



Rivers to Ranges project

Government agencies working together to protect biodiversity on public land from the impact of weeds north-east of Melbourne.

Peri-urban Weed Management Partnerships

Rivers to Ranges is one of seven collaborative conservation projects funded through Peri-urban Weed Management Partnerships (PWMP).

In the last five years, the Victorian Government provided \$674,385 for weed control and a project coordinator.

Funding concludes in December 2021. More funding is needed to protect this significant area from weeds and maintain the partnership.

Project Partners

- Nillumbik Shire Council (lead agency)
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
- City of Whittlesea
- Manningham Council
- Parks Victoria
- Melbourne Water
- Trust for Nature

A Hotspot of Biodiversity

The project focuses on a 16,000 hectare network of public land to the north-east of Melbourne including:

- Kinglake National Park
- Warrandyte to Kinglake Habitat Corridor
- Parts of the Yarra River and adjacent land
- Plenty Gorge Park and Plenty River

This area contains a rich diversity of plants, animals and habitats. This biodiversity hotspot:

- connects native habitats from the Yarra River to the Kinglake Ranges
- contains a multitude of rare native orchids found nowhere else, including endangered Rosella Spider-orchid and Charming Spider-orchid
- supports a key population of threatened Brush-tailed Phascogales
- forms a vital migratory stepping stone for Critically Endangered Swift Parrots

Approach

The project applied the following approach:

- Landscape-scale Strategic Planning – Plan for strategic biodiversity conservation at a landscape scale to make the most of limited resources. Improve the impact of works at a local scale by seeking opportunities to work across tenures.
- Effective Project Working Group – Establish shared decision making, foster strong relationships between project partners and harness the capacity of the member groups to benefit all partners.
- Creative Project Coordinator – Coordinate and facilitate the project to respond to emerging threats and opportunities in the project area.
- Adaptive Processes and Accountability – Develop and apply processes to:
 - gather and share information
 - ensure the accountability of project partners and contractors
 - adapt to emerging weed issues

Project Achievements

Weed Control

- Strategically targeted weed control funding following the biosecurity approach (protecting the highest value assets at the greatest risk first)
- Directly treated over 52 different environmental weed species in 11 reserves covering more than 2,862 hectares of critical habitat:
 - Reduced weed cover from an average of 15.7% to 2.8%
 - Removed 279 hectares of weeds
- Contained the spread of *Oxalis micrantha*, a weed never before found in Victoria/Australia.

Resourcing

- Allocated and spent \$674,385.
- Project Partners delivered complementary weed control and other on-ground works across the 120 reserves and 16,261ha of public land in the project area
- Supported the leveraging of about \$1.7 million of additional funds

Collaboration

- Developed and maintained relationships with the 7 project partners and 3 additional participating agencies through the Rivers to Ranges Network (Project Working Group)

- Ran 13 Rivers to Ranges Network meetings, including presentations, 2 site tours and 4 major planning workshops
- Coordination with Conservation Futures project including shared meetings and works plans
- Maintained a relationship with the Nillumbik Landcare Network (NLN) including contributing the NLN Nillumbik Conservation Action Plan
- Drove and supported cross-tenure collaboration across the project area
- Collaborated with or supported other landscape scale projects, networks and strategies in the Port Phillip and Westernport region
- Developed collective strategies for the control of 21 new and emerging weeds

Knowledge

- Developed and reviewed project Operational Plan and AMPR plan, and reserve Works Plans
- Each year produced mid-year and annual reports
- Applied and further refined the Environmental Works Toolkit – a works planning system
- Supported and contributed to biodiversity and threat monitoring, in particular the PMWP weed monitoring program
- Organized Agriculture Victoria Weed Spotters training in identifying and reporting state prohibited weeds

Community Engagement

- Developed a range of education and engagement materials including project signage for reserves, festival banners, fact sheets, articles and videos
- Created a citizen science iNaturalist Project, Nillumbik WeedWatch, to encourage the detection of weeds on public and private land
- Ran a Land Management Mini-Expo providing land management advice to over 50 attendees
- Ran a campaign for the control of emerging weed, South African Weed Orchid – including factsheet mail out to 1950 properties and social media video post (8.8K views and 88 shares)

The Future

The project finishes in December 2021. The Network is seeking funding to maintain and expand on these significant achievements.

For more information contact Nillumbik Shire Council on **03 9433 3111** or environment@nillumbik.vic.gov.au