



STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND INITIATIVES TO PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE - THE OOLONG CHALLENGE AND CARBONSMART

It is critical that the last substantial remnants of the natural environment are protected. Wilderness today is reduced to islands of nature surrounded by a sea of developed land. Unless we protect these remaining bushland expanses, threatened wildlife will become extinct and catchments protecting critical water supplies more polluted.

A strategic common direction taken in conservation issues by several agencies and governments indicates how these issues affect NSW and the Southern NSW region in particular. Some issues appear to work against each other and have to be re-examined in the contest and integrated with local initiatives to succeed in preserving our heritage.

The Southern Wilderness Protection Plan 2005: Only a small part of the South East NSW area proposed for nomination in the wilderness 2000 campaign has been declared by the NSW government and the Colong Foundation, Total Environment Centre, National Parks Association of NSW, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and The Wilderness Society have appealed the NSW Ombudsman, who found wrong conduct regarding the assessment of submission on the southern wilderness nomination. In June 2005 the group re-lodged their wilderness nominations in southern NSW in a joint nomination under the Wilderness Act and nominated 313,053 hectares for assessment under the Wilderness Act, 1987.

The Lachlan Action Plan and the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority: The Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (LCMA) is adopting and implementing a 10-year document, in the Lachlan Catchment Region of the Burrinjuck Electorate, under the NSW Catchment Management Authority Act 2003. The Plan provides strategic direction for natural resource management activities and investment in the Lachlan Catchment.

The Native Vegetation Remnants of the Upper Lachlan Region, located on the Southern Tablelands (shown in green in one of the maps presented in Habitat/Remnants on our website www.pcug.org.au/~gianni), is where efforts will be concentrated.

This map covers most of the blank area, north of Canberra on the maps on Wilderness Protection Plans, which show Wilderness to be protected, areas declared wilderness and National parks/state forest. The nearest Nature reserve is Mundoonen Nature reserve, approximately 20 km south west of Oolong. Belmont forest is approximately 35 km to the southeast and the next nearest lands managed by the department is Hattons corner at Yass and then Burrinjuck Nature Reserve 40 km south west of Yass. The country in the southern Tablelands between Yass and Cowra is poorly represented in the States Conservation System. Developing a network of wildlife

corridors to link the small remnants in the Upper Lachlan Region is the best way to fill the gap to produce a fragmented but still very valuable protected wilderness.

The Upper Lachlan Region covers 588,114ha. It encompasses the Lachlan River catchment above the Wyangala Dam, the Crookwell River catchment and the Abercrombie River catchment south of the Abercrombie River below and including the Burra Burra Creek Confluence. The Region includes the towns of Crookwell and Gunning and the villages of Dalton, Bigga, Reid's Flat, Grabben Gullen, Yuena, Rugby, Binda, Breadalbane and Laggan and forms part of the Murray-Darling Basin and 7% of the Lachlan catchment.

Nineteen Landcare groups have been running projects on a Lachlan Action Plan from 2000 to 2003, under the Upper Lachlan Catchment Coordinating Committee (ULCCC). Landcare provided over \$1 million and the strategy was to have 30% of the Lachlan, Crookwell River and Abercrombie Headwater regions under trees and shrubs by 2030. No map has been produced to show the positions and the extent of the revegetated corridors since the LCMA has taken over the development of the Lachlan Action Plan.

A State and Federal Plan- a 2800km wildlife Corridor: The NSW Department of Environment and Water has formed partnerships with The Australian Bush Heritage Fund and other agencies and community groups to establish a 2800km wildlife corridor along almost the entire east coast of Australia. The plan will be coordinated by the Bush Heritage Fund and will include existing national parks, state forests and other crown land. Large tracts of land cleared for agriculture break the corridor in several places. The hardest links to restore are expected to be in Upper Hunter and part of Queensland and southern NSW where there are small-scattered habitat/remnants amongst large cultivated areas. Landholders will be encouraged to undertake Landcare works and sign voluntary conservation agreements.

