

Annual Report

2019 - 2020



Bass Coast
Landcare
Network

Proudly Supported by



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning





We acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Bunurong and the Boonwurung, of the places in which we live, work and play. We recognise and respect the enduring relationship they have with their country, and we pay our respects to elders past, present and future.



Welcome from the Chair

Ric Oldham

Welcome Landcare members, your families, our volunteers, partners, friends, staff, and fellow Board Members to the Bass Coast Landcare Network 2019/20 Annual Report.

A year of extremes, first the devastating fires and then the effects of COVID-19. With impacts not only felt across our region but indeed the world, Landcare remains an important part of the social fabric connecting many across Bass Coast.

Although that connection has looked a little different in the last half of 2019-2020 with a multitude of digital meeting platforms in play and online events taking place, our Group Membership and staff have been able to adapt and remain relevant and connected to our community.

We continue to support our Groups and Members, while remaining one of the most successful Landcare organisations in Australia by staying true to our core purpose **“Educate, Grow, Feed”**.

We will continue to adapt where necessary and provide meaningful ways to reach out and connect with our communities. Through learning and doing we will continue to walk together exploring innovative ways that help us manage, protect and enhance our natural resources and play our part in ensuring our farming enterprises are sustainable and food security assured in times of changing climates.

We hope that you are inspired by the can do action within this report as we continue to work together to address ongoing challenges and ensure we keep our communities connected into the future.

BCLN Board Executive

The Chair – Ric Oldham

Deputy Chair – Brett Dodd

Treasurer – Roger Lee

Secretary – Anna Gloria

Portfolio Holders

West Gippsland CMA – Paul Spiers

Port Phillip and Western Port CMA - Ric Oldham, Peter Mulherin

Audit and Finance – Don Creed, Brett Dodd, Roger Lee

Risk and Compliance – Ric Oldham, Anna Gloria, Abigail Yarranton

HR Advisory Committee – Daryl Hook, Brian Enbom, Jean Coffee, Brett Dodd, Lisa Wangman

Groups and Representatives

Powlett Project – Paul Speirs

Bass Valley – Jean Coffey

3 Creeks – Ray Kirk

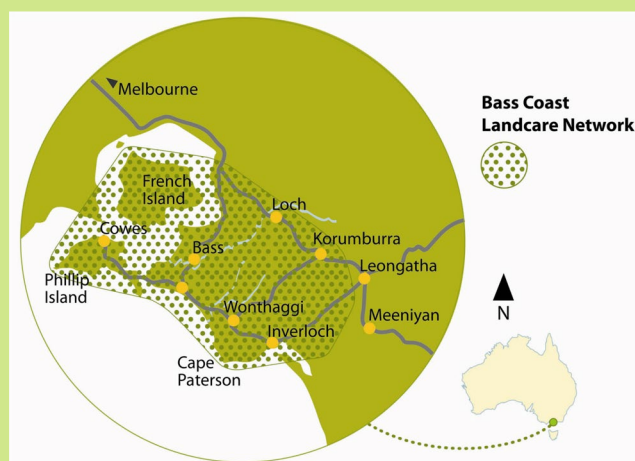
Anderson Inlet – Daryl Hook

French Island – Linda Bowden

Kongwak – Clare Stainsby

Korumburra – Don Creed

Phillip Island – Mike Cleeland



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Background and History

The Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) was formed in 2003 as an affiliation of the Landcare Groups in the region, enabling them to better position themselves for investment from government, local, state, federal and corporate programs. Sixty percent of the 1,400 rural properties in the Network area are involved in and supported by the BCLN.

Under the direction of the Groups and the Network Board, our Landcare Staff manage a variety of programs including;

- Education and Training - Engaging the next generation, supporting a community of practice
- Demonstrating Sustainable Agriculture - Providing pathways to resilient and profitable farming
- Natural Resource Management - Remnant vegetation protection and revegetation
- Pest Plant and Animal Control - Integrated management and control
- Works Crew - Assisting landholders in on ground works and offering traineeships
- Indigenous plant nursery - Volunteers growing local indigenous plants for Landcare projects
- The River Garden - A community trials, education, demonstration space and future food hub
- Practical Sustainability - Community action for sustainable farms and homes
- Capitalise on Carbon - Supporting landholders to generate income from sequestration
- Partnerships in Action - Engaging and delivering partnerships in the corporate and agency sector
- Ecosystem Services Delivery - Valuing biodiversity and providing consulting services

The Bass Coast Landcare Network falls in two Catchment Management Areas, West Gippsland and Port Phillip and Western Port. The top of the catchment is characterised by steep hills with slopes from 20 to 40 degrees whilst the lower catchment area is flat and prone to flooding and salinity. Within the catchment there are several small rural settlements surrounded by agricultural enterprises, such as dairying, beef cattle, sheep and vegetables, which support the majority of the population. Tourism, small rural allotments and extractive industries are other typical land uses within the catchment.

The Network has the twin focus of changing the understanding and the practices of landholders. In recent years the Network has conducted education and training programs for landholders and facilitated Farmer Discussion Groups to highlight the issues of land management, best practice farming techniques and whole farm planning. In addition, the Network has been successful in gaining funds to support landholders and urban groups to complete works to improve their land. This includes re-vegetation, soil health, salinity control, sustainability, greenhouse reduction, wetland restoration, coastal rehabilitation, pest plant and animal control, improving water quality and monitoring biodiversity.



Our Core purpose

Educate – Grow – Feed

Our Vision

Our vision is to be a community engaged in supporting a productive, biodiverse landscape incorporating sustainable agricultural practices and innovative environmental enterprises.

Our Mission statement

To collaborate with our groups, the community and partners and to enable the delivery of innovative land and environmental management practices to support healthy and resilient communities and ecosystems.

Our Values

The BCLN core values have been drawn from a consultative process between the Board and BCLN staff. They are not rules but represent guiding principles that we should test all decisions and actions against.

Excellence: To strive for high standards in everything we do to create the best outcomes for the community and future generations.

Respect: To maintain a respectful and professional attitude to embrace individuality and different viewpoints and values.

Teamwork: To create a healthy, cohesive and supportive work environment to ensure collaboration and cooperation are cornerstones of our organisation.

Optimism/resilience: to continually adapt and evolve to change while remaining optimistic and confident in our values.

Integrity: To take pride in working professionally and honestly to achieve outcomes that reflect our values and enhance our reputation as a trustworthy organisation.

*As an organisation we value and support **biodiversity and the natural environment.***



Our Strategies and objectives 2018-2025

To achieve our core purpose, six key strategies and their objectives have been identified. These strategies and objectives will guide the selection and focus of the activities undertaken by the Network. How the activities are to be managed will be outlined in an annual Operational Plan, compiled and reviewed in November each year for the coming year.

1. Strong communities engaged and connected through Landcare

- 1.1 Increase volunteer activity by 50% by 2025
- 1.2 Increase new memberships within Landcare groups by 20%
- 1.3 Engage 50 new landholders (average 5 per member group) in Landcare activities per year
- 1.4 Increase level of lobbying on Landcare issues by Landcare groups by 100%
- 1.5 Double funding from corporate sources by 2020
- 1.6 Raise awareness of BCLN within the philanthropic sector
- 1.7 Explore other commercial opportunities that align with principles of the network.
- 1.8 Develop an MOU with the Bunurong Land Council

2. Grow and protect a connected biodiverse landscape

- 2.1 Increase indigenous vegetation cover by 1.5 % per annum
- 2.2 Protect and enhance 40 ha of remnant vegetation per annum
- 2.3 Hold a minimum of 15 community planting days per annum
- 2.4 Increase works crew revenue by 25% by 2025
- 2.5 Facilitate 6 more traineeships by 2025
- 2.6 Establish 50 new Biolinks Projects by 2025
- 2.7 Increase woody weed eradication funding by 30% by 2025
- 2.8 Trial 3 new technologies in revegetation by 2025

3. Lead an innovative sustainable agricultural community

- 3.1 50% of the agricultural community have implemented productive changed practice to become resilient to climate change
- 3.2 25% of agricultural properties have developed carbon-neutral action plans and implemented changed practice to become carbon neutral
- 3.3 75% of the agriculture community have developed approved farm biosecurity plans and have implemented changed practice
- 3.4 BCLN will have established a peer to peer mentoring program for 5 key sectors;
 - Organic/regenerative horticulture
 - Master Tree Grower/Multi Story farming.
 - Grazing (beef and sheep)
 - Zero Emissions agriculture
 - Mixed Farming
- 3.5 25% of the agricultural community will have developed drought proofing water plans and have become water stewards

4. Capitalise on Carbon

- 4.1 Expand BCLN vehicle offset program to include flights, by 100% by 2025
- 4.2 Become a carbon neutral organisation by 2022
- 4.3 Train 2 staff members in carbon accounting by 2020
- 4.4 Develop an on-farm carbon sequestration and carbon reduction program by 2020
- 4.5 Develop a carbon consultancy prospectus by 2020
- 4.6 Develop carbon offsets programs by 2020

5. Best Practice Governance and Safe, Skilful Operations

- 5.1 Maintain a quality board and management team which provide effective, accountable and strategic leadership and sound succession planning
- 5.2 Implement Professional development for staff to the minimum of 5% of salary
- 5.3 Maintain effective, nationally compatible systems across all key areas of operation.
- 5.4 Zero Harm, live a culture of safety
- 5.5 Develop plan for Network to become progressively less reliant on public funds in support of operational overheads and support self-sufficiency by 2025
- 5.6 Maintain strong cash reserves (>\$500K), high levels of secured work and an ongoing annual surplus (>5%).
- 5.7 Maintain high quality assets, infrastructure and equipment in priority locations.

6. Deliver leading edge experiences, education and training

- 6.1 Develop and market two new profitable environmental experiential activities per year
- 6.2 Increase by 10%, the number of students reached each year by the Environmental Detectives Program
- 6.3 Develop new environmental detective's activities per annum
- 6.4 Develop an integrated and accredited Landcare Training program for landholders by 2025
- 6.5 Establish a partnership with an Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) accredited centre to deliver accredited Landcare training
- 6.6 Increase landholder/farmer engagement in education by 50% by 2025
- 6.7 Engage 15% more volunteers in training – both as trainer and trainee
- 6.8 Establish 3 Educational Hubs in Gippsland by 2025

The following Annual Report will be structured following our 6 key strategies.



Best practice governance and safe, skilful operations

Governance and Planning

The BCLN Board has the ultimate responsibility for BCLN projects, funding and activities. It is assisted in fulfilling its responsibilities by the BCLN Executive General Manager and other Network managed staff. Specifically, its role is as follows:

Broad Aims

- Pursue core purpose and mission statement of the Bass Coast Landcare Network.
- Develop clear aims and objectives for the BCLN and provide leadership in their implementation.
- Provide support to all member groups.
- Coordinate the activities of member groups in relation to Network wide projects.

Overall Operations

- Approve the strategic plan for the Network.
- Delegate authority to staff and member groups appropriately.
- Demonstrate Leadership.
- Recommend the auditor's report be approved at the AGM.
- Ensure effective communication between Landcare Groups and other stakeholders.
- Establish ethical standards for the BCLN.

Performance

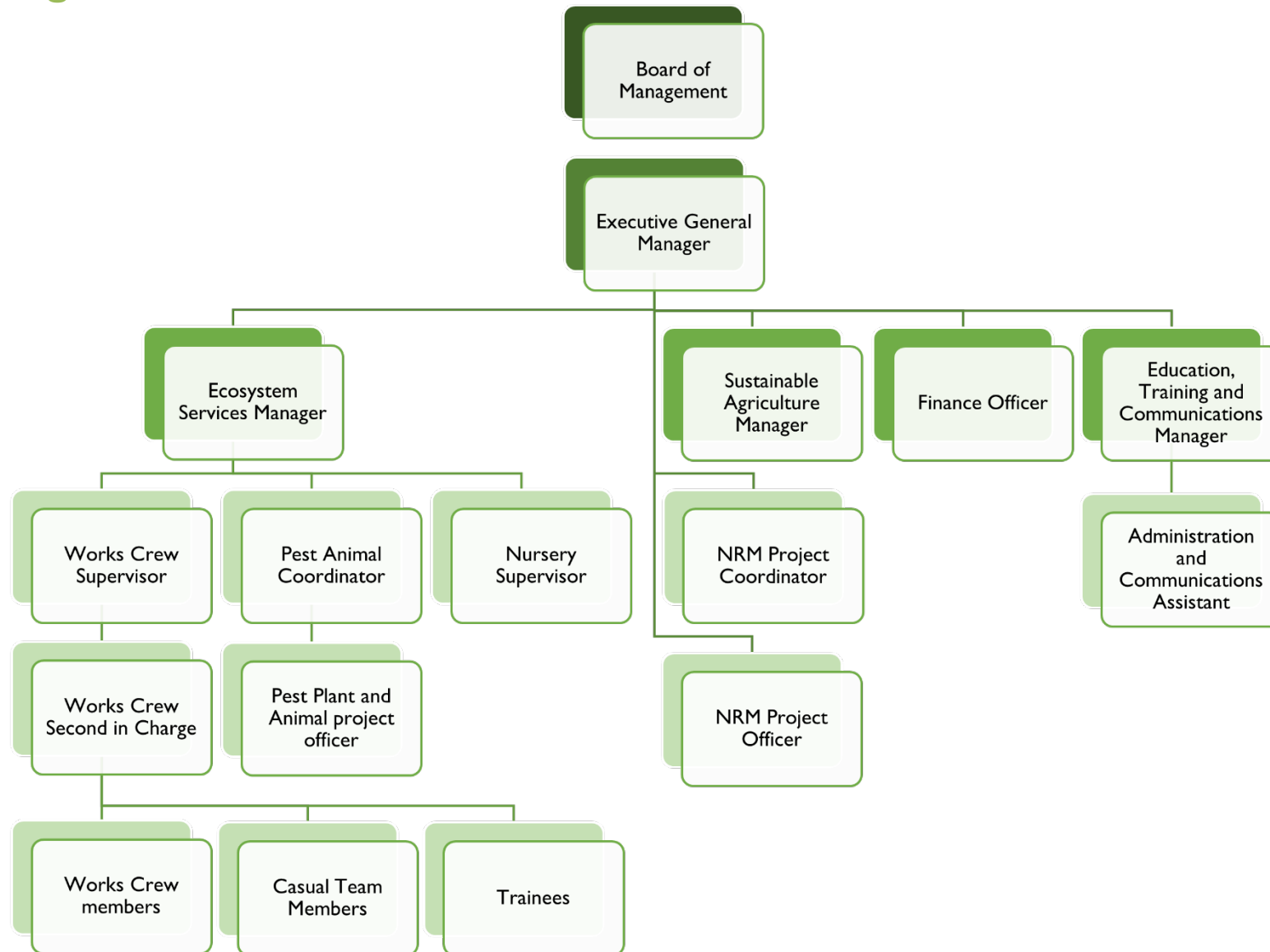
- Ensure the long-term viability of the BCLN.
- Oversee the implementation of the strategic plan.
- Ensure development of project proposals across the Network and seek funding in line with:
 - Strategic directions and resources capabilities
 - Member groups action plans, their needs and capacities to achieve stated outcomes
 - Ensure proper disbursement of any funds received in line with funding agreements
 - Monitor developments in the Landcare field and the operating environment.

Legal Conformance

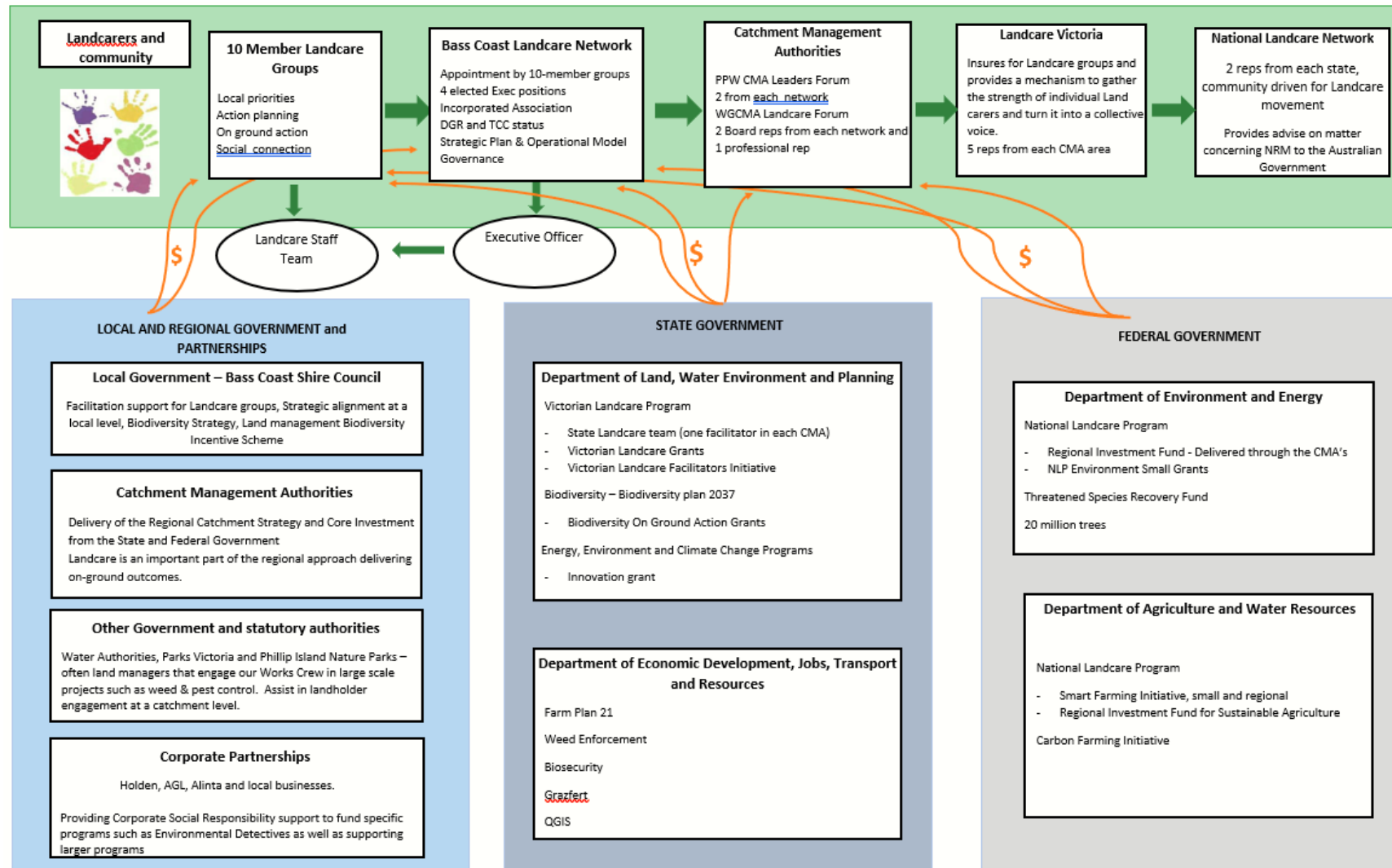
- Understand and protect the financial position of the BCLN.
- Require and monitor legal and regulatory compliance including adherence to the conditions of funding.
- Approve annual accounts, annual reports and other public / sensitive reports.



