

Warringah Council Policy

ENV-PL 005

Bushland Policy

1 Purpose of Policy

This Policy aims to:

- secure and promote long-term conservation of biodiversity and associated environmental values on public and private lands in Warringah; and
- ensure bushland conservation and management issues are appropriately addressed and integrated with all Council's activities including strategic land-use planning and decision making.

This policy applies to all bushland in Warringah outside national parks. The interpretation of "bushland" is taken from *State Environmental Planning Policy No19 - Bushland in Urban Areas* (see 9.1 definitions) and covers wetland, terrestrial and coastal vegetation communities surveyed and mapped in Council's Natural Area Survey (Smith and Smith 2005).

2 Principles

This policy is based on the Council's commitment to apply the principles of ecologically sustainable development, and the actions outlined in Warringah's Environmental Strategy. In particular:

- The precautionary principle;
- Intergenerational equity;
- The protection of natural environmental processes;
- The protection of native biodiversity;
- The protection of scenic and recreational amenity;
- The protection of environmental quality; and
- Council policies/strategies must ensure inappropriate activities are effectively managed.

These principles will be implemented as follows:

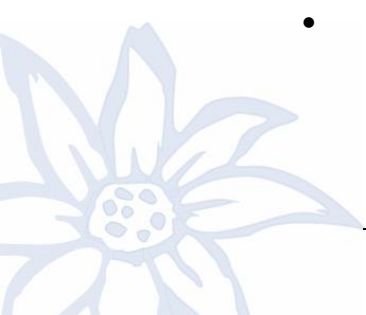
2.1 Management of Bushland Areas

a) Operational Management Standards for Bushland Areas

Council management practices will be covered in Operational Management Standards (OMSs). An OMS provides operational direction at a level of detail that is not appropriate in a Policy. The OMSs will be consistent with this Policy. They will be prepared for the following aspects of bushland management and conservation:

- Natural Area Restoration
- Recreational Access
- Community Education and Involvement
- Heritage Management
- Fire Management
- Pest Species (plants and animals) Management
- Leases and Licences
- Biodiversity Surveys, Monitoring and Inventories
- Bushland Conservation Prioritisation System

- Illegal Use and Activities
 - Common Customer Requests (e.g. relating to termites, bees, ticks in bushland, bushland trees dropping leaves/sap into gardens/pools, tree removal).
- b) Council's Goals for Bushland Management Programs are to:
- Re-establish fully functioning, self sustaining native ecosystems by providing the optimal ecological conditions for this to occur;
 - Protect, conserve and restore fauna habitat and wildlife corridors;
 - Prioritise restoration of bushland based on conservation significance of vegetation communities and populations of plants and animals as identified in the latest version of the Natural Area Survey (Smith and Smith 2005);
 - Protect residential properties on the bushland reserve boundaries by developing and maintaining access for fire fighting agencies;
 - Maximise the effectiveness of pest animal and noxious weed control programs on public and private land by co-ordinating with other land management agencies, adjacent local government areas and residents;
 - Provide sustainable recreational access to bushland reserves with a focus on environmental interpretation of features with special ecological and cultural significance where appropriate;
 - Integrate bushland restoration goals with natural area management projects undertaken by other sections of Council;
 - Foster community knowledge of Warringah's special natural environment, the threats to its survival, and the actions and behaviour patterns needed for a sustainable environment by integrating environment education with every aspect of Council's bushland management program.
- c) Council's Approach to Managing Bushland Areas
- In general, bushland restoration work on public land will only be undertaken by professional contractors and professionally supervised volunteer groups. Council's safe work practices will not permit volunteers to work alone in isolated areas.
 - Council will only allow work to take place on public bushland if it is satisfied that there is adequate resourcing to achieve a sustainable long-term improvement in bushland condition. This may require resourcing from Council to underwrite the cessation of work commenced by volunteers.
 - Restoration projects will aim to restore bushland to a condition that is as self-sustaining as possible. It is acknowledged that many areas of restored bushland will always require some level of maintenance due to irreversible changes in environmental conditions.
 - Bushland restoration programs will give consideration to addressing the causes of bushland degradation as well as the symptoms. The impacts of stormwater run-off, absence of an ecologically suitable fire regime and damage from adjacent residential development are common causes of bushland degradation in Warringah.
 - Weed control works will be undertaken in a staged process so that short-term loss of fauna habitat within the immediate locality, in particular structural cover and shelter is minimised. Weed control projects within wildlife corridors will not commence until a work plan has been developed to prevent a significant short-