This plan, supported by State and Federal Governments led by NSW, is one of the nation's highest environmental priorities for the year 2007 and beyond. The NSW Minister for the Environment is to announce a first-stage funding of \$7 million worth of incentives to private landholders. Nearly two-thirds of the state's threatened species are found along the land the corridor would encompass. The corridor will also improve the management of the nation's most economically significant watersheds, including the Murray and the Darling.

Once complete, the Alps to Atherton wildlife corridor will be amongst the longest in the world and will include existing national parks, state forests, and other crown land. It would be like a terrestrial version of the Great Barrier Reef - only longer. However hundred if not thousands of private properties break the corridor and these are the hardest links to restore.

Developing Wildlife Corridors Within Private Properties and the model of Habitat/remnants Linked by Wildlife Corridors. This is a major issue, which requires promotion with education and incentives to get the support of communities and landholders. For this purpose the Friends of Oolong have undertaken, over several years, a complete study of a model of habitat/remnants on private land linked by crown roads. The model together with an inventory of fauna and flora and a

management of collection of Grassy Box Woodlands seeds and other ecosystems is a showpiece constructed for the benefit of the local communities and landholders to be used as pilot study to gather similar information and to get assistance in developing their own model. The Oolong model needs to be preserved as a sample for further study and for education.

The Grassy Box Woodlands as one of Bush Heritage Anchor Regions: The Grassy Box Woodlands ranges in an arc from the Victorian/South Australian border through the grassy box-woodland communities and north along the west of the Great Dividing Range into central New South Wales.

Grassy box woodlands once dominated the wheat-sheep belt of southeastern Australia, but are now one of the most poorly conserved ecosystems in Australia. Grassy White Box Woodlands are listed nationally as an endangered ecological community under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999. White Box, Yellow Box, Red Gum woodland is listed under the Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995 in New South Wales.

One of the five Anchor regions identified by Bush Heritage in which to focus its activities to achieve its long-term vision is the Grassy Box Woodlands.

The Grassy Box Woodlands Conservation Management Network (GBWCMN): Scattered box trees are still common in the landscape but regeneration is limited and the native understorey community is very rare. We are fortunate that at Oolong owing to our management, with the removal of domestic stock, the understorey is regenerating and the whole community is well represented in the sanctuary.

The Friends of Oolong are members of the GBWCMN and are committed to promote, collect and propagate grass, shrub and tree seeds of this endemic ecosystem.

How Wildlife Corridors are Reconstructed Using Crown Roads – The Oolong Challenge: While Governments and other agencies form partnerships to develop wildlife corridors by purchasing properties to maintain them as national parks, the Friends of Oolong are promoting a much more economical way to achieve the same goal on large tracts of private land cleared for agriculture, with the assistance of local communities. The operation is simple and doesn't require the purchase of the land for the corridors. A network of crown roads, about 20m wide, provides access and connects all parcels of land. These crown roads are in the main abandoned. They are shown in all Shire Council parcel maps. Landholders in cooperation with local communities select any vegetation remnants on their properties, choosing the most suitable crown road as links and developing a Landcare 'project' of reforestation of such roads and maintaining them as wildlife corridors.

The NSW government is selling these roads, which are adjacent to parcels of private owned land and landholders either do purchase them or have to pay high rent for them. Some roads offer multiple accesses and cannot be sold to any individual owner and this is a problem for the government.

We are making representation to the NSW Government for the sale to be stopped since these roads are eminently suitable as wildlife corridors.

The Friends of Oolong will try to make - under the initiative to be known as **The Oolong Challenge** - free allocations of endemic seeds and trees to the relevant local communities involved in the restoration of wildlife corridors using crown roads. The supply of the seeds of the Grassy Box Woodlands to the communities is a contribution by the Friends of Oolong in support of reforestation of this ecosystem.

The Challenge is under the patronage of the Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP member for Burrinjuck.