BCLN Organisation Structure



Landcare Framework in Australia



Chair's Report

Ric Oldham

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 throughout 2020, our Network, together with its Member groups continue to adapt and innovate, building upon our strong foundations and resilience. Evidenced by our actions, we remain true to our core purpose, **Educate - Grow - Feed.**

Our education programs, activities and projects remain aligned to our strategic intent. Our well-formed plan continues to hold true and guide our activity. The Safety & Health of our staff and members, above all else, remains a corner stone of our endeavours. Particularly with a large and active in field Works Crew, sometimes operating in hazardous environments, our safety culture with critical risk controls in place and Zero Harm focus has simply become the way we do business within BCLN.

The Board remains committed to the support of Management in the pursuit of our stated 2018-2025 Strategies namely;

- Strong communities engaged and connected through Landcare
- Growing and protecting a connected biodiverse landscape
- Leading an innovative sustainable agricultural community
- Capitalising on carbon
- Ensuring best practice governance and safe and skilful operations
- Delivering leading edge experiences, education and training.

With the onset of COVID-19 restrictions, came a period of expected disruption and uncertainty. The Board acknowledges the efforts and professionalism of the BCLN staff for their quick responses in forming COVID safe plans, analysing our current programs and services to see not only how we could continue to operate safely and protect our people, but also finding opportunities to adapt and innovate, helping our groups to stay connected by transitioning to largely online learning activities. It is pleasing to see the continued professionalism of the BCLN Staff as they deliver outcomes for a very broad range of customers whilst progressively building capacity and capability across a diverse range of specialist projects.



BCLN Staff planting day for the Vehicle Offset program on the Bass River

Our continued focus and successes in supporting sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices in a changing climate across the BCSC through the Growing Southern Gippsland initiatives is acknowledged. The soon to be launched Growing Southern Gippsland website will become a great legacy project for BCLN, providing a valuable resource for farmers and the capability to create their own Climate Adaptation Plans.

Our All Things Carbon strategy continues to build momentum with the development of the Climate Adaptation Plan and the development of the Farming for Climate option created for the Bass Coast Shire Council (BCSC) rating strategy review. BCLN has been working closely with the BCSC and their consultants on the development of their Climate Action Plan. The agricultural sector provides the greatest opportunity for Bass Coast to reduce its carbon footprint. We have positioned our Network well to help BCSC deliver on their targets within the plan.

Biolinks continue to be a major focus for BCLN, Last year in our region we planted over 200,000 indigenous plants, made possible through the great work of our Natural Resource Management team.



The view towards Westernport Bay from the Russo property over a revegetated gully, one of the largest Biolink projects to date

We acknowledge the support of the BCSC through our Memorandum of Understanding, which has funded many of the Biolinks projects and worked closely with us on many Carbon based initiatives. We have partnered with BCSC to conduct weed control works throughout the extensive network of rural roads and we will now host the Sustainability Festival and make improvements to the River Garden through BCSC Community Grants support.

Our Education and Communications team continues to engage the next generation through influential place-based activities and provides

opportunities for our Groups and Members to participate in educational events designed to develop skills and increase knowledge. The River Garden, our flagship educational activity site, has generated many new community partnerships this year, assisting in site development while building a connected community of practice.

The BCLN Works Crew continues to be a major asset, improving our ability to deliver positive on ground outcomes for our members and clients. This year our works crew expanded its operations to complete its first West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority willow removal job. With the onset of COVID-19 restrictions preventing most Community planting days and therefore volunteer support, the Works crew stepped up to fill the large void and get all the plants in the ground.

Our Pest Plant and animal programs have seen increases in contract work with many partners including neighbouring South Gippsland Landcare Network, Parks Victoria, and Phillip Island Nature Parks.

Our relationship with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) is developing well. Over the past 12 months we have engaged their team in cross cultural inductions at many of our events, along with cultural heritage inspections at some of our riparian revegetation sites. We aim to have a Memorandum of Understanding signed with BLCAC in the coming months.

We can expect that in the aftermath of the devastating regional fires and the COVID-19 pandemic, that future funding challenges and increased competition will present within both the public and private sectors. The new and expanding partnerships with Beveridge Williams, South Coast Taxis, Hills are Alive Group and Holcim demonstrate that notwithstanding the year it was, the BCLN brand is strong and one that the corporate sector wishes to identify with.

A huge shout out goes to all our volunteers. Whilst having to change operational protocols our volunteers still managed to participate in some tree planting days, assist at the River Garden and participate in our Bass Landcare Indigenous nursery Group (BLING) to grow plant stock and improve infrastructure, all whilst adhering to our COVID Safe Plans.



The BCLN Board, staff and friends at the 2019 BCLN AGM

As last year's winner of "Best Landcare Network" in the Victorian Landcare Network Awards, much is expected from us. We continue to be innovative leaders, thanks to our professional Board and Staff who are adaptable and nimble as we navigate the continued impacts of the COVID Pandemic. The Board acknowledges the leadership, strategic vision, dedication, commitment and achievement of our staff and volunteers, and applauds the successes of BCLN's activities and pursuits which we intend to continue with the help of our people into the future.



BCLN representatives at the 2019 Victorian Landcare Awards at Government House.

A sincere thank you to all who contribute to the Landcare movement within the Bass Coast, acknowledging that through your commitment to action and care, we will remain stronger together.

Ric Oldham

Chair – Bass Coast Landcare Network – On behalf of the BCLN Board

Treasurer's Report

Roger Lee

This year, despite the turmoil and uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Network has been able to continue operations safely and produce a very satisfactory financial result.

The most notable outcomes of the financial year include:

- A small but acceptable overall profit for the year of \$67,598 resulting from the operating activities of the Network
- An outstanding net operating surplus for the year of \$320,598
- An unplanned significant boost to total equity.



Management and staff did well to meet the challenging budget set for 19/20. Total income of \$1,745,865 was almost 20% higher than the previous year and despite corresponding expenses being slightly more than budget (partly due to increased wage costs associated with JobKeeper) normal operations produced a surplus.

Salaries & Wages continue to be the major expense item. Staffing levels will therefore require regular reassessment alongside funding availability.

The Balance Sheet indicates BCLN is in a very healthy financial position and able to meet its debts as they fall due. Working capital ratio has increased to a very sound 2.3 and accounts receivable remain at an acceptable level. There has been a significant increase in plant & equipment which reflects the organisation's confidence to invest in itself. The purchase of the Nursery facilities, spray units, vehicles and pest control equipment enhance the Network's ability to fulfill project work and pursue future business opportunities.

BCLN qualified for COVID-19 related Government support and received \$100,000 from the Business Cash Boost and \$153,000 from the JobKeeper scheme. These receipts were treated as income in accordance with accounting standards (AASB1058) resulting in a substantial surplus for the year. There were some additional wage costs associated with JobKeeper (about \$25,000) but the majority of these receipts flowed directly to retained earnings. The Board considered it prudent to review BCLN's Cash Reserves Policy and re-asses how available cash reserves should be allocated and managed. Consequently, changes have been made in order to protect staff entitlements, build future capability and to allow for financial uncertainty.

Considerable effort was put in to BCLN's budget for 2020/21. The budget reflects the outcome of a risk review undertaken to identify how COVID-19 might impact future funding. Much of the grant income in the 20/21 budget is committed so we anticipate income levels will be maintained. However, funding of the Network's activities beyond 20/21 is far more uncertain. In addition, a major project "The Bunurong BRP project" will come to an end in 20/21 so it will be necessary for BCLN's management and staff to fill the gap to ensure current staff levels can be maintained.

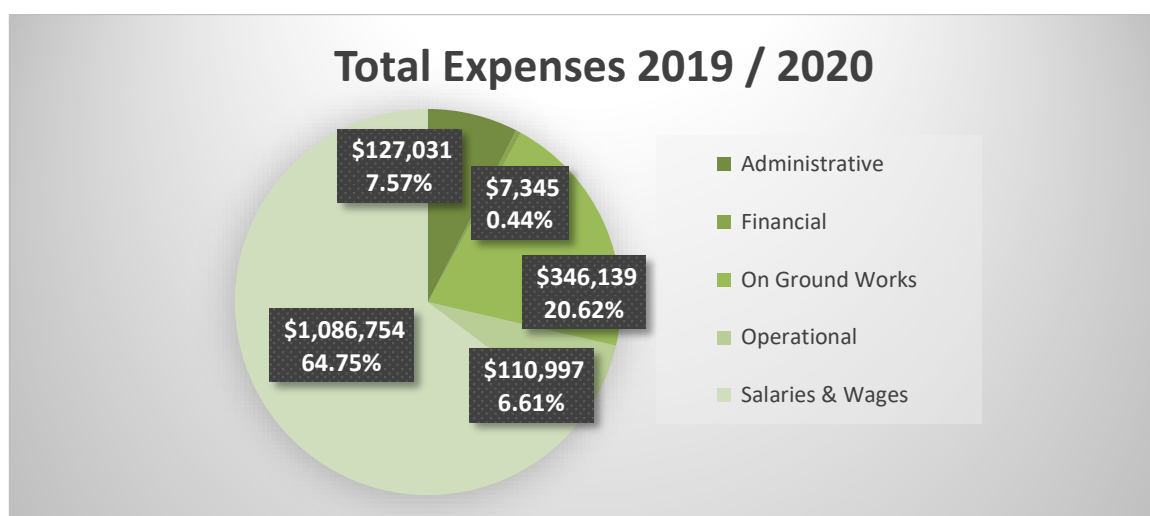
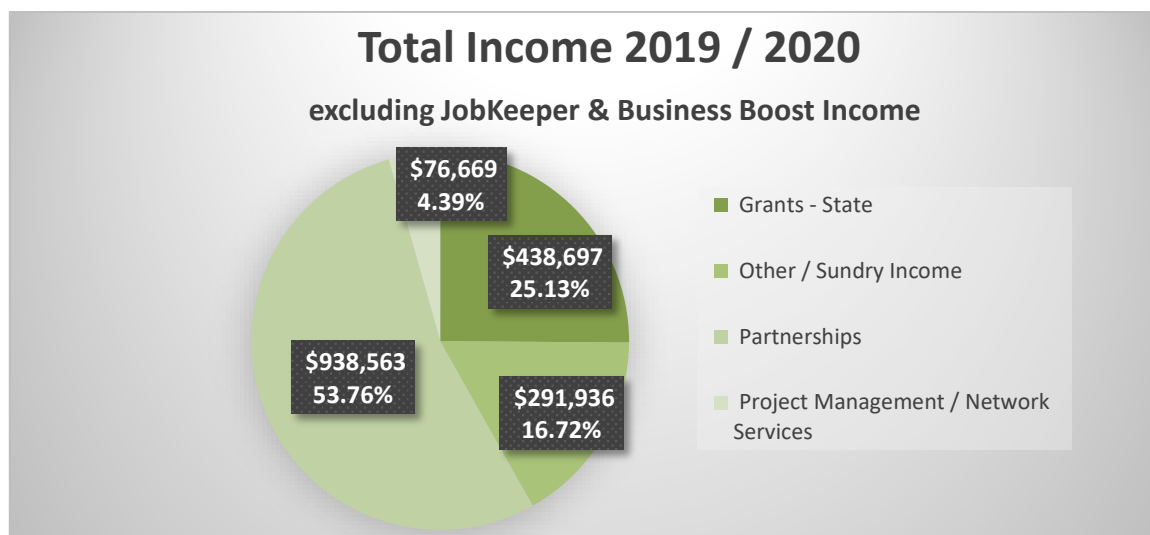
Key partnership arrangements with the Bass Coast Shire Council (BCSC) and the Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) continue to underpin the Network's funding. The MOU with BCSC, together with the Biolinks strategy and roadside weed spraying generated \$255,000 revenue for the year. The Bunurong BRP pest animal contract with South Gippsland

Landcare Network contributed \$289,000 for the year and grew the capacity of the Pest Animal team to pursue additional business including a large contract with Parks Victoria.

The 20/21 budget includes a change to the accounting for internal administrative transfers. This internally focused item will no longer be treated as income resulting in small reduction in total budgeted income.

An important outstanding matter was resolved when the Network successfully applied to the State Revenue Office under Part 4 of the Payroll Tax Act 2007 for exemption from payroll tax based on its status as a Non-Profit Charity.

This is now my third year as the Network's treasurer and each year has thrown up unexpected challenges. I believe these have all been dealt with professionally. I must pass on credit for this to the great team around me. David Bateman and Cheryl Marchant now share the role of the previous Finance officer and together they have raised the standard of BCLN's financial management. I commend them on a great job managing the accounts, generating reports and responding to my many questions. I am also very, very fortunate to have the support of a great team on the Audit & Finance Committee. I have huge respect for their knowledge, expertise and commitment and we work well together. Thankyou Bret Dodd, Don Creed and Jon Hauser. Please come back next year!



Executive General Manager Report

David Bateman

Bass Coast Landcare Network has had another fantastic year delivering a broad range of on ground works, educational activities, sustainable agricultural programs and facilitation of our 10 Landcare groups. This year we planted just over 200,000 plants on properties in our region, which was a fantastic result considering the impacts of COVID-19 on the 2020 planting season. Our key partner, Bass Coast Shire Council, has again been a great supporter of BCLN. Through our shared goals and MOU, we have been delivering great results for both organisations. The Biolinks project has been a fine example of collaboration. Through this project we have leveraged funding from multiple partners to get the bulk of 200,000 plants in the ground.



I am very proud of both our staff team performance and the BCLN Board through a difficult time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. BCLN adapted quickly to the situation that was placed upon us, our Executive team got together a few days after the pandemic was announced and worked through a variety of ways to continue to operate safely. This involved the development of a COVID Safe plan with strict guidelines around social distancing, office staff working from home, increased hygiene and more. Both State and Federal Government support has been a big bonus for BCLN during the later half of the 2019/20 financial year, with BCLN being eligible for both the Job Keeper and Small Business Boost. This support has enabled the BCLN works crew to plant all of the trees that would have been planted by volunteers with funds allocated from the support. BCLN was also fortunate to partner with the BCSC to host a Working for Victoria team. This team of five people who lost their jobs through the COVID-19 pandemic have been of great assistance to our crew and our members putting many thousands of plants in the ground.



Working for Victoria Crew at Charles Davidson's planting



Working for Victoria Crew at Paul Speirs Property

Staff focus and values

Throughout the year I have been fortunate to participate in a High performance leadership course. This course has given me many great leadership ideas and tools that I have been implementing with our team. One of my main goals is to build stronger relationships within our team, so we all feel more comfortable having genuine conversations around team and individual performance. I believe through catching up and checking in with each other regularly and doing some outdoor fun activities, that our team morale and purpose has significantly improved throughout the year. I am very proud of Lisa Wangman in particular and our whole team in the development of our Team Values. Lisa and I designed and delivered a half-day session at Maccas farm in early June (in between lock downs) to develop our Staff team Values.

Thoughtfulness

We treat everyone with kindness, respect, and compassion.

Culture

Our culture is governed by our commitment to excellence, with professionalism, compassion, and resilience as cornerstones of our work ethic.

Vision

Utilising innovative and creative approaches to realise our vision of a more sustainable and resilient environment.

Teamwork

Our team strives to provide sound leadership through collaboration and fostering of healthy relationships.

Community

We advocate to make a difference to our community and beyond.



