



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 85 August 1997

COMING EVENTS

Festival of Wildflowers -- On 23rd and 24th August at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens. This should be a great wildflower treat as usual, guided walks through the gardens, or leisurely stroll to enjoy the winter sunshine (hopefully). The Society for Growing Australian Plants will have their usual spectacular display of native wildflowers in the pavilion, there will be other displays and sales booths, with snacks and refreshments on sale. The Ku-ring-gai Council staff generally excel themselves in organising the Festival. STEP will have its stall there as well.

Muogamarra Nature Reserve Walk -- This Reserve is only open on six weekends during the year, when the wildflowers are at their best. We have booked a guided walk to Lloyd's Trig in the Reserve on **Sunday 14th September, 1997 to start at 2.00 pm.**

An **EASY/MEDIUM** walk takes you to the highest point in the Reserve to enjoy panoramic views over the Hawkesbury River and adjoining National Park areas, with wildflowers on the way. The last bit of the walk has some rocks to be negotiated.

The entrance to the Reserve is 3 km north of Cowan on the Pacific Highway (NOT the Expressway), and there is a 2 km drive inside the Reserve to the carpark, picnic area, information tent and toilets.

A donation of **\$2 per person**, or \$6 per car, is requested to cover the costs.

The duration of the walk is approximately **two and a half hours**. Bring your hat and a drink (and snack). Tea, coffee, cordial and cake will also be on sale.

The Reserve is rich in Aboriginal and European history and valued for its flora and fauna, and the National Parks guide will provide informative comments along the way.

Ku-ring-gai Community Fair -- On 21st September, 1997, at Bicentennial Park, Pymble.

Annual General Meeting -- This will be held on **Wednesday, 15th October, 1997.** We will advise the details in the next Newsletter. **Biodiversity in Ku-ring-gai** will be the topic for the evening. Please mark the date in your diary.

The STEP Environment Protection Fund

We have now received advice from the Director of Environment Consultation and Support Department, Environment Australia, that from 25 June, 1997, donations made to the STEP Environment Protection Fund will be tax deductible under item 6.1.1., Table 6 in subsection 78(4) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936.

This will place STEP on a par with other environmental organisations, and will make it more cost effective for donors. We hope to be able to attract donations, which would be used to promote local conservation work.

We will report on its progress in due course.



Blue Gum High Forest

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a preliminary determination to support the proposal to list the Blue Gum High Forest occurring on the north shore as an endangered ecological community on Part 3 of

Schedule 1 of the Act.

The Blue Gum High Forest is the accepted name for a plant community occurring on deep shale-derived soils with high rainfall in the north shore and northern suburbs of Sydney. It is confined to soils derived from Wianamatta Shale, and is distinct from open forest in sandstone gullies or alluvium which may include some of the species such as *E. deanei*, *E. pilularis*, *E. saligna* or *Syncarpia glomulifera*. It has the structural form of tall open-forest to open forest. The total species list of the community is large, with many species present only in one or two sites or in very small quantity. The species composition of a site will be influenced by its size, recent disturbance history and the balance

of species will change over the fire cycle.

The exact wording of the preliminary determination and the species list characteristic of the community can be obtained from the NSW Scientific Committee (9585 6940).



John Burke Honoured

Immediate past president of STEP, John Burke, has been honoured by Ku-ring-gai Council for the contribution he made to conservation and management of bushland in the municipality. Through the many years of work on the STEP Committee he raised public consciousness about the importance of urban bushland. He was appointed to the original Bushland Management Working Party, which was an advisory committee to the Council, and in this capacity he guided Council in the formation of a bushland section within the Council's Parks Department. His work, which preceded the State Government's SEPP 19, resulted in Ku-ring-gai's Plan of Management for Urban Bushland.

To recognise the importance of his contribution, Ku-ring-gai Mayor, Cr. Richard Geddes, presented him with a Citation at a short ceremony on Tuesday, 15th July 1997. STEP heartily endorses this recognition.

John's interest in the Ku-ring-gai bushland is illustrated by the fact that he undertook a bush regeneration course to ensure that he was able to speak with authority on

bushland matters. It is also reflected in the sensitive manner, in which his residence is integrated into its surrounds, retaining the natural bush all around and replanting local native species, where it had to be disturbed.