term loss of fauna habitat. Where suitable, shelter and cover for fauna may be constructed at the sites of restoration projects.

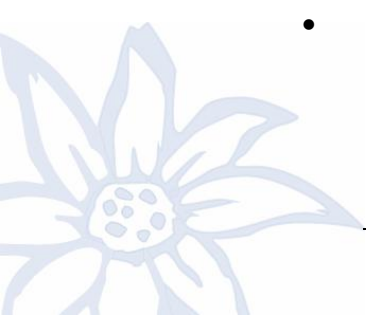
- Re-vegetation will only be considered if the likelihood of natural regeneration from the endemic seedbank and vegetative reproduction on site is low. Re-vegetation should use local provenance species. Revegetation projects must allocate a satisfactory level of resourcing to weed-control and supplementary planting works following completion of the main planting phase. Council recognises that re-vegetation sites will not become self-sustaining ecosystems and accordingly a level of maintenance will always be required.

2.2 Strategic Land Use Planning and Policy

Council's strategic planning and land-use planning will aim to protect and manage bushland outside national parks and reserves. Particular priority will be given to habitat for plants and

animals of conservation significance, vegetation corridors and scenic landscapes. Council will consider the following approaches to achieve this aim:

- Retain adequate sized areas of bushland to protect catchments of water bodies
- Conserve and restore threatened species habitat in an environment that maximises ecological sustainability
- Plan and provide for the sustainable and appropriate recreational use of bushland areas focussed on user appreciation of bushland values and interpretation of the bushland setting.
- Take action against significant threats to regional biodiversity by initiating and participating in strategy development with other land management organisations.
- Plan for the consequences of climate change affecting bushland, particularly in the areas of bush-fire hazard control, sea level rise and flood affected land, storm activity, weed management and biodiversity conservation.
- Protect, restore and enhance bushland in near proximity to bushland with conservation significance, or bushland with higher priority (e.g. national parks, Manly Warringah War Memorial Park, Allenby Park, Jamieson Park and other areas of core bushland) to form a buffer.
- Provide bushland reserves of a sustainable size and shape with vegetated linkages to other bushland areas in secure tenure.
- Minimise loss of bushland for asset protection zones by siting new development in lower bushfire hazard areas.
- Provide incentives to property owners to conserve bushland on private land (e.g. ranging from rate and planning incentives to education and technical support).
- Acquire and reserve bushland with significant ecological, habitat, recreational or scenic values as resources permit.
- Protect, restore and enhance bushland remnants within vegetation corridors and buffer zones.
- Alleviate barriers to fauna movement in vegetation corridors.
- Where appropriate, negotiate biodiversity offsets to ameliorate the effects of direct and indirect adverse impacts of development on bushland.



- Investigate the use of biodiversity offset schemes such as environmental contributions, bio-banking and bio-certification of an environmental planning instrument to prevent loss of highly significant ecological sites through development.
- Recognise the importance of bushland as local habitat for common native plants and animals as well as for species with higher conservation significance.
- Co-ordinate with other local Councils, state government and owners of large bushland areas to achieve bushland conservation at a regional level.