BCLN staff at Maccas Farm values session

Our partnerships and relationships I believe, are the key to our continued success. I would like to thank all our key partners including Bass Coast Shire Council, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Westernport Water, Phillip Island Nature Parks and Holcim for their support. I would also like to acknowledge our new partners Hills are Alive Group, Beveridge Williams and South Coast Taxis. I am proud of what our Staff team, BCLN Board and volunteers have achieved this year and would like to thank everyone that has contributed. We will continue to innovate and strive to do great things for the Bass Coast and the world. Well done.

Human Resources Report

Recruitment, Staff turnover and Volunteers

This year we sadly say farewell to Abigail Yarranton. Abby left BCLN in February 2020 to head back into the corporate world after spending 7 years working for BCLN, firstly as our HR and Finance Manager then moving on to Manager of People, Culture and Capability. Abby has done a fantastic job helping BCLN staff transition from BCSC employees to BCLN employees. Abby put together all our staff and BCLN Board policies and procedures, OHS systems, set up our financial reporting systems and implemented the change from QuickBooks to Xero. Abby also shared the Executive Officers role after the departure of the previous EO. We will also miss the fantastic cakes and muffins Abby made. Abby was the most amazing cake baker and decorator that Landcare has ever seen. Abby achieved a great deal in her time with BCLN and we wish her well in her new endeavours.



Abigail Yarranton



Chantelle Geissler baiting at Venus Bay

Low staff turnover continues to be a positive attribute for BCLN, actively demonstrating the staff and organisational commitment to one another. BCLN lost only one non-casual staff member in 2019/2020. This positive commitment is supported by excellent opportunities for flexible working arrangements including utilising time in lieu and changing work location or times, and part-time employment, which has increased over the prior year.

This year we had the opportunity to employ our first ever dedicated Rabbit Officer. This was made possible through funding from the Phillip Island Nature Park, Bass Coast Shire Council and the South Gippsland BRP project. We have been so lucky to recruit Chantelle Geissler. Chantelle moved from Sydney to take on the 3 day per week role. Chantelle has been instrumental in improving some of our GIS systems and improving our reporting. Chantelle's role has already grown to a 4 day per week position.

The overall number of full-time staff has decreased, but this is reflected in an increase in part-time staff, and those existing staff accessing opportunities for flexible working arrangements, including part-time work.

Casual workers continue to be essential and utilised by our Works Crew to create a flexible workforce, easily allowing our team to adapt on a seasonal or demand basis. Although we have a high level of casual staff, the amount of casual employment has reduced from 3.81 FTE to 2.31 FTE. This can be mainly attributed to Luke Phillips taking on the full-time role of Second in charge of the BCLN Works Crew. Luke was a trainee with BCLN and had been on the crew as a casual for a few years after finishing his traineeship. Luke has showed excellent leadership qualities as the 2IC.

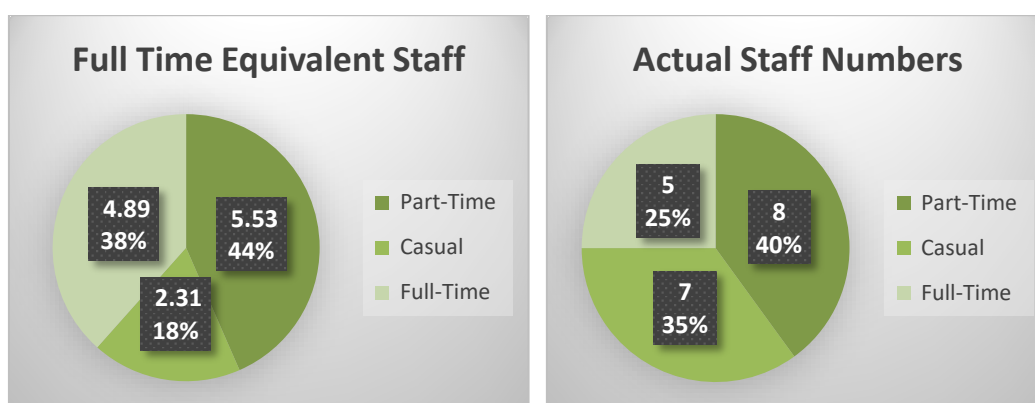
Volunteering is integral to our team and without the commitment of our Nursery Group Volunteers we would be unable to produce the high level of quality plants we are utilising in our plantings. These volunteers come from all areas of the community and a special thanks must go to the Nursey Group who have allowed us to develop the nursery and control the quality of our plants now and into the future.

BCLN volunteers range from our entire Board, who offer a strong and ongoing commitment, to those who come to a casual planting. Each person is needed, and essential to create successful outcomes for BCLN activities and its stakeholders. I take this opportunity to thank all of you, our vitally important and needed volunteers.



3 Creeks Planting volunteers at Paul Fisher's and Philippa Armstrong's planting day

Statistics



Employee Status at 30 June 2020			
	Female	Male	Total
Casual	3	4	7
Full-time	0	5	5
Part-Time	4	4	8
Total	7	13	20

Training and Development

Human Resources provides a variety of training and development opportunities aimed at building employee capacity to deliver services, meet strategic needs and align with BCLN's values, strategic plan, and overall mission. BCLN continues to sponsor staff in informal, short and nationally recognised vocational training during the year and anticipates an ability to develop programs and activities into the future from this investment.

Training activities this year included; chainsaw usage, 4wd buggy course, payroll and taxation, leadership development, chemical endorsement, Pest animal control, 1080, health and safety, master tree growing, event management and pitch training.

BCLN also encourages staff to undertake other outside studies improving their professional and personal skills. We are pleased to report BCLN staff are independently undertaking or completing vocational and postgraduate studies, further developing the knowledge base and experience at BCLN. We are pleased to be able to offer these staff support in ways other than direct financial contribution.



*Safe handling of 4wd Buggy course at
Bruce and Anna Spiden's Farm*

Work Health and Safety Injury Management

BCLN acknowledges continual improvement of our work health and safety policies, procedures and guidelines is essential to help identify, adopt and develop best practice in health and safety management processes. These proactive activities reduce social and financial costs of workplace injuries and illnesses and improve the overall performance of BCLN.

Conclusion

We believe our employees are the most important resource for creating organisational value. By increasing our investment and commitment in human resource development and bolstering the strengths of individuals, BCLN will maximize the power and value of our people and the organisation itself. BCLN strives to enhance capabilities, building strong, highly competitive foundations, bringing value to all of our partners, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

Special thanks go to all of our volunteers, our dedicated staff, and the members of the People Culture and Capability Committee for their committed work all year.

Child Safety Statement

Bass Coast Landcare Network is committed to the safety of children and young people who participate in our programs. BCLN has developed a thorough and clear policy that both define this commitment and the steps to be taken to ensure compliance.

BCLN will demonstrate its commitment to applying the seven standards and three principles of Child Safety Standards and outlines by having:

- a clear written commitment by the BCLN Board of Management to child safety
- a communicated policy of zero tolerance for child abuse
- actively working to listen to and empower children
- having systems to protect children from abuse and take allegations and concerns seriously
- actively promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children and those of a culturally and / or linguistically diverse background or with a disability
- actively ensuring all persons involved with BCLN have been trained in and subscribe to the BCLN child protection and safety policy and code of conduct.



The next generation of Landcarer's

Public Fund

Ian James

The Public Fund was set up by the Bass Coast Landcare Network in order to raise funds to finance projects proposed by community groups aimed at assisting the environment and people's enjoyment of it.

Throughout the year the Fund worked on increasing its presence in the region by improving communication and knowledge of activities and possibilities. The brochure designed to assist individuals in making bequests to the Fund for environmental purposes was widely distributed. The Trustees are pleased to announce that they are aware of at least one bequest as a result of the brochure and wish to acknowledge Bill Young, a resident of Cowes, for his bequest. Bill hopes that an acknowledgement of his bequest will encourage others to consider similar action. The brochure is available on the Bass Coast Landcare Network Website or a copy can be picked up at the Landcare office at Bass. The Fund received donations of money from 12 individuals.

The Fund applied to two philanthropic organisations to gain funding for a project called the Island Ark. This project aims to reduce fox and rabbit populations in a 30km radius from the Phillip Island bridge. Reducing the fox presence in the areas near Phillip Island would make Phillip Island a safer place for potential threatened species releases. The first application to the Ian Potter Foundation was unsuccessful and at year end our second application to the Ross Trust had not been settled.

Financial support was provided for the development of an app to guide visitors to the renovated Pioneer Reserve at Kongwak. The Fund will continue to seek funding for the Bass River Garden project which it has supported in the past.

Last year we reported that we had received a request for financial support for a feasibility study into a Bass River Walk, Canoe and Fishing Access Project extending from the Bass township to Western Port Bay. The lower



reaches of the Bass River provide an excellent example of a waterway in transition from fresh water in the vicinity of the town of Bass, to a coastal bay entrance. The river widens considerably as it approaches Westernport Bay and there is abundant marine and waterbird life. Historically there was a launching ramp for recreational boats under the bridge at Bass, but this has since disappeared and only remnants remain. During the year the Public Fund worked with Melbourne Water to further investigate the possibilities of opening up the river. While there are pockets of public land some of the river frontage is in private hands with titles running to the riverbank. This precludes public activity such as a riverine walking track from the Bass bridge to the entrance of the Bass River at Westernport Bay. Hence any public activity downstream of the bridge is confined to water activities on the river although there is scope for recreational fishing where public land extends to the riverbank. Upstream of the Bass bridge there is scope for a riverine walking track but this will require discussions with the Bass Recreation Reserve Committee. The Public Fund is keen to support community projects like this.



We have also been planning to run a Master Tree Growers information field day at one of the trustee's farms, however this has been placed on hold due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are hopeful we will be able to run this early in 2021.

While individual interest remains high in providing financial support, the level of donations from the corporate and philanthropic sectors remain disappointing and the trustees are hopeful of increasing the level of funding from these sectors post COVID -19.



This will be the last time I submit this report. It is time for an injection of new blood into the leadership of the Public Fund and I intend to stand aside at the Annual General Meeting. I would like to thank all those whom I have worked with and especially my fellow Trustees who have shown high levels of professionalism in the conduct of their duties.

Ian James

Chairperson for the Trustees of the BCLN Public Fund.

Successful grant applications and Major Contracts

Funding Source	Amount	Grants Included
DELWP	\$2,727	Future Homes Farms and Festivals for 2040 (First milestone payment only, \$53,636 total)
FRRR ANZ Seeds of Renewal	\$14,820	Building a sustainable Bass Coast through environmental activity days at the River Garden
Bass Coast Shire Council Community Grants	\$3,150	Supporting a volunteer workshop program to fulfill the community plan for the River Garden
Port Phillip and Westernport CMA	\$17,052	Westernport Catchment Kids
West Gippsland CMA	\$16,000	Powlett Catchment Kids 2 (Milestone 1 80%)
Southern Farming systems	\$13,600	Women on Farms series, Soil moisture field day
South Gippsland Landcare Network	\$288,851	BRP Bunurong Pest animal project
Phillip Island Nature Park	\$21,720	Rabbit Officer project/Partnership
Beveridge Williams	\$5000	Bronze Sponsorship
South Coast Taxis Offset	\$3164	Offset planting
Hills are Alive Group	\$5500	Offset planting
Holcim	\$28,826	Bronze sponsorship and Works Crew contract weed control and planting
WGCMA	\$20,000	Anderson Inlet VLG: Protecting Places for Laces
Westernport Water	\$52,542	Westernport water MOU delivery
Melbourne Water	\$18,998	Community Grant – Bass River
Victorian State Government	\$104,992	Biodiversity Response Planning – Building the Bass Coast Biolinks
Victorian State Government Facilitator program	\$55,191	Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program 2019/20 Program
Westernport Landcare Network	\$98,630	Demonstrating Sustainable Agriculture Project
WIRES and Landcare Australia Limited	\$20,000	Bushfire recovery works at Grantville Reserve

Strong communities engaged and connected through Landcare

Activity Days

Date	Name	Location	Description	Attendance
27 th June 2019	Community planting	Phillip Island	Planting Day	14
29 th June 2019	Community planting Phillip Island Landcare	Rhyll	Planting Day	22
5 th July 2019	Phillip Island beef group farm visit	Ryanston	Discussion Group	9
5 th July 2019	Community planting	Powlett River	Planting Day	25
6 th July 2019	Community planting	Kongwak	Planting Day	21
6 th July 2019	Landholder	Rhyll	Planting Day	5
8 th July 2019	Facebook for Landcare Groups	Bass Hall	Training Day	10
14 th July 2019	Community planting	Dalyston	Planting Day	32
18 th July 2019	Wonthaggi Secondary College	Korrine	Planting Day	120
20 th July 2019	Community planting	Woolamai	Planting Day	32
20 th July 2019	Community planting	Almurta	Planting Day	15
27 th July 2019	Community planting	Dalyston	Planting Day	50
28 th July 2019	John Dever Planting Day	Rhyll	Planting Day	21
2 nd August 2019	BRP riparian planting - Powlett Primary School	Powlett River	Planting Day	34
3 rd August 2019	Our Lady Star of the Sea, Community planting	Cowes	Planting Day	45
3 rd August 2019	Community planting	Kongwak	Planting Day	14
8 th August 2019	Kongwak Ellipak Discussion Group	Kernot	Discussion Group	12
8 th August 2019	Holden Proving Ground	Lang Lang	Planting Day	20
12 th August 2019	Holcim & BCLN Board	Bass Arboretum	Planting Day	17
13 th August 2019	First Aid for Landcare Groups	Bass Hall	Training Day	21
16 th August 2019	Phillip Island beef group	Phillip Island	Discussion Group	10
17 th August 2019	Community planting	Woolamai	Planting Day	16
18 th August 2019	Community planting Phillip Island Landcare	Rhyll	Planting Day	14
23 rd August 2019	Monitoring Day	Pound Creek	Training Day	10
25 th August 2019	Paul Waylen's planting Phillip Island Landcare	Ventnor	Planting Day	18

25th August 2019	Community planting	French Island	Planting Day	1
27th August 2019	Bass Valley Primary School	Bass River/ River Garden	Planting Day	25
30th August 2019	Wonthaggi Secondary College	Korrine	Planting Day	100
30th August 2019	Landholder	French Island	Planting Day	3
31st August 2019	Brian Griffin planting day Korumburra Landcare	Jumbunna	Planting Day	22
3rd September 2019	Wonthaggi Secondary College	Woolamai	Planting Day	150
4th September 2019	RMIT University	Ryanston	Planting Day	12
5th September 2019	Community Planting (Bushday BDO)	Phillip Island	Planting Day	45
14th September 2019	Hills Are Alive Festival	Krowera	Planting Day	77
14th September 2019	Community/Works Crew	Bena	Planting Day	9
15th September 2019	John Dever's Bush Care's Big Day Out Phillip Island Landcare	Rhyll	Planting day & environmental walk	45
21st September 2019	DIY Monitoring Day	Bass	Training Day	15
22nd September 2019	Travis Lukie's planting day Korumburra Landcare	Bena	Planting Day,	22
29th September 2019	Intrepid Landcare planting	Ryanston	Planting Day	16
10th October 2019	Kongwak Ellipak Discussion Group	Anderson	Discussion Group	13
12th October 2019	Citizen Science Monitoring Day	River Garden	Training Day	15
21st October 2019	Beveridge Williams Corporate Planting	Ryanston	Planting Day	11
23rd October 2019	GSG- Biosecurity in a changing climate.	Kernot	Field Day	34
29th October 2019	Leongatha Secondary	Bena	Planting Day	40
1st November 2019	Niels Olsen discussion Group farm walk	Hallora	Discussion Group	33
8th November 2019	Master Tree Growers Discussion Group	Ranceby	Discussion Group	15
23rd November 2019	BCLN AGM	Corinella	Event Day	55
28th November 2019	GSG-Carbon farming in a changing climate.	Moyarra	Field day	70

18th December 2019	Kongwak Ellipak Discussion Group	Glen Alvie	Discussion Group	18
13th February 2020	Kongwak Ellipak Discussion Group	Mouth of Powlett	Discussion Group	11
21st February 2020	Peninsula Avocados discussion group visit	Mornington Peninsula	Discussion Group	18
21st February 2020	Phillip Island beef group	Ventnor	Discussion Group	8
28th February 2020	GSG- Water management in a changing climate.	Phillip Island	Field day	57
6th March 2020	Grazfert workshop 1.	Kernot	workshop	13
20th March 2020	Phillip Island beef group	Newhaven	Discussion Group	10
27th June 2020	Darren and Tracey Jeffery planting day on split sites.	Ventnor	Planting Day	18



*Declan McDonald, Senior Soil Scientist from SESL Australia
at the On Farm Water Management in a changing climate field Day
for the Growing Southern Gippsland Project*

Group President Reports

Powlett Project – Paul Speirs

The Powlett Project recently held its 156th meeting. The ten members present (plus Dave and Jye) represented about 260 years of Landcare experience. We review potential (and past) projects. The Powlett Project is perhaps, 25 years mature, having planted probably more than two and a half million plants. We have some experience of change and challenges.

Previously our plantings have been accomplished with a variety of partners: corporate, school students, the shire, tertiary students, the landholders, their families and friends, our works crew and staff, Landcare group members, volunteers and sundries. This planting season was, of necessity, different. Our works crew and our (shared with the shire) Working for Victoria Crew, carried out the vast majority of the (100,000 plant) planting, with large sites, steep terrain and in a very wet season. Thank you for all staying safe and being productive. More thanks to Dave, Mark and Jye for the extra work and responsibility the situation demanded.