John recognised early that threats to the bushland did and would come from many directions, including roads, inappropriate development, Council neglect, public ignorance, population pressures, urban runoff and the general perception that bushland was unused land.

Consequently he concentrated his efforts towards educating the public about the values of natural bushland and its conservation.

He used his presence on the BMWP to influence the views of community leaders and Council officers towards conservation objectives.

His ability to mount rational arguments in support of his views made him a very persuasive advocate in the battle to safeguard urban bushland.

He produced or substantively participated in the preparation of position papers and written submissions on contemporary issues, which formed a threat to the bushland. These issues included:

The Lane Cove Valley Freeway (on which he wrote and produced a position paper, which became the intellectual basis for the fight to eliminate this destructive motorway proposal)

The Mona Vale Rd corridor, which he recognised as an important bushland link between National Parks and which he strove to defend against development.

Bush regeneration, which he strongly promoted through STEP and was influential in getting Councils to accept responsibility for supervision and support.

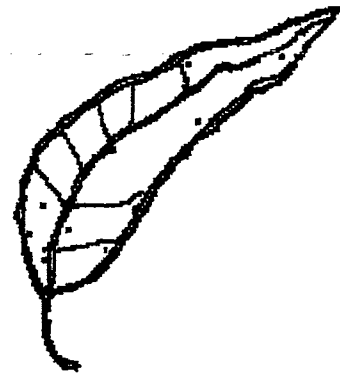
Dual occupancy, which he saw as the thin edge of the wedge, which would eventually rob Ku-ring-gai of its natural tree cover and bushland setting.

Piecemeal road development by

the RTA and its predecessor, the DMR, posing threats to bushland in various locations.

The "tyranny of small decisions", which threatened bushland through a series of unrelated and seemingly insignificant development decisions, affecting the interface between residential areas and bushland.

John has contributed immensely to the community's acceptance of the importance of conservation issues in Ku-ring-gai, and no doubt will continue to do so in future.



STEP MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

A brief reminder that membership subscriptions are now due again for the 97/98 financial year.

Please check your Newsletter address label, which shows the status of your membership, and if you are not paid up, please send your cheque to the Treasurer (PO Box 697, Turramurra, 2074).

STEP COMMITTEE

At the Annual General Meeting there will again be opportunity to join your Committee. If you wish to contribute to the activities of STEP in the capacity of a Committee member, or if you happen to know someone who may be willing to serve on the Committee, please contact a Committee member or your President in the coming weeks. The Committee can have up to fourteen members. We only have ten on the present Committee.

Residential Development Control Plan

It was previously reported that STEP was participating in the preparation of a new draft development control plan for residential areas through the Ku-ring-gai Residential Environment Advisory Committee (KREAC).

Ku-ring-gai Council has now published the Draft Development Control Plan as "The Good Design Manual" to replace the existing DCP6 .

The stated aims of the draft DCP are:

- * To enhance the significant and unique living environment available in Ku-ring-gai.
- * To encourage development which is in harmony with the surrounding area and which is sympathetic to the street and locality in which it is proposed.
- * To minimise the impact on adjoining properties and the natural environment generally and sustain this environment for future generations to enjoy.
- * To reflect the natural, built and cultural significance of heritage items and conservation areas in Ku-ring-gai.
- * To facilitate good architectural design.
- * To be innovative and flexible in approach.
- * To be responsive to both community expectations and an applicant's right to have a level of certainty in the assessment process.
- * To focus on the desired urban design outcomes.

The draft DCP is currently on exhibition for public comment until 8th September, 1997, at the Council Chambers.

Your representative on KREAC believes that the requirement for a site analysis and compliance with the visual character of the location, combined with the hierarchy of other parameters will produce better outcomes than a rigidly prescriptive control plan, which is likely to give rise to architectural monstrosities exploiting the limits of the very

controls intended to curb such excesses.

Nevertheless since this document will shape residential developments in future, it is far too important to be left entirely to the deliberations of a committee, even if you have some representation through STEP. Therefore every one should have a look at it to see whether you believe that the stated aims have a chance to be met.

A public meeting has been arranged at the Turramurra Uniting Church Fellowship Hall on Monday, 1st September, 1997, at 8.00 pm.

Council's Director of Development Control and Health Services will be there to answer questions regarding the document.



