

6th Creek Catchment Group

July Newsletter

Winter 2003



Project Officer: Katrina Warner
Ph: (08) 8390 1891
Fax: (08) 8390 1598
Email: kwarn@ahc.sa.gov.au

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Call the Project Officer if you are interested in attending these FREE courses. All courses held at Norton Summit

GOOD NEWS FOR THE PROJECT!

The 6th Creek Catchment Group has been successful in obtaining a fourth year of funding from the Federal Government's Natural Heritage Trust. Successful applicants were informed in July, after a long waiting period this year.

This means that we can continue and also expand the work of land rehabilitation which is occurring at a number of locations across the catchment on both public and private land.

Our main focus remains with the protection of native vegetation from weeds, but other important issues we are addressing include water quality protection via fencing and strategic revegetation (in consort with the Torrens Catchment Water Management Board), fire hazard reduction, soil stability and landholder education.

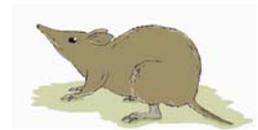
This year we are also undertaking a fox baiting program as an extension of an existing baiting program in the Norton Summit area and also linking in with the South Para Biodiversity Project and ForestrySA baiting program. Landholders interested should contact Sue Delaney (Project Coordinator) on 8390 1995 or Don Cranwell on 0407 728 878 for further information.

Our thanks to the Torrens Catchment Water Management Board for providing some bridging finance this year and also for a very relevant, FREE landholder education program which we will assist them to provide. See details below.

Our remaining uncertainty this year is the question of access to the Norton Summit Service Centre as a base for meetings, courses and project administration. We hope for ongoing access to the building despite it now being closed for Council business.

COMING EVENTS

- AUGUST** *Getting out of the Weed Cycle, Andrew Crompton*
Wed 13th, 20th & 27th
Sun 24th Field Day
- SEPTEMBER** *Understanding your local Vegetation, Andrew Crompton*
Wed 3rd, 9th, 17th & 24th
Sun 21st & 28th Field Days
- OCTOBER** *Learn to grow your local plants, Janet Pedler*
Thurs 16th, 23rd & 30th
Underwater Beasts & Understorey Birds, Janet Pedler
TBA



Are you planning some Revegetation?

Some things you might like to consider...

- ✓ You have attended a small property management and planning course
- ✓ You have a property plan
- ✓ You have fenced off stock from watercourses
- ✓ You have made some progress with reducing the weeds on your property. If not, you only have to ask Don Cranwell and perhaps consult the 6th Creek Catchment Group Information Kit and Meg Robertson's standard reference.

So, what next?

Above all, remember that you may not be able to correct mistakes. Get it right first time! Of course there is no single plan for all situations. But I offer a few ideas and pose some questions you might answer before going any further.

First of all, you should probably consider what you want to achieve. For example, do you want a forest of gum trees? Or do you want to reconstruct the natural vegetation of the area? If the former, perhaps you should consider my comments under "Local Provenance". This article is mainly for people concentrating on the natural vegetation.

The Natural Vegetation

The natural vegetation of our catchment is not all the same – for example, there are obviously areas of stringy bark and others of manna gums. Some parts naturally include many kinds of other bushes; others may be made up predominantly of lower-growing plants such as grasses.

There is no easy way to decide what to call natural vegetation – do we mean pre-Aboriginal settlement or pre-1836 or something else? What do we know about the effect of past or future climatic changes or changing fire regimes? Not all that much.

Perhaps the best we can do is to compare the revegetation site with what appear to be the least disturbed patches of remnant vegetation on a similar slope. Don Cranwell or Katrina Warner may be able to help with this. Older residents may remember the earlier vegetation (helpful but not always reliable).

Assemble a list of species that occur naturally in this vegetation. Has the area been used for intensive grazing? Bear in mind the difficulties you may have with high nitrogen or fertiliser levels.

You have an idea about what the natural vegetation should be, but are you sure that that is what you want? Are you sure that it fits in with your fire risk strategy; will it fit in with your neighbour's wishes; are you sure that you can make a long-term commitment to maintaining it?

Choosing the right moment

Once you have got this far and still want to continue, you will have to think about further weed control. This depends to some extent on the relative amounts of weeds and native plants.

It may be best to assume that there are more native plants than you initially thought. Once major weeds are removed, people are often surprised at the native plants that appear. Except in the most desperate cases, it is certainly worth waiting a few years to see what comes up. Do what you can to remove weeds without disturbing the natives in the meantime.

Even now, do not rush into planting

You will need a plan for the eradication of weeds – or at least those you believe are able to be eradicated. Think about the problems that could arise in dealing with these weeds if you have planted natives among them. And don't forget the dangers of soil erosion if you clear too much vegetation.