Drone Photo of Revegetation at Paul Speirs' Property

Brian Enbom is very much alive but has left the Powlett Project and the Board of BCLN after decades of leadership, mentoring, signing documents, hosting, planting and other sundry good times. Thank you Brian. You have our respect and recognition. We look forward to catching up in more sociable times ahead.

Finally, thanks to: BCLN staff, for getting on with the business, The Bass Coast Shire for our increasingly productive relationship, The West Gippsland CMA, for ongoing support and partnership, the landholders, volunteers, committees and all who feed us. Amen. Ps. And our funders!

Paul Speirs

President, Powlett Project.

Powlett Project	Ha Reveg	Plants
Mark Rowe/Ray Slade	2.68	6000
Clive Hollins	2	1000
Cameron Corrigan	3.84	10000
Brad & Dani Carr	7.89	15000
Amy Richardson	3	3000
Mark Rowe/Ray Slade	2	3000
Craig Aplin	5	8000
Viminara Biolink	1	3000
Bass Coast Shire Council	1	2000
Rail Trail Dalyston	0.5	1000
Totals	28.91	52000

Anderson Inlet – Daryl Hook

Due to the Covid 19 outbreak the activities for our group have been close to nil. The closest we came to an outing was a walk through Peter Lyons forest looking at the great natural resource natural vegetation is in our community. Some damage has been done by feral deer that have made their home there. Deer shooters claim it is difficult to shoot the deer as the kangaroos warn them when human hunters are in the area .



Our group has a new secretary in Peter Lyon. He put up his hand to help our group when the long-time secretary Nicole May transferred to Melbourne. What a great commitment she made to Landcare in our area and though we will miss her the results of all her work will be visible for years to come.

We are grateful for the unending support we get from the BCLN network .We hope Dave and his team keep up the great job they do for Landcare in this part of Victoria.

Daryl Hook

President, Anderson Inlet Landcare Group



Bass Valley – Lew Potter

Bass Valley Landcare Group has continued to thrive throughout the past year, which some have described as difficult. As a group we have adapted and are prepared to move on and embrace the future and whatever it brings.

Revegetation Projects

This year we have achieved significant outcomes getting 56,000 plants in the ground in an area of 29ha of revegetated land. Most of these projects were carried out on the land of newer members.

Partnership Development

We have lost our sponsor in Holden but Holcim continues to be our main corporate sponsor and our acceptance of them will ensure our commercial viability. We continue to network and make contact with new businesses as they encroach into our area.



Bass Valley Landcare Group members enjoy a farm walk at Lew Potters property

Bass Valley and Melbourne Water	Ha Reveg	Plants
Bass Arboretum	1	1000
Bass River/ River Garden	0.5	400
Holden Proving Ground	0.5	1000
Seb Ellis	1.5	3000
Karl Russo	5	10000
Lew Potter	0.2	500
Peter Toole	3	6000
David Guest	3	6000
Jon Koolstra	2.5	4500
Jelgri Dairy	3	6000
Alister McBride	3	9000
Guy Angwin	0.75	1500
Mangroves	0.1	3500
Westernport Water	2	2000
Dandy Pre Mix Quarries	1.5	3000
Rohan White	0.25	500
Holcim	1.4	1300
Totals	29.2	5950

Membership and Staff Support

Our initiative in offering a tray of 40 plants to each member has proved to be enlightening as members seemed to come out of the woodwork to take up the offer.



As the deliverer of these tidings, I took the opportunity to encourage new members to be more involved and look forward to the next open planting to see those promises fulfilled.

We were all saddened to hear of the passing of our stalwart Anwyn Martin. I am sure she is up there somewhere overlooking our magnificent valley.

Future Direction

Promoting our Brand to existing landholders remains our main challenge and will be our focus. Cultural awareness is gaining momentum as a future benefit.

I am sure we all look forward to getting out there with hico's and Hamiltons in hand in the near future to catch up where we left off before this year's intrusion.

Dave Bateman has continued to be our driving force. Secretary, Mez Oldham, has very capably kept us abreast of all activities. Graeme Wood our Treasurer has reconciled our finances admirably. Thanks to the Committee and members alike for your efforts. I hope we can continue to do well next year. Thanks to all for your efforts and involvement.

Lew Potter

President, Bass Valley Landcare Group



Drone Photo of Revegetation at the Russo's Property

French Island – Judith Metcher

What a year it has been, somewhat like riding the Big Dipper at Luna Park with all its ups and downs. We went from having normal meetings, to no meetings, to zoom meetings and then back to normal. It's amazing that we achieved anything at all! But we did.

Arrangements were made for the Phillip Island Conservation Society to come over in October 2019 and have a look at what we have achieved in the past, planting wise. However, there was a clash with the Grand Prix on Phillip Island which they felt would be inconvenient so it was postponed until May 2020... yes well so much for that visit for 2020.

We produced a new resource...Unwelcome Plants. Many thanks Ken Brown. His research was meticulous and quite surprising, and depressing, as to what is an unwelcome weed.



Plans were made for Garden visits, a members' BBQ at the Landcare Office and a Ramsar function. Those activities will hopefully take place in 2021.

Due to changes in the Bass Coast Landcare Network's Groups Board of Management they were no longer prepared to continue including our casual nursery employees on their employment books. Whilst we always paid the wages bill it is those other extras that we now have to find. The setting up of the French Island Landcare Committee as an employer has been achieved at a considerable cost to our bottom line.

In November we were successful in obtaining a \$500.00 grant from the Bendigo Bank for our proposed Community Garden. All up they have donated a very welcome \$2,500. Many thanks to the Bendigo Bank.

The following figures relate to another successful grant. These include:

- 4,900 tubes planted over 4 different sites (sites included Faganello's, Pentland's, Polatsidis and Hales).
- 2,970m of fencing was erected that was linked to funded projects.
- 4.15 hectares of revegetation was carried out.
- 3.39 hectares of remnant vegetation protection was carried out.
- Archaeological investigations were carried out on a variety of the project sites by members of the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation.

We had a great beginning in February with our "Start Up Pizza Day" at Anne and Emilio Vallaetta's, no Emilio as he was overseas, but Anne kept the show on the road. Again, an amazing array of beautiful pizzas cooked and eaten in a wonderful ambience.

In March, a decision was taken for Landcare to become more involved with Perseverance Primary. Before COVID-19 struck we walked the BMX track at the back of the school and

decided to clear up the area, regenerate it with indigenous plants and build a frog bog. We went for a walk along the Ridge track to see what had regenerated following the bushfire in January and Glenys took some of her bee keeping equipment to the school to do a presentation. Unfortunately, that is all we achieved before remote learning kicked in. Hopefully, we will be able to continue this relationship sometime in the future.

In April we decided that we would apply for a Coastcare grant to help clean up the foreshore on the south side of the Island. I am delighted to say that in September we were notified that we had been successful. It was a long wait but worth it. Planning is now under way for this. Unfortunately, some grants that are normally advertised in May have not been offered this year.

It was in April that we lost perhaps one of the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic volunteers on French Island, Chris Chandler. The depth of Chris' knowledge on the plants of French Island was truly amazing, he and his knowledge is sorely missed.

You may have noticed that the Committee has sent out the first of a bi-monthly newsletter. We felt that as we're unable to organize any social gatherings for the members as planned, there is a need to let you know that we're still here and still working to help improve the environs and farms of our Island.



Proposed site of the community garden

We have applied for a CMA Work crew to come over and help with the preparation of the Community Garden. This garden has been in the pipeline for nearly four years. Unfortunately we have been unable to move as fast as we would like for financial reasons and are therefore relying on grants and volunteers. However, we are slowly inching forward with a working committee being set up to help in the planning. Whilst this has been instigated by Landcare anyone is welcome to be involved. Its aim is to provide

a child friendly meeting place where plants of all sorts can be grown, and knowledge shared. We will also run workshops on such things as straw-bale building, mud brick making and building a wicking garden bed. I'm sure the list of what we can learn is endless. These will be workshops where you can actually get your hands dirty!

As part of helping our bottom line, as well as providing a service to the community, we decided that we would grow vegetable seedlings at the nursery for locals to purchase. The General store very kindly allowed us to place them at the store on their market day.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Linda Bowden, our tireless representative on the Bass Coast Landcare Network Group Board of Management. She has done a sterling job of reporting back to us and keeping us in the loop.

I would also like to thank this year's committee. It hasn't been easy, but I think you should be proud of what you have achieved in very trying circumstances. David Paonetti, Paul Henwood and Alan Pentland have decided to take a break but will continue to be very active Landcare members. I thank you for all the work that you have done.

After many years of dedicated service Julie Trezise will be standing down as Treasurer for the next year. She has done a truly amazing job of keeping track of our finances, especially having to deal with a President who can't add up even with a calculator. Thank you so much Julie. However, she is not disappearing totally as she is still the Ramsar Representative for French Island. The following is a report from Julie on the Ramsar Project:



Vegetable seedlings now available from the French Island Nursery

"The current Ramsar funding from the Australian Government via Port Phillip and Westernport CMA has been directed towards the management of cats. Cats pose one of the greatest threats to our resident and migratory shorebirds which form part of the Ramsar values. In the last 12 months, French Island Landcare Group has conducted an eight week feral cat trapping program resulting in the humane removal of 20 feral cats. The Responsible Pet Ownership program continues with 2 new domestic cats desexed, microchipped and added to our register of owned cats. Zoos Victoria's veterinary team were kind enough to offer on island microchipping of several domestic cats in their downtime during Eastern Barred Bandicoot trapping. Lockdown has reduced many interactions but soon we will be able to meet and work with the community more. Ramsar funding is also available for all domestic cat owners on French Island, to build cat enclosures for use during trapping periods and if the eradication program goes ahead, to keep everyone's pets safe. As Covid-19 restrictions ease and the weather warms, take a walk along the coast and try to spot some shorebirds as they arrive from the Northern Hemisphere."

A final thank you to the staff and volunteers who have continued to keep the nursery operating. There were times when we could not have volunteers and the staff kicked in, and there were times when we have had to reduce the staff hours because of the impact from less grants. A big thank you to the residents who have also put in private orders – these are helping to get us through what has been a challenging year. We look forward to it all improving in 2021.

Judith Metcher

President, French Island Landcare Group.

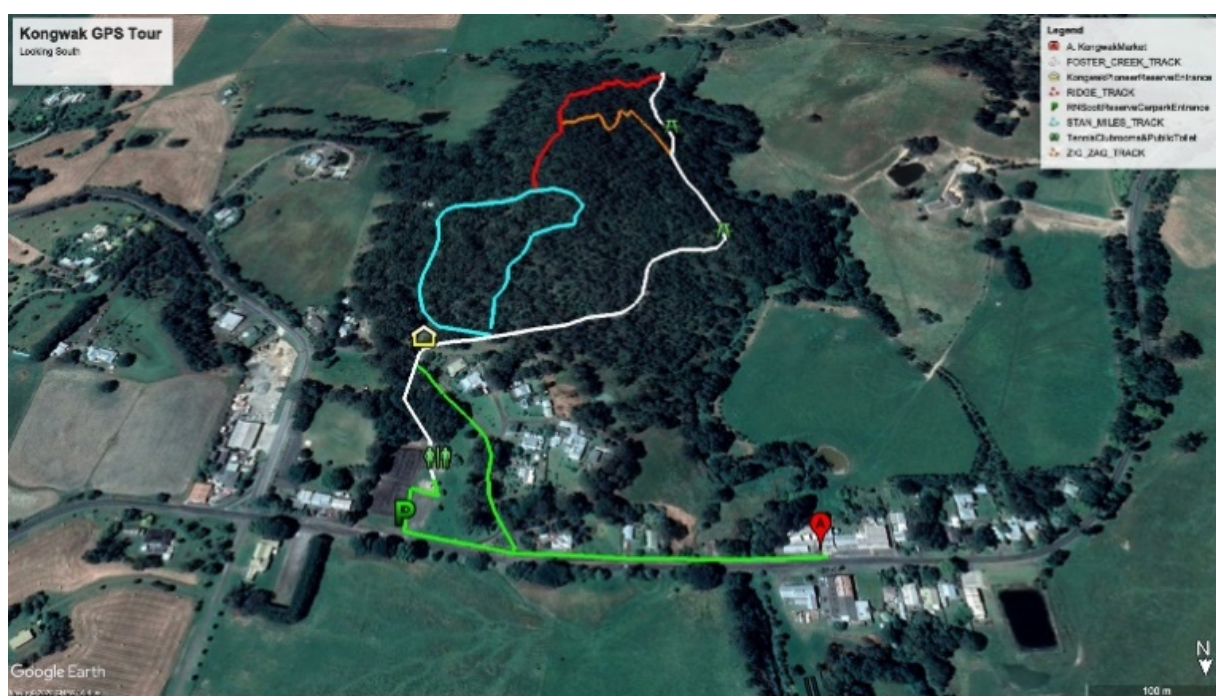
French Island	Ha Reveg	Ha Remnant	Plants
Charlotte & Carlo Faganello	1.15		1200
Pentlands	1		1300
Chris Polatsidis	1.2		1000
Chris Polatsidis	-	3.39	0
Brian Hales	0.8		1400
Totals	4.15	3.39	4900

Kongwak Hills – John Hauser

The Kongwak Hills Landcare Group remains committed to working within our local community to protect and restore vegetation on the surrounding farming land - linking these patches through a series of wildlife corridors. We are striving to raise Kongwak's profile as an open and caring community.

The Kongwak Landcare group has been in operation since 2012 and has delivered on average 6,000 plants per year over the past 7 years. This equates to 42,000 plants over the life of the group. Although our group was unsuccessful in gaining Victorian Landcare Grants for revegetation works this year, the last half of 2019 saw us wrap up plantings from the Gums, Owls and Growls project part 2 and plantings funded through the last Victorian Landcare Grants. These included works at Clare Stainsby's, Steve and Amanda Oliver's, Wendy and Wolfgang Kessler, Mark and Bonnie Young and at our property as well.

This year our group greatly improved the visitor experience to the Kongwak Pioneer Reserve, with assistance from Mick Green at Drift Media and funding from BCLN Public Fund. The pre-existing Geotour app experience has been upgraded so that the tour and all its audio content can be enjoyed together with Google Earth maps of each track in the Reserve providing details of length/distance in metres and elevations with attached track profiles in graphical display.



The new upgraded facility is easily accessed by using your phone, by opening your camera and scanning the QR code shown here. This will take you directly to the Kongwak Hills page on the BCLN site <https://www.basscoastlandcare.org.au/kongwakhills.html> where you can scroll down until you come to the heading, Pioneer Reserve-Interactive Tour and Track Maps. From here you can download the Geotour, Google Earth maps and the Track Maps. Kongwak has good phone signal strength to download the interactive tour and maps and enjoy.



Kongwak Hills Landcare Group

For ease of access, decals highlighting the QR code will be placed around the Reserve, on the information Board outside the old General Store, and tourist information outlets.



Uncle Shane Clarke from the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation sharing cultural heritage information with volunteers at Clare Stainsby's Tree planting day.

We were privileged to engage with the Bunurong Land Council this year who conducted a Cultural Heritage session on our planting day at Clare Stainsby's. Our members heard firsthand from Uncle Shane about the rich and interesting layer of indigenous history of the area and were shown some great artefacts.

Our group membership remains strong at 33 memberships representing 57 adult members at the end of 2019-20. It has been confirmed by Landcare Vic that as our

memberships are currently per household, this is reflected in voting rights to one vote per household. As a group, we are grateful to all those members who are prepared to open up their homes for our meetings which inevitably are followed by a convivial get together and wonderful local food offerings.

Special thanks must go to outgoing president Sue Mooney, and outgoing secretary Marg Hauser, a role she has performed admirably for the last 7 years. We thank Susan Pryde, our Treasurer, Susan Banks, our Vice president, Jillian Durance and Kate Davis, our minutes and communications secretaries, and Clare Stainsby as our Board representative. And of course, Lisa Wangman! - our BCLN group facilitator.

Our group has now decided to reduce our meetings to 3 per year and are looking forward to pursuing funding to monitor fauna, install nest boxes and continue planting to increase the biodiversity of our wonderful Kongwak Hills area.

John Hauser

President, Kongwak Hills
Landcare Group.

Kongwak Hills	Ha Reveg	Plants
Wolfgang & Wendy Kessler	1.94	4000
Steve & Amanda Oliver	1.21	3000
Bonnie Young	2.28	4000
Bonnie Young	0	1000
Clare Stainsby	2.68	5000
John & Marg Hauser	1.2	1500
Pioneer Reserve	1	1000
Totals	10.31	19500

Korumburra – Melynda Dawson

Pre Covid-19!

We were lucky enough to have 2 plantings in the 2019 planting season.

A spectacular sunny day was provided for our volunteers at Brian Griffiths planting of 3000 trees at the end of August. We even had some 1st year veterinary students from Melbourne University who made the lovely journey through the hills. The hill was steep, the fences were done, the sun was warm and the volunteers were eager. The luncheon was lovely with some Asian styled dishes, that were almost gone as soon as they were put on the table.