Pam Morse Bequest

At its August meeting the STEP Committee decided on the following disposition of funds derived from the Pam Morse Bequest, the capital of which is held in a separate account. A grant to the value of \$250 will be made annually, available to students engaged in the study of any aspect of urban bushland, including flora and fauna studies, biodiversity, and management issues such as chemical pollution, weed invasion, erosion control and control burning. It is expected that such studies will allow better understanding and management of Ku-ring-gai's urban bushland, although the study area will not be limited to Ku-ring-gai. Eligible applicants will be engaged in research at honours or postgraduate level at any of Sydney's universities.

Applicants will be required to submit a grant application consisting of no more than two A4 pages, outlining their research project (objectives, project design)

and how the money would be used to aid their research. A short curriculum vitae should also be submitted.

Applications will be invited in March and close on April 30th. On completion of the project (within 12 months of receipt of the award) the successful applicant will be required to provide a short summary of the research results, which will be published in the STEP Newsletter.

The Pam Morse Fund must be acknowledged in any publications resulting.

Applications will be assessed by three members of the STEP Committee, acting as a sub-Committee, who will make a recommendation to the full Committee at its June meeting.

Kingsford Ave Bushcare The STEP Track

The STEP track was established by Alan Catford and his team in Kingsford Ave to promote appreciation of our natural bushland and to demonstrate bushcare principles. It was subsequently upgraded with timber steps, stormwater controls and signage by Ku-ring-gai Council, and officially opened by Mayor Peter Derwent in 1993.

Maintenance has been taken up by a bushcare group of eight volunteers working on the first Saturday morning of each month. According to our correspondent and group member, Margaret Booth, the site is just big enough to be interesting, and small enough to manage.

Tools were provided by a grant from the Lane Cove Valley Catchment Management Committee.

A stone and rubble silt arrestor has been constructed with a trickle path through a series of logs.

Grassy patches have been covered with newspaper and mulch after spraying, and are ready for replanting with local species.

The group is confident that they will have the introduced shrubs and dandelions under control soon and be able to move along the track further.

Ecological Engineering

In June we had Associate Professor Steven Riley from the University of Western Sydney talk to us about Urban Runoff in the Lane Cove Valley. Among other information he showed illustrations of some stormwater control works, which had been carried out under his direction by students for a minimal cost. He demonstrated and emphasised that effective results could be achieved without great capital expenditure by harnessing volunteer input for the design as well as for the implementation of such projects. He has used such work with students to demonstrate the approvals procedures and public consultation process, as well as the engineering aspects. The Ecological Engineering Group at UWS is actively pursuing studies and prototype remedial work in the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment. Its objective is to foster ecological engineering research and practice. To focus its efforts it has adopted a mission statement: *To facilitate ecologically sustainable development and human welfare in the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment by initiating and supporting research into management of water, associated land and atmospheric resources.* Among its projects are two, which relate to the Lane Cove Valley; mapping and modelling stormwater outlets in the Lane Cove National Park, and urban stormwater impact monitoring and modelling in the LCNP. The majority of its projects are in the Hawkesbury-Nepean area and include design and field testing of performance of drainage pit litter traps, optimal sizing and location of wet detention ponds in a catchment, and the study of guidelines for stormwater amelioration strategies in urban bushlands. Steven Riley is the Group Coordinator, Faculty of Engineering, University of Western Sydney, ph (047) 360 282.

SENDER STEP Inc
P.O.Box 697,
Turramurra, 2074

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PHIL HELMORE & HELEN WORTHAM
19 VERNON ST
TURRAMURRA 2074

The "Green" Fire Truck

This is how Judy Messer, Vice-Chair of the NSW Nature Conservation Council describes the new Rural Fires Act (1997), which was passed into law in June of this year. It requires a duty of care to incorporate environmental protection into all levels of planning and operational activities, and in this respect may be the most advanced bushfire management legislation in the world.

Some of the environmental aspects are:

- * ESD principles to be binding on all elements of the Rural Fire Service.
- * No exemption from the Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995), other than under emergencies.
- * The NCC to have the right to nominate a representative to the Rural Fire Services Advisory Council and to the Bush Fire Coordinating and Management Committees.
- * Public exhibition of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans.
- * Restriction of the use of fire as a hazard reduction method in areas that are "particularly sensitive environmentally".
- * Private landholders to have the right of appeal, on conservation grounds, against notices to require burning on their land.