implementation of RVMPs. Forty five percent of NSW non-metropolitan councils (i.e. those where a RVMP would be most appropriate) responded to the survey.

The main findings of the survey were:

- ❖ Half of the councils that responded confirmed that they have a RVMP or similar plan.
- ❖ Councils reported that their RVMPs were developed between 1994 and 2010. Over half were developed between 2004 and 2008 - the period that the REC's NSW Environmental Trust program was implemented.
- ❖ Only 22% of councils have reviewed their RVMPs. Several of the older RVMPs have never been reviewed. Councils cite lack of resources (funding, staffing) as the main reason for not reviewing RVMPs.
- ❖ Approximately one-third of councils with RVMPs have placed them on their council's website. A few councils wished to do this in the future.
- ❖ The majority of councils (78%) with RVMPs confirmed that the REF approval team does refer to the RVMP. Furthermore, 64% of councils confirmed that their RVMP is on council's REF checklist.
- ❖ Exactly half of the councils with RVMPs reported that the information in the RVMP is a layer on council's GIS system.
- ❖ Approximately one-fifth of the councils with RVMPs believed that the Vegetation Management Plan with Country Energy (or similar provider) referenced the RVMP.
- ❖ Forty percent of the councils with RVMPs confirmed that a handbook has been developed for staff and contractors to implement the RVMP. Of these, 75% reported that new employees had access to the RVMP handbook.
- ❖ Only one-third of councils with RVMPs said they have methods in place to monitor and evaluate their RVMPs.

Councils were asked about ways to improve their RVMPs. The main responses included completion of vegetation mapping, further training of staff in best practices, RVMP awareness as part of new staff induction and improving communication to the public of the RVMP. Some councils that did not have RVMPs believed that the REF process led to similar outcomes as a RVMP, although others felt they would develop an RVMP if funding was available.

The main issues about management of roadside environments were identified by the councils as rationalising requirements with safety clear zones and the need to protect roadside environments, conflicts between legislative requirements and public liability, requests from adjacent landholders about fire hazard reduction works and lack of interest/awareness/care from road crews.

The need for funding to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate RVMPs was a strong request from many of the councils surveyed. Apart from possible support with this request, councils felt the REC could assist by helping with training of council staff in best practices,

lobbying for increases in funding for noxious weed eradication, further providing guides and information on the REC website (e.g. RVMP template, RVMP examples) and assistance in reviewing draft RVMPs. Two councils believed that the REC should host a statewide forum for the exchange of ideas and learning by regional councils.

Travelling Stock Reserve Conservation Values



Throughout 2009-2010 the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW), on behalf of the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), undertook a project to collate known biodiversity survey data for Travelling Stock Reserves and Routes (TSRs) across the NSW slopes and tablelands (see map left).

Using this data, the project identified whether or not the TSRs were likely to support Box-Gum Woodland or other threatened ecological communities and assigned overall maximum biodiversity conservation value ratings where possible.

The project used existing survey data and also gathered information from Livestock Pest and Health Authorities Rangers (formerly Rural Lands and Protection Board Rangers) who manage the sites. While not part of the initial brief, DECCW constructed a shapefile (which can be used in a geographic information system to produce a map of TSRs) that combined crown TSR spatial data, information gathered from LHPA rangers, and surveyed Conservation and Biodiversity data. This shapefile attempts to spatially reflect current TSRs as accurately as possible with the conservation attributes identified in the surveys attached to each one.

Analysis of available existing survey datasets for approximately 2,700 of the 5,000 TSRs spread throughout the project study area indicated that around 65% are likely to support at least one nationally and State listed endangered ecological community (EEC). Of the TSRs likely to support an EEC, approximately 45% are likely to support Box-Gum Woodland, 35% Inland Grey Box Woodland and 10% Myall Woodland. These proportions are likely to be higher, in fact, because many TSRs are likely to support two and sometimes three EECs.