Melbourne University Veterinary students volunteering at Brian Griffiths tree planting day

Our 2nd community planting took place at Travis Lukies property in mid-September. Again, the sun was provided, with a little wind. We were sheltered by the hills from the wind once planting. From the rains in the previous days, some of the site was extremely muddy, which became a little entertainment for people losing their footwear! Travis spent the morning ensuring all volunteers were well fed with treats and drinks, to keep the planting energy going. We managed to plant about 3000 of the 4000 plants he had to go in. A great effort for a challenging, large and very steep planting site. The BBQ up in the shed was brilliant, lots of good feedback on the yummy food. We also had a lovely couple who spoke to us about geocaching, a great hobby to get out and see different parts of the world!



Tree planting volunteers at Travis Lukies property





In October we had a great social evening with a guest speaker. Max Campbell President of the Field Naturalist Club of Victoria came and spoke to us on all things miniscule. His vast knowledge in all things microscopic is incredible. The microscopic/ macroscopic footage and photos he shared with us, were literally something out of this world. Max introduced the group to a whole world of Cryptozoic* organisms we have never seen, yet even thought about before.

In December on a chilly Friday evening, we held our AGM. We did a walk and talk of some sites, successful and unsuccessful plantings. It's nice to see what the small tubestock we plant

can hopefully grow into. Walking around Don and Marie Creed's property they pointed out plantings previously done, and we could even see the "green wedge" a planting done at Paul Calvert's property. We walked through Outtrim reserve and discussed the unsuccessful planting attempts (wallabies being the main issue). It may be disheartening, but with the passion from Don and Marie along with encouragement from BCLN, things will keep evolving and we will keep trying to outsmart the wallabies!

February saw us once again manning the gates for the Korumburra Show at the showgrounds. A big thank you goes out to Jenny Taylor for organising the roster for the volunteers on the day. Personally, I have never manned the gates before so it was a good social experience and a good lesson in doing maths in my head!

Covid-19 Strikes

Just as the executive committee was organising the next social evening, the virus/pandemic that has thrown everyone's lives upside down hit us. That really put an end to anything socially. As we all do our best to stay safe and sanitised, we kept our members going with lots of things shared on our Facebook page. The committee stayed in contact mainly via emails, as we all adjusted to a new way of doing things.

Personally, I would like to thank Don and Marie Creed (Treasurer and Vice President), without your support and knowledge I would not have known what to do. Thanks to Paul Calvert (Secretary), like me we are learning the ropes together and we are doing alright!! Thanks to Geoff Trease our facilitator, who I handball almost every enquiry over to!

Melynda Dawson

President, Korumburra Landcare Group.

Korumburra Landcare	Ha Reveg	Plants
Travis Lukies	1.91	4000
Brian Griffin	1.57	3000
Arbikor Southern	2	2800
Totals	5.48	9800

*cryptozoic - Describing animals that live mainly within soil, litter, or detritus, being rarely seen in the 'open air'. Most are invertebrates, such as earthworms, woodlice, centipedes, and numerous insect larvae, although the term may be extended to include burrowing or hole dwelling vertebrates, for example some lizards, snakes, and rodents.

Phillip Island – David Rooks

2019/2020 was another full year for our group. We were fortunate to get most of our activities completed before the COVID-19 restrictions become too great.

Thanks to all the committee, BCLN staff and any others who have supported our group this year. Thanks to Lisa Wangman for being the staff contact for our group. Lisa is a great help. She listens to the needs of the group and is always available where required. Her wealth of experience and skill set means we always receive sound and expert advice. Thanks also to Geoff Trease who supports our group through revegetation grants he has been successful in obtaining. Geoff always has the best interests of the group at heart.

New Activities this year:

- Successful CoastCare grant application for \$30,000. Our Grant involves working with all the CoastCare groups on our island. During August next year, each group will be supported to manage a tree planting ~ rabbit education workshop ~ weed eradication type day, providing plenty of opportunities for CoastCare Groups to catch up and learn from each other's successes or failures. The Bunny Boiler will also return next year as part of this grant.
- Confirming our groups involvement in Climate Change plots for plantings next year and beyond.
- Building the new 'Phillip Island Landcare Community Shed'. An exciting project for the group.
- Engaging Robyn and Thirza as our membership team.
- Reinvigorated the partnership with Westernport Water through funding of 'Gardening with recycled water project'.
- Established a relationship with Regional Roads Victoria including funding for Huey Stoppa's planting.
- Held a Christmas Dinner Event at Bimbadeen farm.
- Supported TRPI Open day, 8th September 2019. Provided BBQ and caravan was present.
- Using funds from a Council Community grant, we distributed new farm gate, house and letterbox Phillip Island Landcare membership signs.



Above: Phillip Island Village School students enjoying a day out at the Rooks Farm.

Below: Community Planting day at the Rooks Farm.



Ongoing Activities:

- Dieback issue on Phillip Island. We are about to start a trial to measure how extensively Possums may be contributing to the dieback problem in our mature Eucalyptus trees. We are looking for a range of properties across the Island that can apply plastic exclusion guards for approximately 50 trees in total.
- Participating in the Phillip Island Wildlife Plan. This has been slowed by COVID-19. A draft document for public comments is expected soon.
- Continuing working with Totally Renewable Phillip Island to establish regenerative farming practices on Phillip Island farms.
- Monitoring four revegetation sites as a part of the Adaptive Learning – Revegetation Monitoring project being undertaken by LaTrobe University, the Arthur Rylah Institute (DELWP) and Greening Australia.
- Keeping our 100 members informed and participating in our activities.
- Managing the Bushbank plant voucher system for members from the Rooks farm as the Bushbank was closed.
- Ensuring the wider community is aware of Landcare and its purpose.
- Planting over 13,000 tubestock on nine sites.
- Held five community planting days. 150 attendees in total.
- Continue monitoring new and existing revegetation sites. Candice, the Bushbank Coordinator, is now visiting sites with our group, adding extensive knowledge and support to our revegetation program.
- Supported the Winter Hoedown dance evening in August 2019, organised by the Bass Coast Acoustic Music Club.



Phillip Island	Ha Reveg	Ha Remnant	Plants
Jim Mcfee		2.5	1000
Our Lady Star of the Sea	0.20		400
Paul Waylen	0.40		1000
John Dever's	1.00	2.5	2000
The Shearing Shed	1.00		3000
Bill Cleeland	0.55		1200
Fergus Cameron	1.20		1000
Deborah Holland	0.60		400
Helen Henderson	0.30		600
Darren & Tracey Jeffery	1.20		1400
David Rooks	0.30		400
Works Crew - Westernport Water	0.50		400
Works Crew - Bass Coast Shire Council	0.40		320
Total	7.65	5.0	13120

David Rooks

President, Phillip Island Landcare Group.

Three Creeks – Nick Sibly

The 3 Creeks Landcare Group seeks to restore and protect the integrity and sustainability of the land, biodiversity and waterways in our precinct by encouraging assisting landowners to adopt sound land management practices.

2020 was one of those weird years where Zoom meetings became the norm for 3 Creeks. Despite all the obstacles that COVID-19 presented, 3 Creeks remained focused and positive and continued their great work helping to improve our local environment.

In total there were five official 3 Creeks plantings where a total of 17,000 trees were put in the ground. Plantings were conducted at the properties of Dani and Brad Carr, Andrew Page, Nicky Miller and John Mumford, Peter and Dianne Nuttman and Caroline and Nick Sibly. Unlike past years the trees were mostly planted by the works crew and a team of people from the Working for Victoria Crew who were able to work with Landcare every second week.



Planting Day at Brad and Dani Carr's

The plantings along the Bridge Creek Biolink have continued in 2020 with a planting at the Sibly farm. This 4000 tree planting concluded what had been a two year project to fence off the entire creek. The farm makes up the top 1km part of the 6km Biolink that follows Bridge Creek reserve



Planting Day at Phillipa Armstrong & Paul Fisher's

between Hawkins Road in Woolamai and the Powlett River. It is hoped that more farmers along the Biolink will get on board in the next few years. It will provide a valuable link for wildlife and provide opportunities for people to explore the various habitats that link the Powlett River estuary with the damp forests of the Strzeleckis. Funding for this project is a combination between WGCMA and the Bass Coast Shire Council.

Our fund-raising efforts have gone from strength to strength in 2020 with the continued sale of 3 Creeks branded wine. The great people at Gippsland wines in Loch were able to supply Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz and Sauvignon Blanc, and the locked-up public could not get enough of the stuff. After six months of remote learning the teachers at Wonthaggi Secondary College were some of the best customers. To date we have sold 30 dozen bottles.

In our last committee meeting it was decided that the funds raised so far will be put towards putting even more trees in the ground in 2021. As not everyone who wants to get a Landcare grant is necessarily able to, 3 Creeks will be using their fund-raising money to buy trees for people who only want to put in a few hundred. This will allow members with small plots or who need to in-fill existing plantations to get the plants they need. Fund raising activities in the 19/20 year generated \$2400 income and a profit of \$900.

Another initiative of 2020 was the release of the brand-new farm gate and letter box signs for 3 Creeks. Haven't got one yet? Well anyone who is anyone has one proudly displayed on their front gate. See Ray Kirk if you are experiencing a bad case of FOMO. The distinctive design was created by Junia Da Matta Kirk, the daughter in law of Ray Kirk. We are so fortunate to be surrounded by such creative people at 3 Creeks. The farm gate signs will also be used to raise funds for 3 Creeks Landcare group and help to raise our profile in the Bass Coast.



It is no surprise that with such a hard working committee we have increased our overall membership this year. To date we have received 12 new memberships this year. To sweeten the deal, the Landcare nursery in Bass will offer each new 3 Creeks Landcare member ten free trees of their choice.

The equipment loan program has continued this year. Ben Maghanoy has kindly continued to coordinate this from his home on McDowell Road. This has allowed members to access equipment such as Indian Mynah bird traps and the 400L spray unit.

Members of the 3 Creeks Landcare group continued to offer their services to the Bass Landcare Indigenous Nursery Group (BLING). The small local nursery was able to grow 35,000 plants in 2020. It has been interesting that the discussion on changing climate has meant that there is a push to source indigenous seed from drier climates. It is hoped that this seed will improve the tolerance of the plants to projected drier weather in the Bass Coast.

We hope to continue to deepen our connection with the local community in 2021 and will hopefully attract more new memberships as local landowners discover the benefits of considering native flora and fauna in their whole farm plans.

What has made my presidency so enjoyable at 3 Creeks is the enthusiasm, positivity, and good humour of the committee members. In a time of much doom and gloom regarding the climate of the planet and the challenges of COVID-19, it is great to be surrounded by people who want to make a positive difference in our community and its natural environment. Our members embrace the idea of community wholeheartedly. One only needs to drive down one of the remote local roads to see what a great impact Landcare has made to the local landscape. Land that was previously eroded and covered in land slips now grows beautiful trees. Windy cold paddocks have become protected havens for grazing cattle. Salt effected land has recovered. The beauty of the landscape has improved so much in such a short time. The beauty of the land is attractive to people who decide to move to the Bass Coast and we encourage them to build on the legacy of Landcare.

Nick Sibly,

President Three Creeks Landcare

Three Creeks	Ha Reveg	Ha Remnant	Plants
Priscilla Alderton	3.34	2	5000
Ray Kirk	1.66		1000
Phillipa Armstrong & Paul Fisher	2.5		5000
Stuart Anderson	2.2		4000
Nick Sibly	0.5		2000
Anna & Bruce Spiden	10	3	15000
Paul Speirs	0.2		300
Totals	20.4	5	32300

Partnerships and Sponsors

Bass Coast Shire Council

BCLN and the Bass Coast Shire Council (BCSC) have enjoyed a strong partnership since 1994. This has included BCSC providing significant financial and in-kind support for BCLN.

BCLN and BCSC aim to encourage sustainable land use and promote the conservation of biodiversity across the region. Both organisations support the adoption of environmental best management practices to reverse land and water quality decline through community action, knowledge and skills.

Shared goals of both organisations include:

- Protection of the natural resource base of the Bass Coast Shire
- Promotion and implementation of activities that protect biodiversity and encourage sustainable agriculture
- Create training opportunities based on environmental best management practices
- Provide incentive programs for land managers based on environmental best management practices
- Establish a strong and vibrant rural agricultural community comprising a range of diversified enterprises that is efficiently managed and ecologically sustainable.

Partnership Highlights

The continued support to both deliver Biolinks plantings and roadside weed control have been key highlights for our partnership. Both partnership areas have had increases in activity, due more funding both from BCSC and leveraged through grants.

The relationship with BCSC continues to grow and prosper through working towards our shared goals. BCLN presented to BCSC councillors again this year to show the fantastic work we deliver within the partnership. We have also recently partnered with BCSC to help improve the monitoring of the Biolinks sites. This involves a broad program of drone, EDNA, vegetation density, diversity and photo point monitoring.



*Diana Whittington and Christine Connolly
EDNA monitoring at Paul Speirs farm*

Partnership Outputs

The annual deliverables of this partnership include:

- Executive support to the BCLN Board and facilitation of ten Landcare Groups to ensure alignment of Landcare Strategic Direction
- E-Notices planting day with the BCSC Rates team
- Delivery partner in the Growing Southern Gippsland Project.

- Delivery of the Biolinks Program, which has contributed directly to all of the 200,620 plants in the ground this year.
- Delivery of the Building the Bass Coast Biolinks BRP project, working on the 10 best pieces of remnant Vegetation throughout the Shire.
- Linkages with the Landcare Community to communicate and deliver on Council Initiatives, i.e. the Rural Land Use Strategy.
- Assist in planning permit conditions and referrals.
- Coordination of partnership programs and funding applications.
- Monitoring program for the Biolinks projects.
- Expert advice on the Native Vegetation Framework and net gain opportunities.
- Delivery of the Bass Coast Integrated Pest Plant and Animal Program including approximately 100 customer requests.
- Coordination of DELWP program including 7.6km of rabbit control and 195 km of weed control.
- Delivery of approximately 277 km of roadside weed spraying.

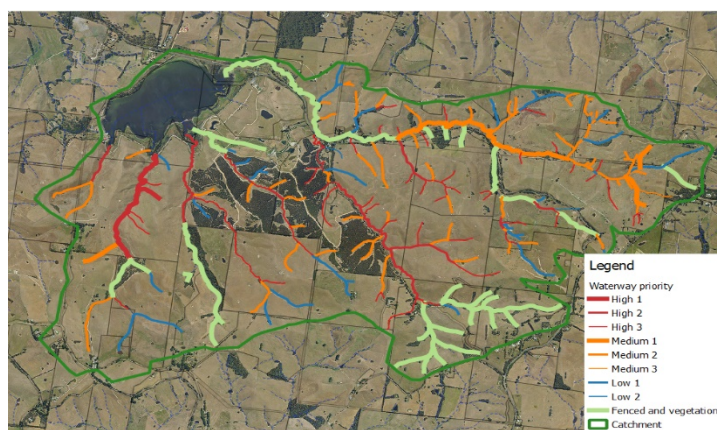


Bass coast shire Staff E-notices planting day

Westernport Water

A major long term partner, Westernport Water (WW) has been a key supporter of BCLN and the Works Crew. With the emergence of the pandemic, the annual Operational Plan for restoring and maintaining bushland changed to accommodate access restrictions. As a result, no pest animal control was undertaken at King Road Waste Water Treatment Plant. Instead, more planting was achieved at Cowes Wastewater Treatment Plant. Nick Stephens at WW was very helpful in assisting with access to sites and shuffling Operational Plan tasks around.

Aside from the operational plan, WW engaged BCLN to develop a Candowie Catchment and Condition Plan, detailing the state of waterways and land within the Candowie water catchment. The plan's objective is to increase the quality of raw water inflow, and will identify and prioritise high risk sites to be restored. WW and BCLN went through the plan with Melbourne Water Staff, who, through the Stream Frontage and Rural Land programs, fund projects that restore waterways and reduce nutrient runoff. WW provide funding for staff to engage landowners within the catchment, and facilitate restoration works along waterways.



West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

The works crew have been establishing and strengthening a partnership with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA), which has included a successful application to become a preferred contractor. We have also assisted with spray spots for the Intrepid/ UNIFY planting at Kieran O'loughlins property at Tarwin.

The works crew continued working in partnership with the WGCMA in the Autumn, undertaking willow removal works on private property alongside an experienced excavator operator. We used large chainsaws to cut and remove substantial tracts of established willows. This work continued with the team using axes in remote areas along the upper reaches of Turtons Creek. We used the 'frilling' method, as well as recording GPS locations for each tree. We backed this up by doing the same works on the upper reaches of the West Tarwin River branch at Mt Worth.

Parks Victoria

Over the last two years the partnership with Parks Victoria has strengthened through work on several projects over many sites;

- BCLN BRP (proposed Yallock-Bulluck Marine and Coastal Park, Reef Island and Bass River Mouth NCR, Westernport Intertidal Coastal Reserve)
- SGLN BRP (Cape Liptrap Coastal Park)
- WIRES and Landcare Australia Limited fire recovery grant (Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve)
- Wonthaggi Urban Landcare Group (Wonthaggi Bushland Reserve, White Road Reserve, Tank Hill, Water Tower Hill)

BCLN was successful in a tender to provide soft jaw trapping services for the protection of Southern Brown Bandicoots around the Wonthaggi Heathlands and Adams Creek reserves.

Friends of Harmers Haven

In October and then again in January, we were lucky enough to partner with the Friends of Harmers Haven in doing some work in the sand dunes at Cutlers Beach. We were targeting the ever-increasing problem of sea spurge. It was a learning experience for us, as we had never dealt with sea spurge. Access was difficult as we had to maneuver through the sand dunes to get on the foreshore with the buggy and loaded spray unit. It was a successful exercise dealing with sea spurge, and we hope to continue in the future with the good work that we started.

