

## Regional Subdivision and Infrastructure Development Control Plan (DCP)

A Regional Subdivision and Infrastructure DCP for the Upper Hunter region is being developed which incorporates the "Auspec" Guidelines (design & construction specifications) and additional information promoting the sustainable management of water resources, risk management issues, wetland construction and solar access for housing lots.

## Central Coast Rehabilitation and Protection Project

This project is developing, on behalf of the Councils and Catchment Management Authority, a rehabilitation and protection strategy for the regionally significant ecosystems in the Central Coast including riparian areas, foreshore areas, wetlands, regional corridors and dunal systems.

## Regional Roadside Environment Project

The Regional Roadside Environmental Management Project is developing a strategy, implementation plan and training resources to assist Councils in undertaking coordinated management of roadsides to protect of remnant vegetation and minimise the impact of road maintenance and construction on the surrounding environment.

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# Hunter and Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy



An initiative of the Local Governments of Gosford, Wyong, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Cessnock, Maitland, Singleton, Muswellbrook, Upper Hunter, Dungog, Gloucester, Great Lakes and Greater Taree.

# About HCCREMS

The Hunter and Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy (HCCREMS) is an innovative and highly successful regional initiative being implemented through the collaborative efforts of fourteen Councils in the Hunter, Central and Lower North Coast of NSW.

HCCREMS seeks to facilitate a regional approach to ecologically sustainable development by actively encouraging greater co-operation between member Councils, state and federal authorities, industry and community groups.

The original Lower Hunter and Central Coast project (LHCCREMS) was developed in 1995 through an extensive twelve-month regional community consultation process using the Agenda 21 model. Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Cessnock, Gosford and Wyong Councils endorsed the LHCCREMS Strategy in early 1996. Implementation then commenced based on the prioritisation of a range of key regional issues identified in the consultation phase of its development. In 2002, the project was extended to include the Upper Hunter Councils of Singleton, Muswellbrook, Scone, Murrumbidgee, Merriwa, Dungog, Gloucester and Great Lakes, and in 2004, Greater Taree City Council was welcomed to the program.

HCCREMS is supported by the Environment Division of Hunter Councils (a Regional Organisation of Councils).



## Why a regional strategy?

HCCREMS has become widely regarded as a model approach to integrating local government planning and environmental management at the regional level. It:

- provides a framework for co-ordinated action in relation to environmental management issues impacting on the region
- addresses those environmental and natural resource issues that are best managed at a regional scale (e.g. biodiversity conservation and water quality management are key issues which require a broad management approach that transcends arbitrary institutional boundaries)
- facilitates regional partnerships and resource sharing to address key environmental management issues in a co-ordinated, pro-active and efficient manner

## Achievements to date

- Councils of the region have remained working collaboratively to achieve strategic regional environmental management outcomes since 1996
- The design and delivery of a wide range of regional environmental management programs, and provision of active input to key regional planning strategies and natural resource management programs
- The program has grown from one staff member and a \$140,000 annual budget in 1996 to eight full time staff and a \$1.6 million budget in 2004
- The establishment of strong and cooperative working partnerships with state and federal Government agencies, the Catchment Management Authority, community networks and non-government organisations
- Achieved strong community approval, a national profile, and numerous awards for council leadership, innovation and a commitment to coordinated and effective environmental management on a regional basis

# Current Projects

## Regional Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

The Regional Biodiversity Strategy is a unique and award-winning project. The project has developed a strategy and implementation plan to protect the natural biological diversity of the Lower Hunter and Central Coast, in order to maintain existing ecological processes for future generations. It enhances integration of biodiversity information into current and future land use planning processes, providing greater certainty to land managers.

The seven-year project mapped and assessed the conservation value of all land within the Lower Hunter and Central Coast to guide future planning and development within the region. It has provided extensive data and mapping resources to Councils, training, educational programs and a range of policy tools. Councils have endorsed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement the Biodiversity Conservation strategy in their LGAs.

A 10 year strategy has now been developed for biodiversity mapping and management throughout the entire Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority region. Data collection and mapping work in Singleton, Muswellbrook, Upper Hunter, Gloucester and Dungog local government areas will be finalised in 2005.



## Urban Water Cycle Management

HCCREMS is involved in a suite of projects designed to encourage innovation, and enhanced understanding and management of the urban water cycle. After delivering an 18-month professional capacity building program for Council staff and catchment managers, as well as developing, regional planning and management tools and a nationally recognised Design Guide for Water Sensitive Urban Design, the program is currently focussing on:

1. Production of an Urban Water Cycle Management training toolkit for all NSW Councils.
2. A 3-year research program into applied Urban Water Cycle Management.
3. Stormwater management extension services to assist and support Councils with water management policies and practices.
4. Research and production of planning guidelines which allow the tuning of urban design and planning practices to meet the ecological needs of receiving water bodies.

## State of the Environment Reporting (SOER)

The SOER project involves the design and development of a framework for improved State of the Environment reporting in the region. HCCREMS has focused on the delivery of a capacity building program for councils, improved linkages to corporate management plans, improved monitoring of environmental management issues, and collaborative regional data collection. HCCREMS is also facilitating an SOER writers network who meet regularly to share information, resources and ideas to assist improved SOER implementation.

## Regional Weeds Program

The Regional Weeds Program supports the Councils of the Hunter and Central Coast region in partnership with NSW Agriculture, and the Upper and Lower Hunter Regional Weeds Management Committees.

The program continues to increase the understanding and appreciation of the impact of noxious and environmental weeds on the region, as well as encourage stakeholder commitment of time and resources to manage the issue strategically. Councils and Weeds Authorities are also mapping and monitoring weed infestations to assist in their management regime.



## Regional Coastcare Facilitator Program

The Regional Coastcare Facilitator program is providing an accessible, regional source of technical and specialist advice for issues relating to the coast, estuarine and marine environment to the Hunter-Central Rivers CMA, the local community, Local Government, agencies, stakeholders and industry groups across the region. The position assists in the design, implementation and promotion of strategic coastal, estuarine and marine management initiatives.