

Summer 2006

Newsletter No. 8

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND 3442

Newsletter Editors: Paul & Marie Marmara

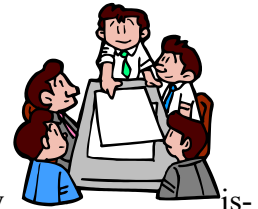
Aims of Newham & District Landcare Group

The Group has the objective of raising awareness of the natural environment amongst the residents of the district. Emphasizing how we can all contribute to the wellbeing of all (humans, plants, water quality and the natural environment) through the raising of knowledge and participation of all in projects that improve the environment of Newham & District.

Your Committee

President: Penny Roberts [5427 0795]
Secretary Roger Rugless [5427 0100]
Treasurer Hilary Roberts [5427 0795]
Past President Jim Sansom [5427 0408]

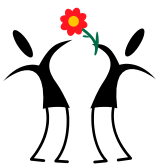
Peter Eisen
Philip Flanagan
Nick Massie
Alice Aird



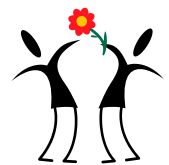
Members are invited to contact the committee on the contact numbers above on any issue.

Special interest groups

If you have any queries, or wish to contribute, please contact the person listed below.



Roadsides: Sue Massie [5427 0065]
Seed bank/seed collection: Penny Roberts [5427 0795]
Newsletter items: Nick Massie [5427 0065]



Upcoming events in Autumn 2006

Property planning sessions Early March to Mid May.

This is a series of five sessions that will show all how to prepare project plans and maps which are needed when applying for funding from any source. It will make it much easier for the Landcare Group to access funding on your behalf if you have participated!! Topics covered will include assessment of property vegetation and soils, revegetation techniques & tools, pest plants & animals and property planning, particularly with respect to planning for broader wildlife landscapes. Participants will receive an aerial photo of their property and learn the skills required to map different transparent layers to sit over it.

Field day: Demonstration of direct drilling – focus on revegetation techniques
Evening speaker meeting: Neville Rosengren [La Trobe University] will present on landscape forms and processes in Macedon Ranges.
Autumn planting day: Depending on the weather!

Firm dates and location details to be advised when confirmed

Achievements - ENVIROFUND (round 7) SUCCESS



We are delighted to announce that just before Christmas we received official notification that our group had been successful with **two** Envirofund applications that were submitted in October. This is federal government money, handled by the Natural Heritage Trust.

This is extremely exciting because it shows confidence in the capacity of our group to undertake these works, and confirms their importance as environmental projects. Successful completion of these works should provide a strong stepping stone for future funding for other works along the Bio-link and along associated waterways.

We would like to acknowledge the support given by John Robinson [Werribee and Maribyrnong Landcare co-ordinator], Lachlan Milne [Shire Environment Officer] and Chris Pollock and Dean Bridgfoot [North Central Landcare co-ordinators].

The applications were:

Trailer-mounted spray unit [valued at \$8,136.00]

Philip Flanagan submitted this application for those of you who feel overwhelmed or physically unable to cope with weeds on your property. The spray unit which is ideal for those large areas will be available for use by members [under certain conditions] from about mid- February. Philip will be the contact person [5427 0336]

Campaspe – Maribyrnong Bio-link [\$26,284.88]

This project is the first stage of a long term plan to protect a watershed catchment area of the Campaspe and Maribyrnong rivers and create a significant corridor of native vegetation (Bio-Link), varying in width from 40 m to over 500 m., between Hanging Rock Reserve in the South and the Cobaw Ranges in the North, a distance of some 10 km.



Two properties will conduct works in this stage, to be completed within eighteen months. These works will involve fencing to protect remnant vegetation and creation of links between these areas, desilting and fencing off a dam / waterway and providing alternative water sources for stock, weed control and planting off indigenous species to protect water quality and limit erosion.

Funding has also been given to support a field day on revegetation techniques, a bio-diversity study, an indigenous site inspection and two other educational events.