The existing available survey data also indicates that at least 20% of TSRs have been rated as of stand-out (high) biodiversity conservation value and at least 75% have been rated as of important (medium + medium-high + high) conservation value. The TSR ranger interview data gave similar results for biodiversity conservation value ratings. This serves to validate the ranger interview process, since the interviews additionally covered RLPB districts without any known significant existing survey data sets and TSRs with data gaps in the existing major survey data sets.

To access the shapefile go to <http://mapdata.environment.nsw.gov.au/> and type TSR into the keyword box. This shapefile will be updated periodically as new information becomes available.

Author: Lorraine Oliver, DECCW based on the report 'Identification of priority conservation Travelling Stock Reserves in NSW' prepared by Andrew Zelnik

Interpretive Native Vegetation Signs



The journeys along the black ribbon of roads throughout our country cover many diverse landscapes. Beyond the white line at the edge is the roadside that provides a buffer between high speed driving, adjacent land uses and native vegetation that has significant environmental value.

Driving long distances without stops can cause stress and fatigue. However, the provision of roadside rest points and the landscapes of roadside vegetation have a restorative effect. How many times have you stopped at a rest point and wondered what you were looking at or why a section of roadside is sign-posted as significant?

The Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority has recently erected interpretative signs for the local Significant Native Vegetation seen at both Lake Popiltah rest stop (along the Silver City Highway near Coombah) and Euston Tapalin rest stop (on the Sturt Highway) rest stops.

These colourful and attractive signs display photographs and descriptions of some of the native vegetation within sight and some of the local fauna that could be glimpsed while sipping a cuppa.

Significant vegetation and fauna are well described with an emphasis on both present and past conditions and habitation of European settlers and include photographs for easy identification.

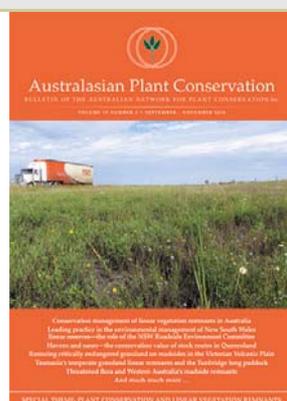
The significant environmental values of these areas include the important habitat for native animals and plants including endangered species. Without these linking corridors of vegetation, native animals would not be able to move from one habitat to another and livestock in adjoining farmland would not have use of this valuable shelter and shade.

Another section of the signs explains where the site is geographically positioned within the state of NSW, and the characteristics of the Sub-region for those who like to know about geology, landforms, soils and vegetation.

These Significant Native Vegetation signs have been funded by NSW Roadside Environment Committee.

Source: Lower Murray-Darling Catchment Management Authority Media Release

The REC sponsors edition of 'Australasian Plant Conservation'



The REC sponsored and contributed articles for *Australasian Plant Conservation*, the Journal of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation. Volume 19 of the journal was themed around linear reserve management. It features an article by Neil Dufty (REC Executive Officer) on the role of the REC and two REC sponsored articles: one about working collaboratively to restore wildlife corridors at Slate Hill in the Albury district and one about an innovative regional roadside environmental toolkit developed by the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Environmental Strategy (HCCREMS). More details at: www.anbg.gov.au/anpc/apc.html

Reminder - Glyphosate Resistant Weeds



Media Release: Australian Glyphosate Sustainability Working Group

Just a quick reminder to all roadside managers to be vigilant of plants normally killed by glyphosate and surviving. Land managers are on high alert with reports that kilometres of Riverina roadsides may be infested with glyphosate resistant annual ryegrass.

Image: Ryegrass at Junee

Although not yet confirmed by laboratory tests, field testing with high rates of glyphosate has shown the ryegrass continues to grow unaffected.

This comes close on the heels of the first Australian roadside infestation of glyphosate resistant annual ryegrass confirmed in South Australia earlier this year.