Choosing the right plants

“revegetation for biodiversity conservation must plant only species that were originally found in that location, and use seed from plants that are as near as possible to the planting site.” Turner 2001

When you are sure you know what kind of vegetation you want, you know what natives already occur there are you are sure that plantings will not interfere with weed control, you can look for seed or seedling sources.

Get advice on whether it is best to plant trees or grasses or something else first, or whether to plant a mixture right at the beginning. Some plants may, for example, need shade to thrive.

Local Provenance

Like humans, plant species are made up of many genetically different forms, the forms that naturally occur in a particular area are adapted to that area and to the plants and animals that occur there. They may also represent the only plants of that form in the world. So, when you bring plants from outside the area you risk bringing in a form not so well adapted and, more importantly in my opinion, you risk replacing what might otherwise have been a unique local form.

To reword this in technical terminology; by bringing in plants of the local species but from other areas, I believe that you risk reducing biodiversity.

Make sure that all propagating material comes from the closest site you can possibly find. Once you have introduced foreign forms, hybrids may arise and no one can ever reverse the process.

This is an issue with more obvious risks should you decide to plant Australian species that are not native to your area. First, there is the possibility of their becoming weedy. There are already several such species in our catchment (pittosporum and the sallow or Sydney golden wattle are local examples). Secondly, and impossible to control, are the species that hybridise with our local species. Rosemary grevillea is not only an introduced weed in its own right but has also seriously threatened our own lavender grevillea by hybridising with it. Around the world there are many examples of native plants and animals being threatened with extinction, not only competition, but also by hybridisation.

To put it bluntly, is it easier to get rid of exotic pine trees or of the genes that might invade our native flora from the introduction of closely related species?

For sound advice, contact Don or Katrina who can put you in touch with people who can help when they can't, and other resources.

John Jessop

References

Robertson, E.L. (1999) Restoration of grassy woodland. Waitparinga Reserve Management Plan. The National Trust of South Australia, Adelaide – a model revegetation project.

Robertson, M. (1994) Stop Bushland Weeds. The Nature Conservation Society of South Australia Inc., Adelaide – the standard work on controlling weeds in native bush.

Turner, M. (2001) Conserving Adelaide's biodiversity: resources. Urban Forest Biodiversity Program, Adelaide.

PROJECT UPDATE

Torrens Watercourse Management Assistance Program

The Torrens Watercourse Management Assistance Program is a project funded by the Torrens Catchment Water Management Board. It works to assist landholders rehabilitate streams and creeks located within the Torrens Catchment. Currently, the Torrens Watercourse Management Assistance Program involves 22 properties in the Sixth Creek sub-catchment. On ground works for 2002/03 financial year include:

Woody Weed Control

Woody weed control has progressed well along the watercourse this year, with weed control occurring on all properties involved in the program. The Torrens Board has spent over \$12,700 this financial year on weed control. Although this has achieved good results, it is anticipated that woody weed control will be required in future years on some properties.

Revegetation

The Torrens Board has spent \$115,263 this financial year on revegetation. This included 13 properties that planted revegetation along the watercourse this year. Although it was a dry year there was still a reasonable survival rate in many areas.

Revegetation will continue this year moving along the watercourse and in some places increasing the density of plants planted in recent years.

Fencing

Fencing is important to increase the water quality of the creeks and to protect the revegetation. Over \$12,500 has been allocated to fencing this financial year and 5 properties have continued fencing off the creek line in the Sixth Creek area.

The Sixth Creek Catchment Group did not receive any National Action Plan funding this financial year. The Torrens Catchment Water Management Board has, therefore, provided the Group with an extra \$20,000 of works funding this financial year and up to \$3,000 for educational purposes.

The Torrens Catchment Water Management Board is committed the ongoing rehabilitation of the Torrens catchment including the Sixth Creek sub-catchment. It hopes the Torrens Watercourse Management Assistance Program will continue working with the Sixth Creek Catchment Group to rehabilitate Sixth Creek.

Sarah Ryan

Reopening of the Basket Range Recycling Centre

The Basket Range Recycling Centre (next to the Post Office & CFS) is open and filling up fast!

With a new collector, Darren Johns from Balhannah, the Centre will take almost everything – cans, tins, plastics, bottles, paper, cardboard, newspapers and even car batteries! People are encouraged to bring clean recycling material, read the instructions at the Centre and place the materials in the appropriate containers.

We hope that the Centre will operate until the Council provides us with a recycling service in 2004. The Centre may even continue after this time if people wish to recycle this way.

Lois Addison

The 6th Creek Catchment Group is supported by:




Natural Heritage Trust
Helping Communities Helping Australia



Department
for Environment
and Heritage

