

**PROJECT SUPPORT OFFICER REPORT**

**for**

**Central West LLS Region – May 2015**

**All activities undertaken in line with the Salinity & Water Quality Alliance 5 Year Plan which identifies Council Community Strategic Plans actions that support and overlap with the outcomes identified in the Central West LLS Transitional CAP**

**(It is intended that the 5 Year Plan will be reviewed once the Central West LLS Strategic Plan is finalised)**

## General Business

The Project Support Officer has been active in a range of works to ensure that the Alliance remains relevant and supportive for the member Councils. Together with the Central Tablelands LLS’s Senior Strategic Land Services Officer – Local Government, the Project Support Officer has been engaging with other State Government Agencies to form a Multi-Agency Stormwater Capacity Building Group. A key focus of this group is to share the positive work being achieved by each agency as well as to create some consistency across NSW in regards to this stormwater capacity building work.

A round of sediment and erosion control training has been completed in early May with sessions aimed at Council staff as well as the building industry. Unfortunately, there was little support from the building industry but a strong turnout from the Councils. This training is considered to be contributing to a range of Alliance Targets and Actions surrounding waterway health and minimisation of pollution.

An expression of interest has been submitted to the NSW Environmental Trust’s Environmental Education Program for a proposed project titled Youth Stormwater Champions. If successfully funded the project would see a group of up to 20 Year 10 students from across the Alliance region participate in a series of workshops related to best practice stormwater management. The program would produce a range of education material including television and cinema advertising and would culminate with the students presenting to their peers at the Youth Eco Summit in Sydney in 2016. One stormwater educational event would be held in each participating Council’s LGA.

An abstract has been submitted to the Environmental Health Australia – 40th National Conference titled Implementing Water Sensitive Urban Design in Central West NSW – The Barriers to Success. Should the abstract be successful and the Project Support Officer is invited to present to this conference it would be an opportunity to promote the Alliance on an International stage.

The Salinity & Water Quality Alliance Facebook page is now live giving the Alliance a presence on social media. It is envisaged that this page will primarily be used to promote environmental events and success stories for the Alliance and each of the member Councils. An Alliance web page is also in the preliminary stages of development with a full communications strategy to be developed.

A Hydraulic Conductivity Testing Kit has been put together by the Project Support Officer for the purpose of measuring the rate at which water moves through filtration media of installed raingardens. This kit will be available for use by Councils with raingardens / biofiltration systems installed to provide hard evidence as to the functionality of these systems. Additionally, the Alliance has purchased 10 Hamilton Tree Planters – 5 Forestry Tube & 5 Hiko – for use by member Councils.

## Dubbo City Council

The Project Support Officer has worked closely with Dubbo City Council to develop the concept of the Youth Stormwater Champions project. This has been due to the fact that Dubbo City Council have a dedicated Stormwater Education Officer who has been able to assist with demonstrated experience in this field.

The Alliance is also working with Dubbo City Council to assist with the planting of the Railway Street Wetlands at Gilgandra. This is based on the local Green Team concept where Dubbo City Council will provide experienced staff to work with Gilgandra Shire Council and the labour will be returned to assist with planting long stem tubestock plants in the following week.

#### Actions:

* Continue to provide support to Railway Street Wetland project.

## Warrumbungle Shire Council

Working closely with Warrumbungle Shire Council to negotiate the complications that they are facing with the implementation of their raingarden project, the Project Support Officer is working to source suitable filtration media, plants, sediment control inlet devices and provide on-ground support. It is considered that this project is now progressing with close management required to ensure a positive outcome for all parties.

Plants for this project have been sourced and delivered to Council with construction to be completed prior to the end of the financial year. At present Warrumbungle Shire Council are assessing the option of installing a submerged zone in the raingarden to support plant growth during dry periods. It is understood that this would be the first such installation in the region.

#### Actions:

* Attend raingarden planning meetings to finalise plans and set a date for construction to begin.
* Continue to provide support as required to ensure that the project succeeds as planned.

## Gilgandra Shire Council

Construction work has now been completed on the Railway Street Wetlands (working title only). Planting is now due to be completed in early May with the Project Support Officer having provided a planting plan for the wetland and sourced and purchased the plants. Additionally, the Project Support Officer has attended a stakeholder meeting in Gilgandra prior to construction as well as presented at a local school excursion to educate the students as to the many benefits of the project. The project has already gained local media attention with coverage through the Gilgandra Weekly newspaper (see article at conclusion of this report).

A Local Green Team arrangement has been negotiated between Gilgandra Shire Council and Dubbo City Council. This will involve staff from Dubbo City Council assisting with the planting of the wetland with Gilgandra Shire Council to return the favour and assist with planting of long stem plants in Dubbo.

This arrangement is seen as beneficial to both Councils as staff will have the opportunity to develop new skills in areas that they may not be exposed to otherwise.

#### Actions:

* Ensure wetland has been suitably prepared for planting.
* Arrange to be on-site for planting.

## Coonamble Shire Council

Discussions continuing with Matt Cock and Kristie Presnell regarding opportunities within Coonamble Shire Council to implement on-ground environmental works, community engagement and attracting grant funding. Key opportunities relate to Giant Rush (*Arundo spp*.) weed infestations on the Castlereagh River, engaging existing environmental groups within the town and working with the Economic Development Manager, Leah O’Connor who is involved with an environmental community group in town.

