

## GREAT EASTERN RANGES INITIATIVE HUNTER VALLEY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

Issue 1. March 2010

To all those who have had some contact with the burgeoning regional partnership in the Hunter Valley, and those who continue to play a role in its development...thank you. Here's a bit of an update...

The Great Eastern Ranges Hunter Valley Partnership continues to work toward the mission to *“engage the New South Wales community – including state government agencies and local government, landowners, industry representatives, community groups and researchers – in an effective long-term partnership to conserve, connect, protect and rehabilitate plant and animal habitats and catchments of the Great Eastern Ranges of Australia along 1,200 km of NSW.”*

The vision for the Hunter Valley is: *“Connecting the Hunter: vibrant community—respected landscape”.*

### **DIVERSE GROUPS COME TOGETHER FOR CONSERVATION**

**by Gabe Anderson, Regional Facilitator, Hunter Valley Partnership, Great Eastern Ranges Initiative**

Some of you may not be aware of the range of diverse groups throughout the Hunter Valley who are joining forces as part of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative.

Representatives from catchment management authorities, local government, state government, vignerons, the thoroughbred industry, coal companies, local aboriginal representatives, the energy sector, forestry groups, community groups, and private and public landholders have formed a steering committee to work together in the Hunter Valley to increase conservation outcomes.

These diverse interests are collaborating on a range of issues and bringing existing efforts into closer

alignment.

The Hunter Valley Regional Partnership has grown rapidly and now has around 90 stakeholders and partners.

It's wonderful to have such enthusiasm and goodwill behind the Partnership. Having all these different groups sitting around the same table allows us to discuss common issues and opportunities to work together.

The steering committee utilises a range of information including satellite data, habitat and corridors mapping, existing reports, local knowledge and expert input to identify areas to direct resources and effort.



Hunter valley Partners Forum 2008. Photo Ian Pulsford

Being part of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, which is a large-scale conservation project, means we're looking at conservation not just from a regional perspective, but how the Hunter Valley fits into the conservation picture across the entire east coast of Australia.

We'll be working with landholders to help them understand what makes the Hunter Valley so important in a conservation sense, and the many ways they can get involved.

The Hunter Valley Partnership of the Great Eastern Ranges supports landholders through advice and assistance regarding grants and stewardship payments including taxation concessions. We can also connect landholders with local conservation networks or organisations, information on biodiversity property values and by aiding educational and networking opportunities such as land management field days.

We're now in a very exciting dynamic phase of development and it's great working on a whole range of scales from small landholders to large mining companies.

## YOUR LOCAL FACILITATOR



As most of you are probably already aware, the local Facilitator for the Hunter Valley Partnership is Gabe Anderson from OzGREEN, a conservation organisation focused on community engagement and sustainability education.

Gabe has a Bachelor of Science in Resource and Environmental Management (with Honours) and is a lead facilitator of OzGREEN's award-winning Youth LEAD and MYRiveR programs. Most recently Gabe was OzGREEN's Programs Manager in South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Gabe has worked in private enterprise and government in NSW and SA and is now based in Newcastle.

### **What is the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative?**

The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative is a globally significant conservation program to help people, plants and animals adapt to future environmental threats by maintaining, improving and reconnecting 'islands' of natural vegetation along the great eastern ranges.

The great eastern ranges are 2800 km long and extend from the Australian Alps north of Melbourne, Victoria to the Atherton Tablelands to the west and north of Cairns in far north Queensland. Current funding for the Initiative is for the 1,200km NSW section of the great eastern ranges.

More information:

Great Eastern Ranges Initiative: <http://www.greasternranges.org.au>

Hunter Valley: <http://www.greasternranges.org.au/partnerships/partnerships/hunter-valley>

## **CURRENT PROJECTS**

**A number of landholder projects are getting underway in the upper hunter to rehabilitate and re-connect the landscape. Here are details on a couple:**

### **Programs for landholders in Wybong catchment**

The Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) wants to connect with landholders in the Wybong catchment interested in support for conservation activities.

Landholders throughout the Wybong and Halls Creek areas are invited to be involved. The first step is for landholders to complete an expression of interest which they can obtain from the CMA.

The CMA will then work with landholders to design and implement projects.

The CMA is currently working with six landholders in the region to implement projects which include riparian and remnant fencing, planting and off-stream watering as well as modifying grazing regimes to increase conservation outcomes.

The CMA is working with the Conservation Partners Program (Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water NSW) on this project.

For further information contact Jon Thorne on 02 6542 4426 or [jon.thorne@cma.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jon.thorne@cma.nsw.gov.au)

### **Conservation Partners Program invests in the Hunter**

The Conservation Partners Program, run by the Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water NSW, will be directing some resources towards the Hunter region.

This program can offer landholders support for voluntary conservation, and includes wildlife sanctuaries and voluntary conservation agreements.

A landholders handbook can be downloaded at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/cpp/LandholderHandbookJune2009.pdf>

For further information contact Brynley Walters on 02 9995 6761 or email [Brynley.Walters@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Brynley.Walters@environment.nsw.gov.au)

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/cpp/ConservationPartners.htm>

### **CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:**

The Great Eastern Ranges website was launched on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2009. See <http://www.greateasterranges.org.au>

There is a Hunter Valley page at

<http://www.greateasterranges.org.au/partnerships/partnerships/hunter-valley>

Additional functions are being developed for the Hunter page including an events calendar and capacity for partners to contribute information and stories etc.

In the future we're hoping your stories of conservation may inspire others to get involved.

## **THE NEXT GENERATION SKILLS UP**

Schoolchildren in the Hunter Valley are learning more about their local environment and the role they can play in conserving it for the future through OzGREEN's MYRiveR project.

In October 2009 OzGREEN ran the first MYRiveR Hunter in the region with support from Xstrata Coal, Peabody and Waterwatch.

The program engaged schools from across the upper catchment in water quality and habitat assessment, visioning and action planning. Five schools and 45 students were involved from Singleton, Muswellbrook, Aberdeen and Scone.



Muswellbrook High Students testing the Dart Brook near Muswellbrook  
Photo Gabe Anderson

MYRiveR is a whole river basin youth engagement and environmental education program. The program enables young people to actively monitor the health of the environment; identify key environmental threats and values; develop their own vision and implement action plans for activities they design to sustain the health of their river basin.

The program was a great success and students are now working on their action plans which include regular Waterwatch testing, Carp catching days, tree planting and making their schools more sustainable through education and awareness (see [www.ozgreen.org.au](http://www.ozgreen.org.au)).

'It was great fun, I'd love to participate again. It was a fantastic experience' MYRiveR Hunter participant 2009.

*Stop Press: Funding has been secured from Xstrata Coal to run MYRiveR Hunter 2010. Schools from across the Hunter catchment will be invited to take part in the program from 6 - 17 September 2010.*

For more information contact Gabe in Newcastle or staff at the OzGREEN office:  
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