Metro Quarry Group

We conducted ten days of weed control spraying across the three separate quarry sites owned by Metro Quarry Group at Bass, Lang Lang and Nyora. Here we were focusing on the large infestations of blackberry. We also completed a planting at the Lang Lang site, using established trees that our own nursery grew from seed.

Phillip Island Nature Parks

PINP was a major contributor to the first BCLN Rabbit Officer position in 19-20. Chantelle Geisler filled this position and did a fantastic job working with the PINP controlling rabbits around Fishers Wetland, but also providing rabbit control advice and guidance to the general public. The PINP – BCLN partnership continued to grow with BCLN staff sitting on the Community Environment Advisory Committee, staff from both organisations attending inter-agency meetings to coordinate pest plant and animal works, and PINP staff offering advice.

Hills are Alive Group

This year Aidan McLaren from the Hills are Alive Group worked with BCLN to create an initiative with The Hills are Alive Festival to take a \$10 per car donation at their New Years on the Hill Festival. These donations created the opportunity to partner with BCLN to plant out 9000 plants at Cameron Corrigan's property, which is opposite the Hills are Alive Festival site. The Hills are Alive Group not only contributed financially to the project, but also provided the labour (over 100 keen volunteers) to get the plants in the ground in one mega planting session. Aidan and his brother Rhett also put on a fantastic party for all the volunteers who lent a hand on the day. Both Aidan and BCLN are hoping to partner up into the future to run a similar event. We would like to thank Aidan for initiating a great event with fantastic social and environmental outcomes. It was inspiring to see so many young people willing to lend a hand for the Bass Coast environment.



Beveridge Williams

BCLN was very fortunate to pick up Beveridge Williams as a Bronze sponsor this year. Peter Toole, long time Landcare member was the key driver to get BW signed up to sponsor BCLN. As a result of the sponsorship the Beveridge Williams team contributed to a large scale Biolink project on Pat Braken's and Rob Stewarts property resulting in 6000 plants in the ground along a section of Archies Creek. 15 Beveridge Williams staff came out to lend a hand, working alongside our BCLN Works Crew to put 3000 plants in the ground in a 3 hour session on the creek line. BCLN would like to thank Peter for instigating the partnership with his team.



Left: Dave Bateman and Peter Toole. Right: The Beveridge Williams Planting Team

South Coast Taxis

For the third year running South Coast Taxis have offset their fleet emissions through partnering with BCLN. The South Coast Taxis team planted 1500 indigenous plants at the Shearing shed on Phillip Island on a sunny day in early October 2019. BCLN is really excited to be able to provide the opportunity for businesses to voluntarily offset their carbon on Landcare member properties. The planting offset the emissions for 8 hybrid taxis and 5 maxi taxi vehicles with annual emissions of 227 tonnes CO₂e. A big thankyou to Michael Wright who heads up the team at South Coast Taxis and Bus Lines for continuing to offset their taxi fleet and being an environmentally conscious business operator.



South Coast Taxis Team Planting at the Shearing Shed in Ventnor on Phillip Island.

Holcim

For the third year running Holcim have sponsored Bass Coast Landcare Network through our One Tree Sponsorship program. This sponsorship has resulted in 1500 plants in the ground at our Bass Arboretum. Holcim also committed to supplying some rock for the track that runs through the Arboretum. A group of 20 Holcim staff joined BCLN staff and BCLN Board members to plant and guard the 1500 plants on a chilly September day in 2019. Holcim continue to be a great supporter of BCLN through engaging our BCLN Works Crew to do natural resource management works at their sites and through our sponsorship program.



Holcim Planting team at Bass Arboretum

Grow and protect a connected biodiverse landscape

Project Statistics 2019-20

We have achieved:

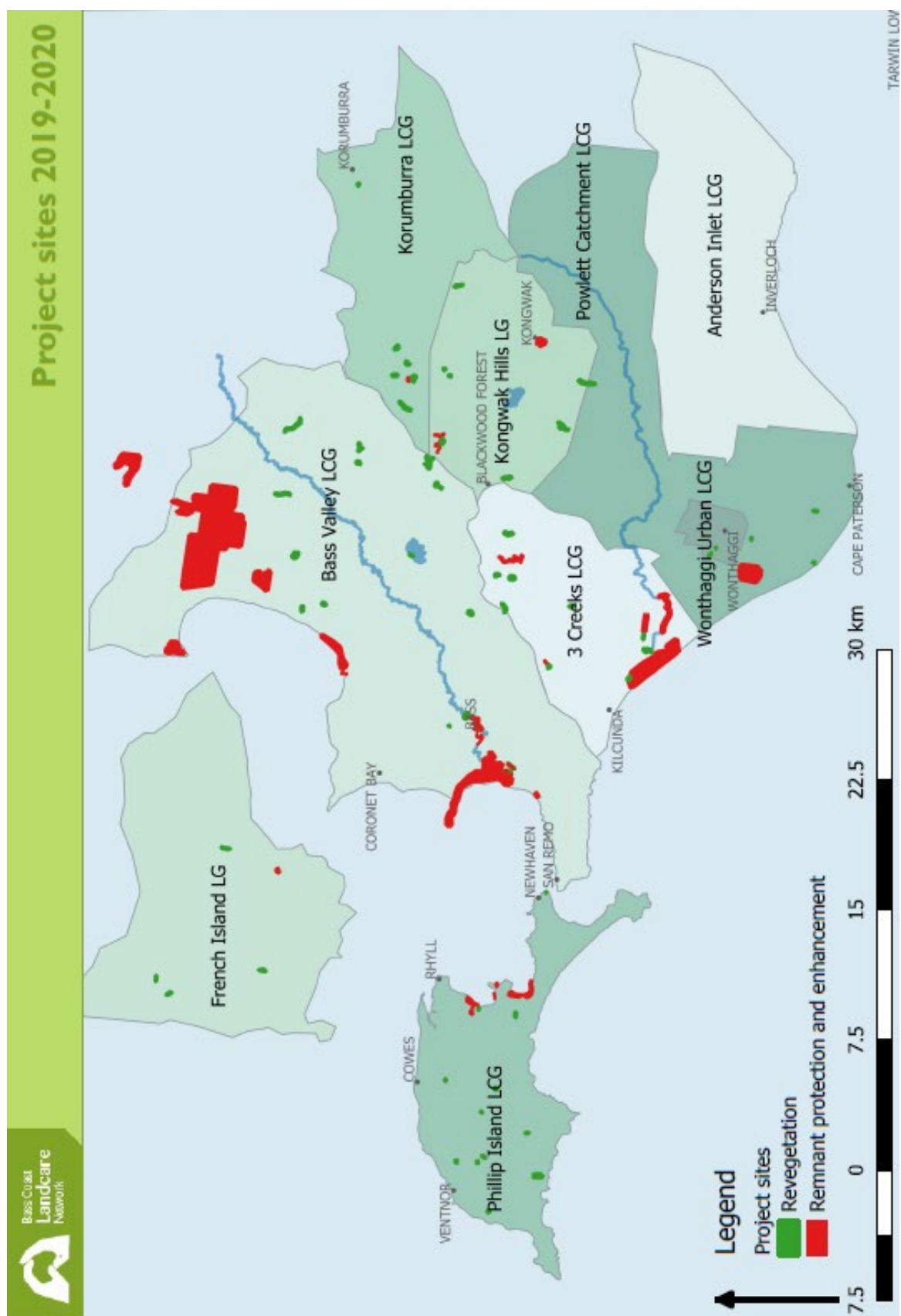
- 26,426 volunteer hours involved in Landcare activities
- 20 Community/Landcare Group Planting days
- 63 Management plans created through the DELWP catchment modelling tool EnSym for all revegetation and remnant protection projects
- 200,680 Indigenous plants established over 104.82 hectares of land
- 22,610 metres of fencing
- 3671 hectares of remnant vegetation protected and/or enhanced through weed control
- 900 hectares of Weeds of National Significance (WONs) weeds controlled
- 358 km of roadside weed control
- 743 hectares of rabbit control works
- 1438 hectares of fox control works
- 2 Soil carbon demonstration sites



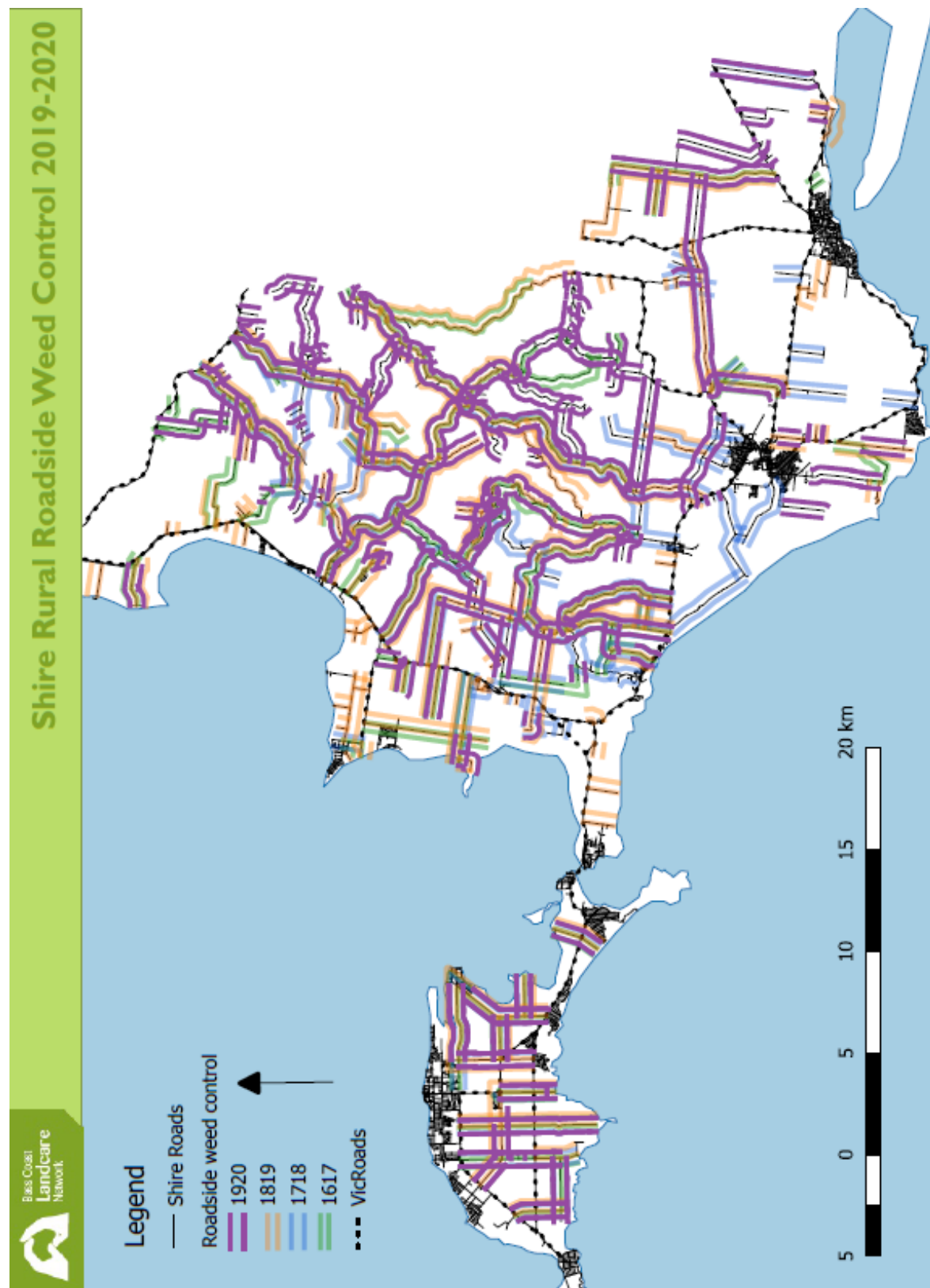
Drone view of one of the Gullies at the Russo Property in Woolamai

Maps

Revegetation, Remnant, and Horticulture Works



Roadside Spraying Projects



Portfolio / Program Reports

Natural Resource Management Portfolio

Geoff Trease - Project Officer

Jye Andersen - Project Officer

The Natural Resource Management program covers all revegetation and remnant protection projects throughout the BCLN. The BCLN has been in operation for 14 years and we have planted on average 150,000 plants per year and endeavoured to protect as much of the little remnant vegetation remaining in our Network. Funding for the NRM projects this year has come from a variety of sources, including Local, State and Federal Government Grants and Corporate Partnerships with Beveridge Williams, Hills Are Alive Group, South Coast Taxis and Holcim. Major projects for 2019/20 include; Kongwak Threatened Species Grant, Bass Coast Shire Council Biolinks projects, Biodiversity Response Planning, Melbourne Water, Ramsar Protection in Western Port and Victorian Landcare Grants. 200,620 plants have been planted this year, another exceptional result for the Bass Coast and the greater world. Geoff Trease has continued to do a terrific job managing Melbourne Water projects, completing site visits, and engaging with the Phillip and French Island Group members. Dave Bateman continues to work alongside the Powlett Catchment groups and Bass Valley and has progressively led Jye Andersen into a position of managing a large proportion of NRM projects, including project monitoring, reporting and landholder engagement. The NRM team have had a productive year in recruiting new landholders and we are excited about many of the projects to come in 2020/21.

Highlights

2019/20 has been an exciting year, with strong funding in a diverse range of projects across the network. During the second year of our 'Biodiversity Response Planning' project, we have started to see dramatic changes to the ecological character of some of the Bass Coast's key remnant sites, through the removal of major infestations of pest plants and animals by our Works Crew. Bunurong Land Council were engaged to complete a cultural induction at a riparian planting as part of the project, attended by Powlett River Primary School students. This was one of many student planting days completed over 2019/20 in the BCLN Catchment Custodian Kids program, fostering a strong relationship for students with their local environment.

Through our 'Ramsar Protection in Western Port' project, we have put 6,500 terrestrial plants in the ground in strategic coastal locations and 3,500 mangroves in coastal erosion sites. A new method of mangrove establishment has seen much greater results than previous attempts, with an average of 48% survival after 6 months. Approximately 100 Ha of weed control has also been completed in endangered Coastal Saltmarsh EVC sites as part of the project, reducing threats to significant habitat and feeding grounds for migratory waterbirds.



Strong stands of mangrove seedlings, established using a new innovative approach, attaching seeds directly to bamboo stakes



Ronan Carr enjoying the sunshine at the Carr Biolinks planting



Glancing up one of the many gullies to be revegetated at Travis Lukies' property in Bena, linking this year's planting to the Foster Creek.



The Bass Coast Shire Biolinks project has contributed over \$90,000 of funding to BCLN this year, with co-contribution to the program through a Bass Coast Shire Council-led grant from DELWP. The Biolinks Plan continues to make the largest contribution to revegetation projects on the Bass Coast each year, providing much needed connectivity across our landscape for local fauna species.

One of our key Biolinks plantings for the year was at Brad and Dani Carr's property in Korrine. 4.63 Ha was revegetated with 14,000 plants through a large wetland area with multiple tributaries. Wonthaggi Secondary College students did a wonderful job of planting out the site, with over 100 students attending on the day, along with the enthusiastic young leaders of the Carr family.

A major highlight of the year was the completion of our first revegetation project at Travis Lukies' property in Bena (4000 plants). This relationship has led to the opportunity to restore huge tracts of the Foster Creek and steep hillsides on the property in the years to come. Greening Australia have been engaged as a potential partnership for a large-scale carbon project at the property and WGCMA have also contributed to the removal of willows as a part of restoring the site. The Lukies family are a perfect example of progressive landholders, transforming poorly managed rural land into a more sustainable and more productive farming enterprise.

New Innovations

Fulcrum Data Collection Application

BCLN has started using Fulcrum, a data collection App, which is now used for advancement of our NRM photo point/ wildlife monitoring and pest plant and animal data collection practices. The App allows all our users to collect and sync data, enabling us to be more scientific and produce more effective long-term statistics.

Improved Monitoring Practices

Using Fulcrum and our large stock of infra-red wildlife cameras, our NRM team has been developing better practices for long-term monitoring of project sites.

For many of our large-scale revegetation projects, wildlife cameras and fixed photo points are set-up for gathering baseline data for monitoring. We capture an array of native species and pest species on our cameras, helping to identify target areas for pest animal control, and monitor the adoption of habitat created through our revegetation projects.



An example of a fixed photo point monitoring site at the Russo property

Natural Resource Management Outputs

Overall on-ground outputs

- 22,610 metres of fencing
- 200,620 indigenous plants in the ground

Outputs by each BCLN Landcare Group

- In the Three Creeks Landcare group area, 32,300 plants were planted, and 1,040 metres of stock proof fence was established.
- In the Korumburra Landcare group area, 9,800 plants were planted, and 1,805 metres of stock proof fence was established.
- In the Powlett Project Landcare group area, 52,00 plants were planted, and 3,805 metres of stock proof fence was established.
- In the Kongwak Hills Landcare group area, 19,500 plants were planted, and 4,440 metres of stock proof fence was established.
- In the Phillip Island Landcare group area, 13,200 plants were planted, and 2,600 metres of stock proof fence was established.
- In the Bass Valley Landcare group area, 65,700 plants were planted, and 5,950 metres of stock proof fence was established.
- In the French Island Landcare group area, 4,900 plants were planted, and 2,970 metres of stock proof fence was established.

