

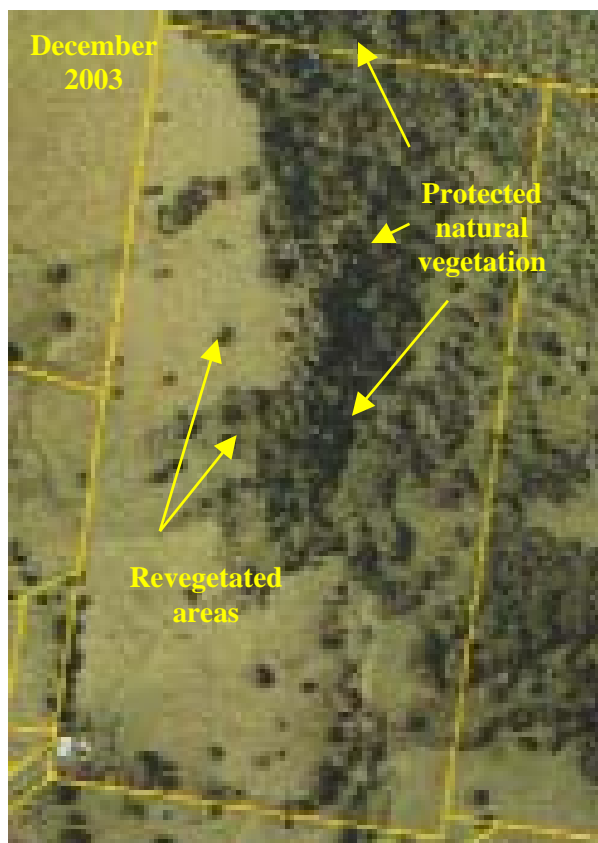
Project Background

The COG project was carried out in two stages over a four year period from 1998 to 2002 and involved Landcare groups from throughout the Mary River catchment. The aim was to identify ecologically significant areas, then assist landholders within these critical zones to protect, enhance, extend and link rainforest remnants.

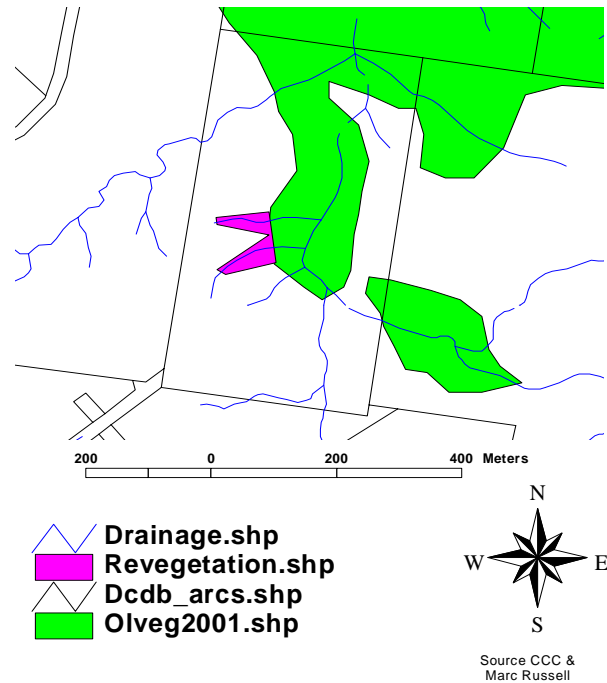
More than 30 landholders in the Bridge Creek sub-catchment were involved in the COG project, many on adjoining properties. This case study focusses on one particularly interesting property situated on a major tributary of Bridge Creek. The landholder (Irene Keton) established a great model for other landholders wanting to protect and enhance habitat on their own properties.

Originally part of a dairy farm, much of the 20 ha frost-free property consists of Kikuyu pasture that is currently maintained with agisted cattle. Stock numbers will be reduced as additional land is required for revegetation or horticulture.

Irene is a member of Land For Wildlife and is the first landholder in Caloundra City to obtain a protection covenant over her forest through the recently established Voluntary Conservation Agreement program. Most of the natural vegetation and revegetation areas on the property now have long-term protection.