This project has been successful because considerable public benefit will accrue for the downstream areas as well as for the divide itself and because it builds on works already done by other landholders – fencing of remnant vegetation, Trust for Nature covenanted land and Land for Wildlife.

[It helps a great deal that the goals of this project align with those of the Water Catchment Authorities and the Macedon Ranges Shire Council!]

If you own land that lies along this bio-link or nearby [including seasonal waterways running into Deep Creek] and wish to find out about funding opportunities please contact Penny Roberts [5427 0795].

Peter Eisen – Newham & District Landcare Committee member has practiced organic weed control for some time and sets out his thoughts in the following article. In summary chemical control is not the only method of weed control.

ORGANIC WEED CONTROL: SENSE OR NONSENSE?

The US Department of agriculture estimates that US, EU and Japanese markets alone will be worth \$100 billion by 2010. Organic farming will be more than ½ of US agriculture by 2020. Australia is currently producing more than \$250 million of organic food annually. It is projected that by 2016 30% of Australian food will be organic. [Ground Cover: Issue 44 April 2003]



If this statement by the Grains Research and Development Corporation is of interest, read on.

I only really know about organic horticulture, having grown lavender and proteas and achieved organic certification. However I believe the underlying principles of organic farming apply to broadacre weed control.

In practice organic farming provides products free of any chemical contaminants. An organic production chain increases long term soil productivity through a sustainable natural fertility system. There are significant environmental benefits in maintaining closed organic farming practices, i.e. feeding plants through the soil with high levels of organic humus rather than by spraying or spreading non-organic fertilizers, and through no synthetic inputs to weed and pest control.

In brief, this kind of weed control depends on disrupting soil as little as possible; using on-farm humus, manure and compost, all of which are cost-effective farming; encouraging growth of clover and native ground cover; mechanical removal of weeds by repeated mowing, flaming and heavy grazing; and NO use of herbicides etc.

I believe it is labour intensive only in bursts of activity, that overall there is considerable cost containment and better time management. Weed control occurs in the main at times of rapid weed growth. Willows, gorse and so on are containable, and with diligence can be eradicated.

A few links that may be of interest:

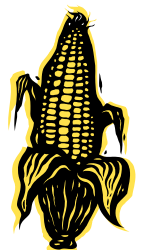
Diverse weed control methods: www.northcoastweeds.org.au/intweedmgt.htm

A governmental perspective: www.rirdc.gov.au/ORG and follow internal links

A respected source: www.grdc.com.au/growers/gc/gc44/organic_farming.htm

For the academics: www.une.au/agronomy/agssystem/organic/research/ext_com.htm

A well regarded organic certification organization with lots of information: www.nasaa.com.au



December 3rd Social Gathering

About 35 members gathered for our traditional Christmas Social [first one in a row!] at the Newham Hall. This was a very pleasant Saturday evening where we had nothing to do but enjoy each others company.

As usual, there was plenty to eat and plenty to talk about as well as a variety of games.....tennis, croquet, mini-golf, soccer and quoits....to keep everyone occupied.

The highlight of the night was the inaugural annual egg tossing competition, which attracted a world class field. After a fierce battle in fading light, the 2005 title was won by the team of Chris Wiggett and Philip Flanagan who lasted until the 15 meter mark.

Many thanks to all comers who made this event a success by providing good company and really yummy food for the shared table.



Jim Sansom, Alice Aird, Horst and Julianne Telbach, Penny Roberts



Keith Wygett, Colleen, Phil Flanagan, Nick Massie

Roadside Weeds Project.

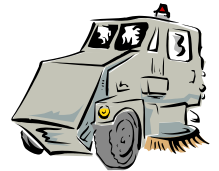
The Roadside Vegetation Group wrote to Lachlan Milne, Environment Resource Office MRSC requesting Council undertake weed control works in the Newham area and on 17 October 2005, Lachlan advised that as part of the Council's roadside weed control programme work would be carried out on Dons Road, Egans Lane and Jim Road, early in the New Year. Colwells Road will be addressed in the 2006/7.

