

Slopes to Summit (S2S)

Organisations currently involved in partnership activities : 8

**Facilitated by :
Nature Conservation Trust of NSW**

The Slopes2Summit (S2S) region comprises the mountains and still-wooded hills and low ridges between Kosciuszko National Park in the east, and Albury in the west. The area cuts across the southwest slopes, connecting inland temperate woodland and grassland ecosystems (in otherwise highly fragmented agricultural districts) with the intact and well-conserved mountains. The area is comprised of a core of remnant habitats which provide the basis for broader landscape restoration efforts. Connecting with K2C immediately to the east, the S2S region completes a 300km transect of the landscapes and ecosystems of southern NSW.

S2S was the second regional partnership established by the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative. Still relatively small, the Partnership has a strong focus on research partnerships. In early 2009, the S2S Regional Partnership was expanded to increase landholder involvement through membership of the Holbrook Landcare group.

Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C)

Organisations currently involved in partnership activities : 10

**Facilitated by :
Bush Heritage Australia**

The K2C region is an east-west band between Queanbeyan and Cooma linking the edge of Kosciuszko National Park with the western edge of the forests that run along the coastal escarpment. Stretching from Kosciuszko National Park to the south coast of NSW, the region occupies the greatest altitudinal sequence on the Australian continent, supporting a variety of woodland and forest ecosystems and ecological communities ranging from alpine snowfields to coastal heath and dunes.

Over the past 200 years, the distribution of native grasslands and woodlands throughout the region has contracted considerably, resulting in the fragmentation of vegetation and a subsequent loss of habitat for many native animals. As a consequence, the landscape is under considerable stress with its long-term agricultural and environmental production capacity being severely reduced. On this extensive landscape of approximately 1200 square kilometres,

K2C partners are focussing on vegetation communities known to be in decline, such as Box-Gum Woodlands and Natural Temperate Grasslands (listed under NSW and/or Commonwealth legislation as endangered or threatened ecological communities).

The partnership group in this region was instigated in 2006 and since 2008 has been supported by funding from the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative. The K2C partnership focuses effort on private and public lands where landholders are interested in voluntary cooperative conservation incentives and protection options. K2C is achieving great results in engaging and supporting local landholders in conservation activities.

K2C has continued to maintain and build its effectiveness due to the committed partnership of 10 groups and organisations, including DECC, as well as significant engagement with over 70 landholders across the current operational area.

SERIES FACT SHEET

A project built on partnerships

The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative is a concept that brings people and organisations together to focus efforts on establishing a conservation corridor along the 1200 km NSW section of the great eastern ranges. It is a project that will be built and improved on over many generations.

The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative is built on a foundation of community partnerships. It aims to raise community awareness and support, and connect land owners with on-ground delivery programs using a variety of mechanisms for conservation on private land.

In 2008, the NSW Government, through the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, and the NSW Environmental Trust, provided more than \$7 million, over three years, to establish the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative.

Leadership

Leading the Initiative is a collaboration between a range of established, well-respected conservation organisations who will work together to make the Great Eastern Ranges vision a reality. They are:

- Greening Australia
- The Nature Conservation Trust of NSW
- OzGREEN
- Bush Heritage Australia.
- National Parks Association of NSW
- The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW,

Regional Partnerships

In each of the five Regional Partnerships, a Facilitator brings together a range of local stakeholders, many of whom are already working together, to focus conservation efforts in the region.

Border Ranges

Organisations currently involved in partnership activities : 7

Facilitated by : Nature Conservation Trust of New South Wales

The Border Ranges is one of the most biologically diverse landscapes on the continent, supporting a significant proportion of threatened species and plants and animals which can only be found in this region. Highly fragmented due to past clearing and grazing development on the lower slopes and surrounding landscapes, the area is part of the network of World Heritage listed 'Gondwana Rainforests'. The management of pests and weeds is particularly important in the region. Another issue is the need to buffer against the potential impacts of wildfire on rainforest remnants, particularly in the face of accelerating climate change.

The Border Ranges region has been the subject of intense conservation planning and community engagement over recent years. The NSW and Queensland state governments,

and the federal government, collaborated in the development of a Border Ranges Biodiversity Management Plan (currently in Draft) which can be viewed online at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/recovery/pubs/border-ranges.pdf>

The area has a highly enthusiastic conservation community, with extraordinary demand for conservation programs. The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative has co-invested in the delivery of the Border Ranges Biodiversity Management Plan and on-ground conservation efforts in partnership with Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, the Nature Conservation Trust and many other organisations. In 2009, efforts began to move into a new era of partnership in the region, engaging the broad network of organisations through a series of forum events.

Hunter Valley

Organisations currently involved in partnership activities : 40

Facilitated by : OzGREEN

The Hunter Valley is the most complex of the five partnership areas from a social, economic, biodiversity and connectivity conservation perspective. The area contains a diverse range of unique and rich ecosystems. However, this very special landscape is under significant risk. Since European settlement the area has

become increasingly degraded and fragmented, and is at increasing risk due to rapidly expanding agricultural, industrial and urban development. The landscape will be placed under additional strain as the coal and power industry intends to mine over 70% of the valley floor over the next 30–50 years.

The geography of head of the Hunter Valley (there is a natural discontinuity in the ranges where they pinch to a low, narrow ridge) means it's one of only three areas on the eastern seaboard of Australia where inland ecosystems are not held back by the ranges, but stretch down to the coast.

The Hunter Valley represents a significant east-west linkage of natural vegetation in the great eastern ranges, with the potential for north-south "stepping stones" of vegetation to allow species movement (see Fact Sheet on Connectivity Conservation).

A diverse mix of industry (coal, power, equine, agriculture, viticulture, tourism, conservation), community, government, local government and academic interests have come together for the first time, under the banner of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, to act to conserve the unique values of the region.

This group, of more than 40 organisations, has come together to bolster the resilience of ecosystems and habitats in the face of impending climate change impacts.

Southern Highlands

Organisations currently involved in partnership activities : 15

Facilitated by : Greening Australia

Although many areas in the Southern Highlands have been extensively cleared for agriculture and urban expansion, there are still significant areas of natural vegetation, many of which are protected as national park or reserves. The area contains three important woodland linkages, and a fourth rainforest and wet sclerophyll linkage associated with the Illawarra escarpment. In addition to linking the Morton and Nattai National Parks, the area has significant east-west values for a number of coastal wetland birds that travel inland during wetter seasons.

Urban expansion associated with the Sydney-Canberra development corridor, and the encroachment of rural subdivision blocks into the hillier country supporting remaining forest and woodlands, is a significant threat that will further fragment habitats in this region.

The Southern Highlands partnership was created largely due to the enthusiasm of the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority and Greening Australia. The partnership has developed a draft conservation action plan, which seeks

to focus attentions in the first instance on the western-most woodland linkage in the Burratorang Valley.

This linkage is important because it has remained relatively intact and because of this, more threatened species can be found in the woodlands and forests of the Wollondilly and Burrogorang Valleys than anywhere else in the Sydney Basin. To look at the Southern Sydney Fauna report, go to <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/faunasouthsydney.htm>

In 2009, there will be extensive consultation on the draft plan with the aim of engaging landholders, business and local industry in the region to support the partnership and its efforts. The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative is currently supporting a significant social research pilot project in the region, which seeks to determine landholders' views on conservation. Findings from this research project will inform the way in which conservation projects seek to engage with the local community.

Fact sheets in this series

- What is the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative?
- What is Connectivity conservation?
- Fast Facts: Why the Great Eastern Ranges are important
- A project built on partnerships
- Landholders: questions and answers
- A View from the land – feedback from landholders