CarbonSMART: Landcare in NSW has entered the carbon-trade. It is hoping to pay farmers an annual income for the carbon savings that their tree plantings are achieving. Landcare CarbonSMART is a not-for-profit scheme that plans to develop a database of tree plantings to sell to carbon dioxide emitters who want to mitigate their pollution. The concept is being driven by landowner and corporate interests and was launched on March 1 as Carbon SMART project.

A Coordination of Efforts: The new initiative proposed by the Friends of Oolong with the Oolong Challenge is to contribute to the Lachlan Action Plan final stage and its completion - as far as the revegetation of wildlife corridors on private land - is a far less expensive proposition.

The Carbon SMART project is to provide the incentive for landholders to widen the corridors by planting more trees on either side of the roads.

The Friends of Oolong have been developing and actively promoting the establishment of wildlife corridors between the numerous small habitat/remnants in densely private lands in the Upper Lachlan Region and with the Oolong Challenge and Landcare CarbonSMART are now promoting and supporting the Governments Plan on a 2800km wildlife corridor and the LCMA Action Plan.

All projects should be coordinated in the Region together with the LCMA programs on Land Salinity, Vegetation and Water Quality Managements, since all these initiatives follow a strategic direction and are to achieve a common goal: The preservation of our heritage.

Great efforts should be concentrated in promotion and education so that the full participation of local communities and landholders is obtained.

Observations and Conclusions on Strategic Direction in the Upper Lachlan Region: The Lachlan Action Plan (LAP) provides strategic direction for natural resources management. The development of the LAP is a requirement for the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (CMA), under the NSW Catchment Management Authority Act 2003. The management targets, within the LPA, concern the next three years rolling investment strategy, which attracts funding from the Australian Government through the National Action Plan (NAP) and natural Heritage Trust (NHT) (From Lachlan CMA Newsletter Issue 2-winter2006).

The development of the LAP is based on priorities identified by the catchment community. Meetings were held across the catchment to gain feedback on the priority issues. The Lachlan CMA recognises the need to communicate and is seeking

expressions of interest from anyone in the community participating in the program. They need people interested in protecting and enhancing our environment by monitoring resource conditions in their own area. It is essential that CMA is aware of the different initiative available at the same time to avoid duplication of efforts. A coordinated approach with other organisations with same goals would be to the benefit of the community. The Friends of Oolong is prepared to cooperate and should be listen to. They would like to offer all they specific resources, expertise assistance and contribution to form a partnership with all concerned.

They offer: a well-organised administration and experienced volunteers capable to assist with an education program for schools, local communities and individuals, a well organised website to inform communities and landholder to the benefit of conservation on private land with any incentives as they are announced; assistance on how to set targets with the selection of remnants, the study of airphoto and Council crown roads; how to select the suitable corridors to be developed, the classification of the endemic ecosystem; the collection of seeds and their propagation and their supply on the ratio of two shrubs to one tree to produce a balanced reconstructed ecosystem.

On this later account it is to be regretted that in the past the local communities and landholders were supplier with any type of native trees in tube, which had no bearing in relation to the endemic species and mostly neglecting the understorey.

Native seeds are expensive to buy when available and the Friends of Oolong are establishing a bank of seed of endemic species to be germinated as required to suit the local condition and supplied during the initial development period of the projects. The Friends of Oolong are seeking a grant from a suitable Trust so that these seeds will be supplied free. The Friends of Oolong are there to channel any request to the pertinent authority for solution. This would resolve the problem of communication between the several agencies to the satisfaction of all concerned.

While the CMA is a major source of funding and Landcare is still running projects Including the CarbonSMART, The Friends of Oolong is running its programs without any major financial support and now the Oolong Challenge will increase dramatically the work load of all the volunteers involved.

After consultation with the community the Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has a Landcare's Community Support Officer to act as a link between the Landcare network and the Lachlan Catchment management Authority. The officer in this position will be assisting groups and individuals with training, education, planning, and funding applications. The Friends of Oolong are in need of a paid staff to deal with all the increased activities and demands outlined above and should receive similar treatment by the CMA.

The Friends of Oolong
Dalton NSW 2581
PO Box 4017