The group will monitor the effectiveness of the programme and on 11 January 2006 three members have been trained by Lachlan on the methodology of assessing and recording the level of infestation for the Council's data base for the roads noted above.

Lachlan will write to those Landholders whose properties may be affected by the weed control programme advising them that the work is being taken in partnership with the Newham Landcare Group.



Clean Up Australia Day - 5th March 2006



A clean up site for Newham Landcare is being registered for this year's clean-up, so please consider taking part. A notice board for Newham Landcare is to be placed on the veranda of the Newham General Store. Please check this board for details of the clean-up day or alternatively on the Clean-up Australia Days web page.

Some interesting Web sites

The following web sites have some excellent information, topics such as Biodiversity through to Code of accepted farming practice for the welfare of sheep.

The amount of quality free information available on the internet is incredible.

If you don't have a computer try the Library or ask a friend.

Greening Australia
Department Natural Resources & Environment
Landcare Notes and Agnotes
index.htm

<http://vicnet.net.au/~gavic>
<http://www.nre.vic.gov.au>
<http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/notes/>

Information Victoria
Creswick Landcare Centre
Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
Royal Botanical Gardens Melbourne

<http://www.information.vic.gov.au>
<http://users.netconnect.com.au/~gpark/>
<http://calcite.apana.org.au/fncv/>
<http://rbgmelb.org.au>



What's happening along the Newham Deep Creek.



By Jim Sansom, convener of the Newham Deep Creek Project.

Much has taken place since the last Newsletter. The most significant thing for the NDC Project (and in the future, for a lot of other creeks in the Newham Landcare District) is the fact that on the 18th of November 2005, Melbourne Water became the official manager for all waterways in the Maribyrnong Catchment.

Newham Deep Creek is right up in the very headwaters of this catchment and so what happens in this little stretch of creek (and in a number of similar creeks in the area) is significant for the whole catchment. The health of streams in our area and the quality of the water is very important for the entire Maribyrnong river system.

Melbourne Water is a large, highly professional organization with considerable resources of finance and scientific and engineering expertise. It is widely recognised as an innovative body with a forward-looking approach to river management.

Senior people from Melbourne Water first visited our area in September last year, largely because of the interest shown by some of our landholders in the Stream Frontage Management Program – run by Melbourne Water.

Then, at the invitation of the Landcare Group, Dr. Rob Ferguson (a stream specialist from Melbourne Water) returned in October to walk the whole length of the NDC to make a preliminary assessment of the creek and to meet some of the landholders.

A formal Meeting was held in the Newham Hall on December the 8th during which Rob Ferguson addressed landholders along the Newham Deep Creek (and a number of other Landcare members) to announce what Melbourne Water could do.

Was it a case of just being in the right place at the right time?

It was announced that \$80 000 would be made available for 'capital works' along the 3.5 km of the Newham Deep Creek. This is a 'one off' grant (not a \$ for \$ subsidy) to enable the big stuff to be tackled – i.e. removal of large willows and works to stabilise the stream channel.

Everybody at the meeting was delighted at the prospect of this large grant and it goes to show how community spirit and a demonstrated enthusiasm to improve the environment of a small creek, can pay-off! Our thanks to Rob Ferguson and the others at Melbourne Water who were in there battling for us!

Contracts are to be let early in 2006 and work should commence by mid March if all goes well.

It should be emphasized that at every step in the design and execution of this work complete discussion will take place with the individual landholders.

In no sense is this a case of Melbourne 'barging in and doing its own thing'! We are getting this assistance ahead of hundreds of other possible projects around the catchment!

One final note: only this week I had a call from Melbourne Water indicating that they would like the Newham Deep Creek to become part of a **long-term scientific study** evaluating the results of major works carried out to improve stream environments. Involvement in the Newham Deep Creek Project is an exciting and rewarding experience for me and I would be happy to discuss progress with anyone who wants further information.