Natural Resource Management Outcomes

- 108.6 Ha of land revegetated through hycro tube stock plantings
- 57.82 Ha of Remnant vegetation protected
- 1759 Ha of Remnant vegetation enhanced through weed control
- EVCs re-established include Damp Forest, Wet Forest, Lowland Forest, Swamp Scrub, Damp Sands Herb Rich Woodland, Swampy Riparian Woodland, Mangrove Shrubland, Coastal Banksia Woodland, Warm Temperate Rainforest, Plains Grassy Woodland, Heathy Woodland
- 63 Management plans created through the DELWP catchment modelling tool EnSym for all revegetation and remnant protection projects
- WONs weeds controlled over 1660 Ha

Ecosystems Services Portfolio

Robbie Gray - Ecosystem Services Coordinator

Jason Good - Pest Plant and Animal Team Leader

Chantelle Geissler - Pest Plant and Animal Project Officer

I have been very impressed by and grateful to staff in the Works Crew, Nursery, and Pest plant and animal (PPA) areas over the last couple of years, especially staff that have filled key roles. They have greatly increased the organisation, capacity, safety, and professionalism of the Ecosystem Services Portfolio, and created opportunities to expand the range of services BCLN offers.

With the continuation of building partnerships, adopting new and emerging technologies and, supporting and training staff, the Works Crew, Nursery, and PPA areas will continue to develop and undertake important environmental works in our region.

Pest Plant and Animal Program

Parks Victoria

This year BCLN were able to secure a contract with Parks Victoria to undertake soft-jaw trapping of foxes as part of their Southern Brown Bandicoot Protection project. This project is based around protecting significant habitat areas for Southern Brown Bandicoots including the Wonthaggi Heathlands and Adams Creek in Lang Lang where the species has been previously noted. BCLN have been contracted to undertake trapping on the properties surrounding these habitat areas while another trapping contractor (Peter Wright) is trapping inside the Parks Victoria properties. During this year BCLN ran 6 trapping programs which resulted in 10 foxes and one feral cat being removed, limiting predation on Southern Brown Bandicoots and other native species.



Fox picked up on camera moments before being trapped and a Southern Brown Bandicoot

South Gippsland Landcare Network

BCLN has continued its partnership with South Gippsland Landcare Network working on their Biodiversity Response Plan project. This project spans 16,000ha from Venus Bay to Waratah Bay and is aimed at protecting threatened fauna species that inhabit the Bunurong Coastal Landscape by running 1080 baiting programs to remove foxes from the area to create a buffer zone for

coastal native wildlife. This is a three-year project and has now been underway for two years, which has seen BCLN undertake 4 1080 baiting pulses with a total of 1,485 baits laid across 376 bait stations with 264 baits taken by foxes. This has been a great result so far over the first two years. Alongside the fox baiting, there was a release of the Calicivirus (K5) at 50 locations across the project area. This was to limit a boom in rabbit numbers with less foxes in the area to control them. The K5 release saw a 71% reduction of rabbits in Venus Bay and 79% reduction in Waratah Bay across the pre-control and post-control monitoring transects.



Fox taking 1080 bait during SGLN BRP project.

Westernport Water

BCLN continued work with Westernport Water on their pest plant and animal issues during 2019-2020 period. Due to COVID-19 arising during this year King Road treatment plant was shut down to people outside of WPW staff. This didn't allow pest animal control to happen so some funds had to be shuffled around to other WPW projects such as, exclusion fencing at Cowes treatment plant. Two weeks of soft-jaw fox trapping was undertaken at Candowie Reservoir with nine trapping locations resulting in two adult Vixens being removed along with one hare. Two nights of spotlight shooting was undertaken at Cowes treatment plant resulting in three rabbits being removed from the area. After many years of rabbit and hare control at the treatment plant there is only a very small population left which has been a great result for BCLN and WPW.

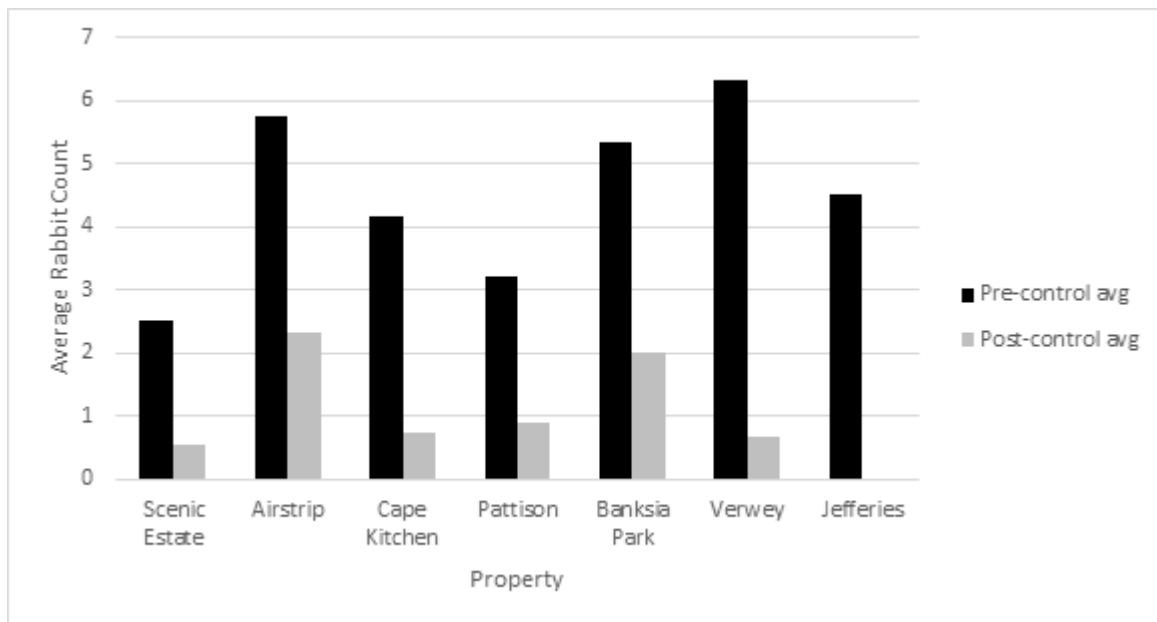
Phillip Island Nature Parks

This was the fifth year that the Phillip Island Nature Parks (PINP) engaged BCLN to complete rabbit control on Phillip Island. The development of the Newhaven Buffer Zone rabbit control program has led to the strengthening of the relationship between the two organisations, as well as reducing rabbit numbers and decreasing their impacts on high priority assets. This year's program was no different, with staff from both organisations working together on this common goal. Collaboration between both organisations relating to rabbit monitoring and control has also been outlined in the PINP 5-Year Conservation Plan 2019-2023 (5.1.3), where it is highlighted as one of the key actions for implementation from the Pest Management Strategy 2019-2023.



Warren fumigation at Banksia Park

The key activities undertaken were rabbit-proof fencing checks, spotlight count monitoring, Pindone baiting, warren fumigation, and mop up shooting. Presence of Eastern Barred Bandicoots excluded a few properties from undertaking Pindone baiting. A combination of open bait trails and exclusion cages were used where baiting was possible. Following baiting, rabbit warren mapping and treatment were completed. A total of 177 warrens were located, mapped, and treated if active with aluminium phosphide tablets. The acquisition of a new smoker machine allowed for the most efficient targeting of warrens, as all entrances could be identified and treated. The combination of these activities (baiting, fumigation, and shooting) resulted in a 72.2% reduction in rabbit numbers across all properties.



Graph showing reduction of average rabbit numbers pre-control and post-control at all properties



Left: cage with free feed at Scenic Estate. Right: fresh rabbit diggings near entrance to cage at Scenic Estate

Victorian Gorse Taskforce

BCLN were again successful in obtaining a Large Community Grant from the Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) to continue the project **“Maintain the gain – reinvigorating gorse control on Phillip Island and surrounds”**. The grant funding allows us to offer grant assistance to 20 landholders through the BCLN Work’s Crew completing a day of gorse control spraying. These targeted properties were spread all around the island, giving good coverage of where gorse is still an issue. Gorse infestations ranged from larger infestations to smaller isolated patches of plants. The process of engaging with landholders, completing site visits, and scheduling of works was made difficult due to the COVID-19 crisis. An extension from the VGT was granted and BCLN have until mid-December 2020 to complete their gorse control engagement works. For the financial year of 2019/20, BCLN completed VGT gorse control works at 14 properties, with an approximate 116 ha of gorse controlled.



Before photo of gorse at a property in Corinella. This was a large infestation that extended through several paddocks on the property

Bass Coast Shire Council

A number of rabbit enquiries were forwarded onto the Rabbit Officer through BCLN and Bass Coast Shire Council. These enquiries were largely to do with rabbits present in urban areas. The majority of these calls came from Phillip Island residents, in areas such as Rhyll, Surf Beach, and Cowes. BCLN updated their rabbit education material, available also on the BCLN website, to address the overwhelming number of urban rabbit control enquiries. These materials give detailed advice for both urban and rural rabbit control.



Front pages of educational rabbit brochures and factsheets

Works Crew

Works Crew Coordinator - Mark Rowe, Works Crew Leading hand - Luke Phillips
Works Crew Members - Angus Carrington, Andrew Smith, Stevie Wynen, Dani Carr, Paul Micallef, Bailey Anderson.

The 2019/2020 financial year has definitely been a year to remember. From trainees finishing their traineeship, an ever expanding pest animal program, forging new partnerships and to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Events / plantings

We began the 2019/2020 financial year in the middle of the planting season. To start with, Bruce and Anna Spiden at Woolamai had a massive site, where we sprayed 15,000 spots ready for planting by the year 9 students from Wonthaggi Secondary College. The site was unique as it has quite a few large, undamaged tree ferns, large old blackwood's, wonga vine, clematis and native raspberries.



All set for planting!

Another sizable site was Cameron Corrigan's, "The Hills are Alive" planting. Although the site was very steep, wet and inaccessible it turned out to be a massive success, with many people coordinating the planting, and so many volunteers wanting to be involved. The volunteers especially enjoyed the festival. This project was a partnership between the Powlett Project and the Bass Coast Shire Council Bio links program.

At the beginning of the planting season it was full steam ahead with spot spraying and planting across the Bass Coast Shire. The team sprayed well over 100,000 spots before the end of June and started planting the first of these sites with seedlings at the beginning of May. The sites are a combination of Melbourne Water, Bio-links and Ramsar projects.

Individually we sprayed 27,000 spots for Charles Davidson's combined project between Melbourne Water and Bio-Links. We are preparing to plant the trees with the help of the new Working for Victoria employees. We will have them working with us every second week, until the end of December 2020, every alternate week they will be working with Bass Coast Shire.

Partnerships

The works crew have been establishing and strengthening a partnership with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA). We have done this by assisting to spray spots for the Interpid/ UNIFY planting at Kieran O'loughlins property at Tarwin.

The works crew continued working in partnership with the WGCMA in the Autumn, doing willow removal works on private property working alongside an experienced excavator operator. We used large chainsaws to cut and remove large tracts of established willows. This work continued into the team using axes in remote areas, along the upper reaches of Turttons Creek. We used the 'frilling' method, as well as recording GPS locations for each tree. We backed this up by doing the same works on the upper reaches of the West Tarwin River branch at Mt Worth.

Holcim's Grantville Sand and Gravel site at Grantville saw us start rehabilitating an old quarry area with 1000 plants. We did this by using wire wallaby guards as a precaution against the ever-present wildlife. We attended on a monthly basis for two days over the last financial year.

Through good networking and positive relationships with Holcim, there was a planting day between the Bass Coast Landcare Network staff and board members, and the Holcim employees in the Arboretum on the Bass River at Bass. We ended the day with a BBQ lunch and a lot of positive feelings about our future partnership with Holcim.



Members of Friends of Harmers Haven with BCLN Staff

In October and then again in January, we were lucky enough to partner with the Friends of Harmers Haven in doing some work in the sand dunes at Cutlers Beach. We were targeting the ever-increasing problem of sea spurge. It was a learning experience for us as we had never dealt with sea spurge. Access was difficult as we had to maneuver through the sand dunes to get on the foreshore with the buggy and loaded spray unit. It was a successful exercise dealing with sea spurge, and we hope to continue in the future with the good work that we started.

Following on from the above partnerships, we conducted ten days of weed control spraying across the three separate quarry sites owned by Metro Quarry Group at Bass, Lang Lang and Nyora. Here we were focusing on the large infestations of blackberry. We also completed a planting at the Lang Lang site, using established trees that our own nursery grew from scratch.

Moving with the times

Moving into the Autumn and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the works crew adapted eagerly to the new working restrictions adhering to all the social protocols to ensure the health and safety of themselves and their fellow co-workers. We continue to follow the necessary processes to keep us all safe, in line with the current State Government restrictions.

During the quiet season, we took a new approach to generate more work by advertising on social media for storm damage clean up. It was a positive response, with our first job within an hour of the ad going out. Coincidentally, the job happened to be on the first ever Landcare planting in that area, at the end of Craig Road Ryanston, which was formerly the McBride's property, way back in 1989.



Storm damage clean up

The planting season coincided with the government “JobKeeper” scheme. JobKeeper allowed us to utilise our own staff in slow periods around the River Garden, Arboretum, Bass River, Bass Recreation Reserve, Nursery and to implement improvements around the Depot, making it safer for everyone. This also assisted us to keep our staff employed and retain them. This is important to us at Landcare, as we consider our staff to be skilled and valued team members.

Training

In October 2019, our two trainees Angus Carrington and Anna Brayley successfully completed the necessary work to achieve their Certificate three in Conservation and Land Management. They have both developed into valuable members of the organisation who are still working with us today.



Trainees Angus Carrington and Anna Brayley successfully completed Certificate 3 in Conservation and Land Management.

Six staff have completed their 1080 fox baiting training, this was in response to the ever-expanding pest animal program and the commitments we had to fulfill in the second year of South Gippsland Landcare Network’s BRP project. A number of the works crew completed their ChemCert certificates. Mark, Luke and Angus completed their Level two tree felling course.

As a team, we have completed an All-Terrain Vehicle course through Honda. This took place over two days. We completed the training at Bruce and Anna Spiden’s property at Woolamai. Thirteen staff successfully completed the training, which was well received.

From the training we have completed, our skills are more refined and further developed. As a result, we were able to have up to 12 active people working on the works crew on a regular basis.



Pest animal / Mosquitos

The Bass Coast Shire Council Mosquito monitoring and baiting program started in earnest in October, and continued throughout the summer. Mosquito monitoring as a result of the early start was a huge success this year.

Bass Landcare Indigenous Nursery Group

Bron Teesdale – Nursery Supervisor

Stevie Wynen – Nursery Assistant

It has been a tough year for the nursery group. Our great and enthusiastic volunteers couldn't meet for large periods in 2020, but it didn't stop many who took trays home to prick out and pot up seedlings! As Ray points out below, it was lucky the majority of propagation was completed prior to the pandemic.

Stevie, Bron and Dani, with some help from the Works Crew, kept the nursery going until the volunteers could return.

With all the interruptions, the nursery managed to produce the largest number of seedlings to date, 47,000. With many external orders arriving at the BCLN nursery prior to plants going off to various sites, space was at a premium. Further hardening off areas will need to be developed.

Outputs

- Over 30 volunteer mornings attended by an average of 10 volunteers. Volunteer days were reduced over the year because of Covid-19 restrictions.
- Construction of a sheltered area between the depot and hothouse, for protection from sun and rain.
- Propagation of 47,000 seedlings, approximately 1/3 more than last year.
- Holding orders of a further 70,000 seedlings during planting season.

Outcomes and group highlights

- Increased plant production, health and vigour.
- 'Most of our propagation was done pre-lockdown, with Stevie and Bron keeping the nursery going. Also shaded area completed, bird watching with Dallas, and seeing our core group keen, along with some new volunteers' – Ray Kirk, Nursery Volunteer.
- 'The highlight of the nursery group would be the achievement of the ever increasing demand for plants. We have propagated, provided and planted in both community and private properties. Personally I have enjoyed the comradery of the volunteer group' – Ben Maghanoy, Nursery Volunteer.



Top: Bron and Stevie at the Nursery.

Bottom: Nursery volunteers helping with planting, socially distanced of course!

Lead an Innovative Sustainable Agricultural Community

Sustainable Agriculture Portfolio

Joel Geoghegan – Sustainable Agriculture Team Leader

Building on the success of the 2018/19 program, the Sustainable Agriculture program again went from strength to strength. It was a year that continued the momentum of two ongoing projects, the 'Smart Farming in Westernport' project and 'Growing Southern Gippsland'. Both these projects entered their second year having commenced on July 1st, 2019.

Growing Southern Gippsland.

Originally a two-year project scheduled for completion on June 30th 2020, the project was offered an extension to 31st December 2020 due to COVID-19, an extra 6 months.



This project is a true collaboration, and we welcome and thank our project collaborators for their commitment and support; Federation University Australia, RMIT University, South Gippsland Landcare Network and Bass Coast Shire Council.

The main project deliverables are:

- 12 targeted Southern Gippsland case studies
- 6 targeted field days/workshops
- Development of a web-based decision-making portal and website
- Production of a series of supporting multimedia products
- Project launch and wrap up

The projects 12 case studies are completed and will be available on the website. They are distributed throughout Southern Gippsland representing multiple landscapes, enterprise sizes and types.