2.3 Assessment and Control of Development and Activities

- Council in assessing proposals and activities affecting bushland will ensure that a comprehensive ecological assessment is undertaken in accordance with current legislation, state policies, local planning controls, best practice guidelines, relevant Council strategies and Land and Environment Court Principles.
 - This assessment will recognise the conservation status of vegetation and fauna as identified in the most recent version of Warringah's Natural Area Survey (currently Smith and Smith, 2005).
 - This assessment will recognise the significance and importance of national parks, areas of core bushland and areas containing threatened species or communities.
- Council will ensure that development proposals or activities are sustainable and any such measures to mitigate or reduce the impact are sustainable.
- Council will initiate processes to audit and where necessary enforce the effective implementation of these measures for the life of the development or activity.
- Council will apply an equivalent or a higher standard of environmental assessment to planning and carrying out its own works and undertake routine operations potentially affecting bushland according to best practice.

When Council is not the determining authority for activities potentially affecting bushland Council will encourage the responsible authority to assess and carry out its works in a manner consistent with the standard Council applies to itself.

3 Authorisation

This Policy was adopted by Council on 10 June 2008.

It is effective from 10 June 2008.

It is due for review on 10 June 2010.

4 Amendments

This Policy was last amended on [insert date].

5 Who is responsible for implementing this Policy?

Manager Natural Environment

6 Document owner

Director Community and Environment

7 Related Council Policies

- a) Environmental Sustainability Policy

8 Legislation and references

- a) Local Government Act 1993
- b) Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995
- c) Threatened Species Legislation Amendment Act 2004
- d) Crown Lands Act 1989
- e) Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- f) National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974
- g) Rural Fires Act 1997
- h) Rural Fires and Environmental Assessment Legislation Amendment Bill 2002
- i) Noxious Weeds Act 1993
- j) Rural Lands Protection Act 1998
- k) Companion Animals Act 1998
- l) Warringah Local Environmental Plan 2000 (WLEP 2000)
- m) Smith, P. and Smith, J (2005) Warringah Natural Area Survey: Vegetation Communities and Plant Species 2005 Update. Report to Warringah Council. P. and J. Smith Ecological Consultants, Blaxland.
- n) Smith, P. and Smith, J (2005) Warringah Natural Area Survey: Fauna Species 2005 Update. Report to Warringah Council. P. and J. Smith Ecological Consultants, Blaxland.
- o) Smith, P. and Smith, J (2005) Warringah Natural Area Survey: Vegetation History and Wildlife Corridors 2005 Update. Report to Warringah Council. P. and J. Smith Ecological Consultants, Blaxland [list].

9 Definitions

Ameliorate: make better, improve

Bio-banking (Biodiversity-banking): a system that enables biodiversity credits (management actions to improve biodiversity) to be traded and used as an offset against the impact of proposed development on biodiversity values.

Bio-certification (Biodiversity-certification): Bio-certification of an environmental planning instrument such as a local environmental plan by the Minister for the Environment allows development to proceed in areas of lower conservation value providing biodiversity loss is offset by positive actions in higher biodiversity areas. Biodiversity certification requires the improvement or maintenance of biodiversity values.

Biodiversity Offset: one or more appropriate actions that are put into place to counter-balance specific impacts on biodiversity.

Biodiversity: the variety of life forms, the different plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms, genetic material and ecosystems.

Bushland: land on which there is vegetation that is either a remainder of the natural vegetation on the land or, if altered, is still representative of the structure and floristics of the native vegetation.



Ecosystem Processes: basic processes at work in all ecosystems that affect the functioning of an ecosystem e.g. the sunlight, nutrients and water available to bushland plants for growth and reproduction.

Ecosystem: the interaction of plants and animals with each other and with the physical environment e.g. a coastal lagoon is an example of an aquatic ecosystem.

Habitat: an area or areas occupied, or periodically or occasionally occupied, by a species, population or ecological community and includes any biotic or abiotic component.

Mitigate: lessen or eliminate the severity of an adverse impact – may include compensation both before and after the impact.

Vegetation Community: an assemblage of plants that has evolved in response to specific environmental factors e.g. a sandstone swamp community occurs on Hawkesbury sandstone soils in the wettest sites.