It is a timely warning from the Australian Glyphosate Sustainability Working Group that over-reliance on glyphosate across Australia has to stop and a range of weed control and management strategies need to be implemented anywhere glyphosate is used.

According to the Chairman of the Australian Glyphosate Sustainability Working Group, Dr Chris Preston, roadside infestations pose real threats to weed management adjacent to roadsides as seed can be readily moved to clean areas by water, wind and machinery.

The Riverina outbreak was first raised with Neil Durning, an agronomist with AGnVET Services in Wagga Wagga by council contractors late in 2009. He initiated some alternative control methods including a double knock with paraquat and diquat and more recently a spray-topping application with paraquat to minimise seed set whilst awaiting test results to confirm his suspicion of glyphosate resistance.

"When you are driving along and see large clumps of live ryegrass on the side of the road after very high rates of glyphosate have been applied under good conditions, it certainly grabs your attention," Mr Durning said. "Glyphosate resistance is a huge concern to my clients and the entry of glyphosate resistant ryegrass into our cropping paddocks from non-crop areas such as fencelines and roadsides will be a major issue. We need to stop its development by alternating control methods and taking the pressure off glyphosate. Most of the roadsides that we suspect have resistant ryegrass have seen intensive use of glyphosate over the past 15 years with at least one application each year."

Mr Durning would like to commend the Junee Shire council and its contractors for being extremely co-operative and addressing the issue in a responsible and pro-active manner.

Mr Durning feels he gained a great insight into resistance management from his participation in the Grains Research and Development Corporation-initiated two-day integrated weed management workshop and will be using these lessons to manage the situation going forward. He would encourage all involved in implementing weed control programs to attend one of these courses and especially those involved in the decision making process.

Seed is now being collected from surviving plants in the Riverina for laboratory testing. These plants will then be completely destroyed to prevent seed entering the soil seed bank.

Dr Preston says management of roadsides is a complex operation requiring road-user safety, maintenance of the road surface, protection of significant roadside vegetation and prevention of the spread of weeds.

"Meetings are being organised with local government, contractors and the RTA to discuss the problem and plan to implement management strategies to slow the development of glyphosate resistance on roadsides.

"The risk to farmers with frontage to roadsides where glyphosate resistant weeds are present is substantially reduced if they have already adopted integrated weed management practices and lessened their reliance on glyphosate for weed control," Dr Preston stresses.

If anyone suspects glyphosate resistant weeds on roadsides, they are urged to contact the relevant council and their state expert, whose contact details are available from the Australian Glyphosate Working Group web site - www.glyphosateresistance.org.au/suspect%20glyphosate.htm

The Australian Glyphosate Sustainability Working Group, is supported by the Grains Research & Development Corporation, and key R&D based crop protection companies with an interest in the sustainability of glyphosate, and has a web site with extensive information about glyphosate resistance, including a register of glyphosate resistant weed populations as well as guides and links for management of glyphosate resistance in different industries.

Go to: www.glyphosateresistance.org.au for more information

Now is the right time to take action to prevent seed set and movement.

Managing Native Vegetation In Travelling Stock Reserves in NSW Workshops

This project will involve conducting six, two-day workshops over three years to engage on-ground managers of travelling stock reserves (TSRs) to increase their ecological knowledge and plant conservation skills.

Course materials will also be developed as a resource for further workshops and other training opportunities outside of the project funding and which could be applied to linear reserve management. ANPC plans to hold the first workshops in the Wagga region, NSW in the first half of 2011.

For further information contact Sue Mathams on (02) 6250 9523 or email sue.mathams@environment.gov.au

Do you have an article on Linear Reserve Environmental Management to share?

The REC encourages readers to share ideas and information through the REC newsletter. If you have a project, idea or any other piece of news regarding linear reserve environmental management that you would like to share with others from around the State, we would love to hear from you. Email your ideas or articles to akarwaj@molinostewart.com.au

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Links:

[REC Website](#)
[Molino Stewart](#)