Keton Property



The steep gorge and cliff faces that transect the property have provided protection for a diversity of flora and fauna. Several threatened species occur, including the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly and host vine, *Pararistolochia praevenosa*, *Macadamia ternifolia* (Maroochy Nut) and *Syzygium hodgkinsonia* (Red Apple).

Project Objectives

To

- ◆ protect, enhance, extend and revegetate disjunct corridors
- ◆ identify high priority vegetation links
- ◆ facilitate community and local government interest, involvement and ownership of corridor projects
- ◆ standardise project site evaluation and monitoring
- ◆ effectively coordinate, manage and implement the Mary River Consortium projects

Project methods (Keton property profile)

- ◆ The landholder expressed an interest in carrying out revegetation after purchasing the land.
- ◆ Priority sites on the property were identified and flora and fauna surveys carried out to identify Regional Ecosystems, the presence of rare and threatened species and threats such as weeds.

- ◆ Advice was given on weed control, revegetation and regeneration etc. A plan was formulated after site inspections and discussions. Well-planned rehabilitation works should aim at maximising the property's environmental, economic, social and aesthetic potential. Planning included staged works to improve habitat and address issues such as windbreaks, landslip and water quality.
- ◆ 500 m of fencing was erected in an M-shape to protect rainforest. It included two degraded gullies containing natural regeneration and weeds e.g. Lantana and Privet.
- ◆ More easily-managed and productive land on the ridges remains open to be grazed and / or cropped.
- ◆ Barung's Green Reserve team carried out fencing work, site preparation and a great deal of planting.
- ◆ A public treeplant involving Barung and Maleny Community Credit Union members planted many of the 800 trees designated for the site.
- ◆ Edges were planted with bushy or overhanging species to reduce sunlight, wind and weeds etc within the patch.
- ◆ The landholder committed to maintenance, especially during early establishment stages. Private contractors with a depth of revegetation experience have assisted.

Project Partnerships

Many stakeholders contributed to the project's success.

Initial funding was provided by the Natural Heritage Trust through project coordinator , Greening Australia, and additional funding was received from BHP, Caloundra City Council and Maleny Community Credit Union.

Other involvement included: Dept. Natural Resources & Mines; Qld Parks & Wildlife Service; Caloundra / Maroochy Water Supply Board; Sunshine Coast Environment Council; Barung Landcare; Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee; Mary River Cod Project; Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group; World Wide Fund for Nature; Men of the Trees; University of Sunshine Coast; TAFE; Land For Wildlife; Mary Cairncross Volunteers; The Wilderness Society; Qld Herbarium and individual community members. Landholder contributions exceeded all other financial and in-kind support combined.

What did we learn?

- ◆ Staking each tree assists with more efficient weed control and fewer losses.
- ◆ Excluding stock from previously grazed areas can lead to weed outbreaks. Cattle grazed periodically within the fenced forest area initially target legume vines, exotic grasses and other environmental weeds, and often reduce Lantana. It is important to move stock on before damage to native regrowth is apparent.
- ◆ Staging rehabilitation work ensures a series of small successes rather than one large failure. We must not overestimate our physical and financial resources.



June 2002



April 2005

Above: 2002 - the community in action
2005 - achieving early canopy phase
Gullies showed evidence of landslip, and the spring-fed waterway had become a bog where cattle accessed. Slope stabilisation and improving water quality through cattle exclusion and buffer plantings in the upper catchment can have positive effects all the way downstream to the seagrass beds in the Great Sandy Straits.

Beyond the project

Irene's enthusiasm for local ecology doesn't stop at her property boundary. She is an active Landcare member and was instrumental in establishing and coordinating interested neighbours, who shared knowledge and worked together to rehabilitate their own creek banks.

By placing a protective covenant on important habitat in Caloundra, the landholder receives financial assistance to help manage the protected area.

This on-going support has increased eligibility for funding from other sources, enabling Irene to undertake additional fencing and rehabilitation works.

While some COG properties did not achieve the level of success we had hoped for, others such as Irene's far exceeded project aims. Assistance offered by the project helps get them started and pointed in the right direction.