Project progress to date includes:

- 12 case studies are completed
- 3 field days hosted with remaining to be completed by December 31st, 2020.
- Website in development- www.growingsoutherngippsland.org.au
- Production of a series of multimedia products available on the Bass Coast Landcare Network vimeo channel- <https://vimeo.com/user86454618>



Year two of this exciting project focused around consolidating the vigorous planning undertaken in year one. In 2019/20 we hosted 3 successful field days;

- Biosecurity in a changing climate
- Carbon Farming in a changing climate
- Water Management in a changing climate



Engaged participants at the Carbon Farming in a Changing Climate Field day hosted by Growing Southern Gippsland in November 2019.

The 3 remaining field days will be hosted in the 6 month COVID-19 extension period and will be completed by 31st December 2020. The remaining field days will cover the following topics;

- Waste and energy in a changing climate
- Disruptive technology on Southern Gippsland Farms
- Website and Climate Adaptation Plan launch.

The Growing Southern Gippsland website is the

largest of the project deliverables and will be soft launched at the end of October 2020. A formal launch will be held in December 2020 once all website content has been completed. The website will include a decision support tool that will enable Southern Gippsland farmers to produce their own 'Climate adaptation plan'. www.growingsoutherngippsland.com.au

The Growing Southern Gippsland projects key measure of success is inextricably linked to its future legacy. The projects key measures of success will be:

- The 'Growing Southern Gippsland' website will be relevant, functional, usable and used by farmers to plan for a changing climate beyond the life of the current funding
- The 'Growing Southern Gippsland' collaborative partnership will continue to work together on future projects under the 'Growing Southern Gippsland' umbrella.

Smart Farming in Westernport- National Landcare Program 2.

2019/20 marked the second year of the Smart Farming in Westernport project funded through the National Landcare Program 2. This project is a continuation of the previous Demonstrating Sustainable Agriculture project. The project is operating across the entire Westernport Catchment and is a partnership between the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Westernport Catchments Landcare Network, BCLN, South Gippsland Landcare Network, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Melbourne Water and Agriculture Victoria. The project is funded for 5 years. At June 30th 2020 the project just completed its second year.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the project was required to adapt its delivery methods. With quick planning, all project deliverables for 2019/20 were achieved. In 2019/20 the project undertook the following activities:

- One soil carbon demonstration site at Bimbadeen on Phillip Island is ongoing
- One soil carbon demonstration site at Kernot is ongoing
- One Grazfert Nutrient Management Program in the Bass River catchment attended by 14 Bass landowners
- One Grazfert remote farm walk over zoom attended by 10 people



- One Rapid Soil Assessment over Zoom field day attended by 19 people.
- 15 discussion group events attended by 207 people
- Production of a video series on Regenerative Agriculture.

Filming the regenerative agriculture video series at the property of Krowera Dairy farmer, Andy Thomas, May 2020. From left: Declan McDonald (consultant), Peter Ronalds (WPCLN) and Andy Thomas.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjE8GJied2s8X_MUTwZxyRDmTxuVY5G-v

Discussion Groups

In 2019/20 the Smart Farming in Westernport Project contributed to the ongoing support of three discussion group programs including:

- The Kongwak Ellipak Group
- The Phillip Island Beef Group, and
- The Innovation and diversification group.

The project also hosted new discussion group sessions focusing on Master Tree Growers and agroforestry on farm. A total of 15 discussion group events were hosted in 2019/20 with a combined total of 207 people attending.

2019/20 discussion group highlights include the following:

- The annual Kongwak Ellipak discussion group Christmas lunch held at the Glen Alvie property of Barb and Peter Brown
- The Diversification and Innovation discussion group visit to Niels Olsen's Soilkee property in November 2019
- The Diversification and Innovation discussion group visit to Peninsula Avocados in February 2020
- The Master Tree Growers discussion group visit to the Ranceby property of Frank Hirst in November 2019.
- Hosting an extremely successful remote discussion group visit to the Multi Story farming property of Clinton Tepper in June 2020.

Thank you to agronomist John Galleon for his ongoing facilitation of the Phillip Island Beef Group and Faye Tughton for coordinating the Kongwak Ellipak discussion group events. Also a big thank to all our farm hosts for the 2019/20 year.

Future priorities for all these groups include:

- Planning to develop long term group priorities
- Encourage increased participation in the discussion groups
- Investigate setting up a regenerative agriculture discussion group in 2020/21.

Capitalise on Carbon

All things Carbon Program

Introduced in last year's annual report, BCLN's All things Carbon (ACT) program has been slowly moving forward behind the scenes in 2019/20. The demand for food and fibre is increasing, but during periods of climate variability, maintaining a productive and profitable farm is becoming increasingly difficult. Farms that provide shade, shelter, build and increase soil organic matter are more resilient during extreme and variable climate and weather events. Regenerative agriculture is the umbrella philosophy that describes these more resilient farm management practices.

2019/20 has seen an increased focus on introducing the concepts of regenerative agriculture into the farming community of Bass Coast and Southern Gippsland. A series of videos has been produced focusing on the main themes. This will be supported by future courses, webinars and farm walks scheduled for 2020/21 and beyond.

Regenerative agriculture has many benefits, one in particular is the increasing of sequestered carbon on farm, either soil carbon or tree carbon. Sequestered carbon can be traded and is considered a co-benefit alongside productivity gains through increased fertility and water holding capacity. Southern Gippsland and Bass Coast has been identified as an area of high opportunity for carbon sequestration on farm.

The ACT team, led by our BCLN Chair Ric Oldham, spent many hours developing the 'Farming for Climate' option for the Bass Coast Shire Council Rating strategy review. Our team which



Nick Dudley, Regional Manager, SE Region at Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, examining a soil core at the Carbon Farming in a Changing Climate Field day.

includes Ric Oldham, Roger Lee, Robbie Gray and Dave Bateman presented to the BCSC Councillors and Management. This led to 'Farming for Climate' being included in the BCSC rating strategy review. We presented at the BCSC ratings review community information sessions and Ric also presented to the Bass branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 the rating review was put on hold. Regardless of the outcome BCLN will continue to push forward with the strategy and continue to seek funding to develop it further. We have spent a significant amount of energy providing comment and feeding information to the BCSC for their Climate Action Plan. We are hopeful that there will be some great outcomes from this plan that include supporting BCLN to roll out Climate adaptation plan workshops and supporting the Sustainability Festival, Future Farms and Homes workshops and video stories.

BCLN is in the process of forming a partnership with Greening Australia Biodiverse Carbon. This partnership will enable Bass Coast farmers to get involved in the Biodiverse Tree Carbon Market. Potentially farmers will be able to tap into this program that will allow large scale biodiverse tree plantings of 10ha+ in size on their property, with the opportunity for full cost recovery and 25 years of payments for the area planted out.

Through the Smart Farming in Westernport project two soil carbon demonstrations are underway on Phillip Island and Kernot. The aim of these demonstration is to prove that certain regenerative agriculture management approaches can sequester carbon, namely the use of multiple species carbon crops combined with rotational grazing approaches.

Using the Landcare brand, trust, knowledge, and expertise, BCLN will provide farmers with the ability, confidence and skills to improve productive capacity, resilience, and branding in a more variable climate, as well as achieve carbon neutrality and generate income from carbon sequestration.

BCLN staff are also looking for new professional development and funding opportunities to further entrench 'All things carbon' into our daily operations. We look forward to 2020/21 with optimism and look forward to reporting on good progress in future years.



Peter Ronalds from WPCLN demonstrating the process of Soil Carbon coring at the Carbon Farming in a Changing Climate Field day.

The Education, Training and Communications Portfolio

Lisa Wangman – Education, Training and Communications Manager

Anna Brayley – Administration and Communications Assistant

Training Programs

BCLN conducted many activities across our region, directly aligning with the needs of our Members, thanks to the guidance and insights uncovered in surveys for the Training Needs Analysis report completed mid-2019. Although the last half of 2019-20 saw COVID-19 impacts halting our gatherings, our staff were successful in taking many activities online. Upon consulting with our funders we gained time extensions for any activities or projects best delivered in person.

Sustainable Agriculture

Training this year included Farmer Discussion Groups, Diversification Group tours, Growing Southern Gippsland and Smart Farming in Westernport project field days and the Grazfert nutrient management program. These activities form part of the Sustainable Agriculture report.

Skills Development for Landcare Groups

We hosted the remaining Landcare Group training days for the Victorian Government Community Skills Development grants in the last half of 2019. These valuable days helped upskill our members to manage their groups more effectively with workshops on: First Aid, Citizen Science monitoring and Facebook for Landcare Groups. BCLN Communications staff also hosted individual training sessions with several of our Groups, showing how to use the Weebly Platform to update their Group website pages. In lieu of hosting a Grant writing and fundraising workshop we purchased booklet and online resources from Our Community now available for all Groups to use.



*Revegetation Monitoring along the Bass River
at the DIY Monitoring Day September 2019*

Women on farms Series

We were successful in gaining \$10,000 from Southern Farming Systems to run four Women on Farms days. Plans were in place to hold an event in each quarter of 2020, with expert speakers on seasonal topics. COVID-19 impacts meant we couldn't host events at participants farms as planned, so we sought and received extensions to run this in 2021. We are hoping this will be the start of a wonderful new Farm Discussion group!

Future Homes Farms and Festivals for 2040

Our original application to the DELWP Climate Change adaptation grants was unsuccessful, we were then invited to apply for a closed round of funding for the same project under the DELWP

Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. We were then granted \$53,636 to run six workshops, create seven video stories and run two annual Sustainability Festivals.



POSTPONED
New date
TBC

A natural extension of the past 'Future Homes' sustainability tours we ran for Bass Coast Shire Council, this project now includes three farm based topics alongside four home and community based topics, to be presented in interesting days combined with expert speakers and tours to properties doing great things in each of the topic areas. The video stories will provide legacy content for each topic that anyone can view, anytime.

BCLN also took over the management of the Sustainability Festival from Council in mid-2019. The first one in this project was planned for May 2019 at the River Garden, the steering committee was well underway with preparations when COVID-19 restrictions hit, forcing the event to be postponed. Towards the end of this year we will have a better picture of what a return to larger events will look like. We are hoping to run the Festival in March/April 2021 if restrictions allow and again in 2022. We are also investigating alternative methods of running these festivals in a COVID-safe manner. Our first two workshop sessions will now run online later in 2020 and into early 2021, with a return to in person events expected by the third session in April 2021.

Catchment Custodian Kids

The bulk of our School based educational activities this year were under the Powlett Catchment Custodian Kids program where tree planting and monitoring activities were conducted on eight properties with over 500 students. There are still five monitoring activity days left to run in this program which were scheduled for term 1, 2020 and are now postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19. The good news is that this program has been funded for a second year, with funding gained through the Victorian Landcare Grants, now for two programs, one in Westernport Catchment and a round two for the Powlett Catchment. This will see 16 properties hosting 32 activities involving around 1500 students. Both programs have received extensions now to run in 2021.



Powlett River Primary School planting day on the Powlett River at Clive Hollins property

Environmental Detectives Schools program – Connecting kids with Nature

Our flagship Environmental Education program, Environmental Detectives has operated on a fee for service basis for 2019/20, which understandably has seen a reduction in booked activities compared to previous years. We have had the pleasure of working with some different groups this year in addition to local schools, including Kinder classes and YMCA holiday programs.

There are currently 10 activities in this program, run at parks, reserves, farms or as incursions to schools, including: Aquatic Macro Invertebrates, Testing physical and chemical features of Water, Bird watching and nest construction, Bug Bits, Little Big things, Soils ain't soils, Exploration trail nature walks, Seed collection & Propagation, Tree planting and A Coastal and Bush Pantry. We also have plans for new activities underway and help schools with designing gardens for veggies, bush food, indigenous plants, habitat or sensory gardens. We tailor all activities to school needs. All information including an online booking form can be found on our web page at <http://www.basscoastlandcare.org.au/education.html>



Our proposal to expand this program further into Gippsland with Landcare Learning hubs which act as community resources in key areas, is one we have had support with at a Landcare network level. Refining our pitch and working with local government and indeed Landcare at the State level is the next step in this plan. We are well on the way to establishing our own Landcare Learning Hub at the River Garden in Bass with an educational shelter at the planning stage, ponds and dam in place and will use this as an example of the potential that can be realised for Gippsland Communities with investment into this program.

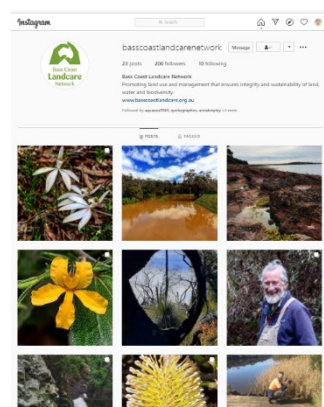
Strategic Direction for Communications in BCLN

This year saw BCLN take a more strategic direction with both internal and external communications. We conducted a review of our current Communications strategy (2017) and are working to bring it into alignment with our current strategic plan. New and updated sections will include stakeholder mapping, evaluation measures and linked communications activity plans for each operational area to ensure an even portrayal of the many facets of BCLN.

We are also undertaking a 're-branding' exercise to produce a Branding Toolkit that updates our imagery, key messages, outlines our personality, our vision, and values. This will include deliverables such as a new Style guide, updated stationery, and new looks to our online presences, all designed to engage you, our members in more of our activities, projects, events and gatherings.

This year we also launched a new Instagram page for BCLN, adding to our successful Facebook page where we can share the many special places, features, events and people of our fantastic Bass Coast Landcare Network. Our social media is where you will get the most up to date information, please like and share our pages!

<https://www.instagram.com/basscoastlandcarenetwork/>
<https://www.facebook.com/BassCoastLandcareNetwork>



Our monthly E-news continues to have a higher than average open rate for emails and we are always looking for contributions, so if you have an interesting story, event or photos to share we would love to hear from you!

River Garden

The River Garden is envisaged as a regional Landcare hub, community garden, trials, innovation, and education precinct, located on the banks of the Bass River, adjacent to our Bass Office and the highway. The focus is on regenerative soil management practices, nutrient dense growing techniques, and local food systems, from the backyard garden to horticulture and broad acre farming.



Aerial Drone view of the River Garden mid-2019, bumper tomato crop last Summer/Autumn.

You may have seen some of the work completed from the highway, the River garden now has vegetable and espalier swale growing beds, orchard, nuttury, hops, berry swales, beehives, five-bed trial comparison site and Coll's plants, a local vegetable seedling nursery business. We have started working with NDIS Clients from Paul's Table to construct raised garden beds and a wicking garden bed demonstration for an 'all access' gardening area to allow us to run programs in the future for those with limited mobility.

We are still firmly in Phase three of development, focussing on community engagement. We are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to implement activities identified in our River Garden feasibility study to engage more of our community, develop partnerships and assist turning the site into a self-supporting enterprise, which allows us to educate and encourage innovation and diversification of agriculture in Bass Coast.

This year the River Garden continued to operate in low maintenance mode, while we build up our links with the community and partnerships with other organisations. A small team of volunteers has started work on our bushfood area and TAFE students from Bass Coast Adult Education Centre studying Certificate 3 in Horticulture now help with various work to support their studies. A Community Corrections works team also helps with the mowing and other jobs once per month. With more support from community volunteers we look forward to taking the site into full production mode.

In March we were about to launch a revamped monthly volunteer program to be held on weekends incorporating guest speakers and demonstrations on sustainably growing nutrient dense food, when COVID-19 restrictions stopped us from having any groups and volunteers on

site. Our staff quickly adapted to the situation, dedicating time working in isolation, following all regulations, to not only maintain the site but avoid our bumper crops of tomatoes and pumpkins going to waste.

We were also able to establish relationships with new local sales outlets during this period, where our produce could be delivered by staff on their way home from the River Garden. New outlets include, IGA in Cowes and Island Grocer who operate a veggie box delivery scheme. Boxes and boxes of 'seconds' produce were also delivered to the Phillip Island Community and Learning Centre (PICAL) in Cowes for their food pantry emergency relief meals and to Corinella District Community Centre (CDCC) for their food pantry emergency relief and community lunches.

A regular video series was started and shared via our Facebook page to show what was happening at the River Garden during this lockdown phase, to keep people engaged and to discuss different techniques and approaches to regenerative growing of vegetable crops.



River Garden update videos during lockdown on the BCLN Facebook page

The River Garden received funding this year to run a series of five 'Family Fun' days focussing on biodiversity and environmental sustainability at the River Garden through the ANZ Seeds of Renewal small grants. These were to be held every second month from March 2020, however due to COVID-19 impacts, extensions have now been given to run these days from late 2020 into early 2021.

A small Community Grant from Bass Coast Shire Council was also received in late 2019 to purchase much needed compost, plants, soil amendments, tools, irrigation supplies, edging and track materials.

We have also been busy this year applying for a range of other funding, garnering local support through various organisations and levels of Government to boost activity in our three core areas of operation for the River Garden, Environmental Education, Community Gardening/volunteer engagement and Food production/trials in a community learning environment. There are plans in the pipeline for updating our infrastructure, an education shelter, new volunteer opportunities, development of new schools and family educational programs, all in accordance with the wishes from our community consultation at our initial opening day in late 2017. We cannot wait to welcome you all back to the River Garden, as soon as it is safe to do so of course!!



Audited Financial Statements



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