A tour of sites around Coonamble presented several opportunities for on ground works assisted by the Alliance. Key sites include:

* Waste Water Treatment Works wetland opportunity
* Tree planting opportunity off Walgett Road where existing plantings are rather sparse
* A disused river crossing that has become a dumping point for rubbish that could be prevented with a road closure
* Urban drainage line through a park in town that has previously been planted with sedges and rushes but is now blocked due to infestations of Phalaris and Paspalum causing localised minor flooding.

Due to a lack of staffing resources and in particular staff experienced in completing on ground environmental works, it is apparent that Coonamble Shire Council could benefit greatly from Alliance support.

#### Actions:

* Investigate opportunities to install a water treatment wetland at the Waste Water Treatment Plant.
* Investigate options for vegetated corridor behind Waste Water Treatment Plant settling ponds to absorb excessive nutrients prior to entering the river where localised Eucalypt dieback is present.
* Explore funding opportunities to complete planting works adjacent to Walgett Road.
* Investigate opportunities to assist Council to engage the community in river restoration works with a focus on removing Giant Rush (*Arundo spp*.) infestations.
* Encourage and support Council to close the road where illegal dumping is occurring in the river and to rehabilitate this site.

## Warren Shire Council

Warren Shire Council is currently working with a Green Army team as well as with Riversmart to open the new Window on the Wetlands centre at Warren. The Project Support Officer is currently in communications with James Cleasby to identify potential project for the upcoming NSW Environmental Trust Restoration & Rehabilitation grants program.

#### Actions:

* Arrange meeting with James Cleasby to workshop project concepts for the NSW Environmental Trust Restoration & Rehabilitation program.

## Bogan Shire Council

Tim Riley introduced the Project Support Officer during an initial site meeting to some of the environmental issues present in the Nyngan area as well as some of the positive opportunities. The town is situated on the Bogan River which provides great amenity, recreational and environmental values. Two key sites were presented as opportunities for the Alliance to be involved in:

1. The Number 2 Oval Waterhole – a functioning wetland area that is largely undervalued by Council and residents with significant recreational and tourism potential.
2. Ex-Service Station site – a sunken basin on the entrance to town with potential to be transformed into a key recreational park with a focus on WSUD.

The Alliance is working to provide a preliminary design for the Ex-Service Station site for Council but to date has been delayed by the inability to access basic site information from Council.

#### Actions:

* Continue to work with Council to obtain basic information regarding the two sites mentioned above.
* Begin preparation of a management plan for the No. 2 Oval Waterhole with the objective to use this document as a means of sourcing funding to implement on ground and educational works.
* Develop concept of a ‘sunken garden’ incorporating WSUD principles at the ex-Service Station site.

## Wellington Shire Council

There exists a range of concepts and ideas relating to the implementation of WSUD principles within Wellington that are being considered as necessary due to the massive erosion events within the Bell River and the need to reduce high volume stormwater inflows.

Concepts include the introduction of an open meandering creek waterway through Market Square and constructed wetlands within the race course and sporting field areas. Stan Robb has experience in completing similar projects and may be a useful source of knowledge and experience for the rest of the Alliance.

#### Actions:

* Forward the Reserve Plan of Management template through to Council for their use.
* Workshop NSW Environmental Trust grant concepts with appropriate members of Council.

## Parkes Shire Council

The Alliance is working with Parkes Shire Council to remediate newly installed, but badly eroded stormwater infrastructure adjacent to the hospital site. At present the plan for this area is to plant out the base of the stormwater drain with a range of sedges and rushes sourced by the Alliance with a raingarden to be constructed above the culverts to filter stormwater and provide a means of bringing the water down to a lower level.

Diana Kureen has submitted an abstract regarding this project to the Water Sensitive Urban Design / International Erosion Control Association Conference as an example of thinking beyond concrete in terms of best practice stormwater management.

#### Actions:

* Continue to work with Council to implement vegetated swale and raingarden adjacent to the hospital site.
* Organise introductory meeting with new Environmental Officer, Michael Chambers.

## Narromine Shire Council

The Alliance has been working with Narromine Shire Council to assist in the landscaping of an open space area adjacent to a truck bypass within the town. An architect drawing has been produced for the site with little detail in terms of plant numbers, site preparation or other practical details. The Alliance Project Support Officer has assisted in specifying plant species and numbers for the stormwater channel associated with this project, as well as the purchasing of these plants.

#### Actions:

* Continue working with Council to ensure that plants are installed as planned.
* Provide assistance with planting, on-site management as required.

## Forbes Shire Council

A very positive meeting was held with key members from Forbes Shire Council who recently employed an Environmental Officer and will be formally joining the Salinity & Water Quality Alliance. It is anticipated that the Alliance Project Support Officer will be working closely with Council’s Environmental Officer on issues and opportunities as they present.

#### Actions:

* Arrange meeting with Leon Ross to identify projects / opportunities that the Alliance can assist with including grant funding.

## Lachlan Shire Council

The Project Support Officer has been involved in investigations into the major salinity issue at Gumbend Lake. A site visit was conducted in late March to assess the level of salinity issues at this site as well as potential management options. A significant amount of further investigation is required at this site to gain a full appreciation of the causes of the salinity as well as to then understand how to best manage the site.

Other opportunities that the Alliance may be able to assist with is value adding to the existing town lookout in terms of nature tourism potential with similar opportunities present in relation to Manna Mountain – an undervalued Wiradjuri site in terms of cultural and tourism potential.

#### Actions:

* Continue working with Anthony Fogg and Allan Nicholson to manage Gumbend Lake salinity issues.

## Weddin Shire Council

At present Weddin Shire Council are the only Council within the Alliance project area that are not members of the Salinity & Water Quality Alliance. The Alliance will continue to promote the benefits of membership to Weddin Shire Council.

## Media



