

Habitat 141° Wimmera Rivers, Woodlands and Wetlands gathering – 25th March, 2015

Attendees:

Bryan Haywood (Nature Glenelg Trust), Jess Gardner (H141 Wimmera Project Officer Greening Australia), Ellie Clarke (Trust for Nature), Stuart Haradine (Parks Victoria), Brendan Foran (CEO Greening Australia), Adam Blake (Wimmera Manager Trust for Nature), Jenny Rowland (Victoria National Parks Association, Jilapanger private conservation reserve), Ewan Moore (private conservation reserve - vice president Victoria National Parks Association), Paul Tant (Community Development Manager Bank MECU Ballarat), Gill Hopkins (Laharam Landcare Group President), Dave Warne (Greening Australia regional manager, Portland), Zoe Wilkinson (Area Chief Ranger, Parks Victoria), Rachael Lloyd (Kowree Farm Tree Group landcare facilitator), Kim Volk (Conservation Volunteers Australia), Ron Dodds (Habitat 141 Alliance Chair), David McClaren (private conservation reserve, Nurcoung), Pamela Lloyd (private conservation reserve, Nurcoung), Iestyn Hosking (Natimuk Landcare, Bankmecu Landbank manager, private conservation reserves, Grass Flat & Clear Lake), Heather Phillips (Horsham Rural City Councillor, private conservation reserve), Steven Lynch (Bankmecu), Nikki Jordan (Bankmecu), Andrew Brady (Farmer, President of Kowree Farm Tree Group), Abigail Goodman (Natural Resources South East, Red-tail Black Cockatoo Recovery Group), Stephen Schultz (Department of Environment, Land & Water Planning), Geraldine Ryan (The Wilderness Society, individual), Rachel Farren (Farmer, Kowree Farm Tree Group), Paul Skeen (Wimmera Catchment Management Authority).

Apologies:

Richard Hughes (The Wilderness Society), Ben Carr (The Nature Conservancy), Frank Carland (Vicroads), Cassie Hlava (Natural Resources South East), Mark Bachmann (Natural Glenelg Trust), Ken & Katrina Jones (Bush Repair, private conservation reserve, west Wimmera), Mauro Baracco (RMIT).

Welcome from Andrew Brady (summary of previous year)

- Finished off South West Wimmera CAP plan.
- Plan presented last year
- Implemented communication in Zone 2; website, monthly newsletters, consultation survey with people interested in the project.
- Greening Australia has a plan for the overall H141°
- Next step: how do we get on with it?

Ron Dodds – Chairman of the H141 Alliance

Big picture with H141

H141° has been a work in progress for a long time

In 2013 it was decided that H141° needs a governance model. However to set up a governance organisation is costly and just adds an extra layer. Instead an alliance group has been set up with a Memorandum of Understanding between the following key groups:

- Greening Australia
 - Conservation Volunteers Australia
 - Trust for Nature
 - Parks Victoria
 - Natural Resources South East
 - Natural Resources SA Murray-Darling Basin
 - Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources
 - Wimmera Catchment Management Authority
 - Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
 - Mallee Catchment Management Authority
1. Purpose of Alliance
 - Terms of reference: provide strategic direction, leadership, communication and cooperation
 - Facilitate delivery of the vision
 - Align organisational objectives with the vision
 2. Objectives of the Alliance
 - 5 key areas: Planning, communication, resourcing, governance, review
 3. Mode of Operation
 - Share information between organisation to make sure H141° plan happens
 - Chairperson selected each time MOU is reviewed (ever 4 years)

The First meeting of the Alliance discussed the new Whole of Landscape Plan, Draft Strategic Plan, Draft Promotional Brochure and the new website.

Priority actions for the Alliance will be:

- Whole of landscape plan brochure (May 20th launch)
- Complete strategic plan and implement
- Launch website
- Meet with Vic minister for environment, climate change and water
- Follow up meeting with SA minister

Brendan Foran CEO of Greening Australia announcements:

Greening Australia is a 32 year old organisation originally founded by Malcom Fraser. H141° influences big picture thinking about issues and opportunities in GA. The key vision for GA is; Healthy and productive landscapes where people and nature thrive. GA is funded from private sources, tendering, sponsorship, membership and contracting. Greening Australia at the present time is the largest standing infrastructure in environmental restoration.

In terms of H141° this is a marathon not a sprint.

GA commitment to H141^o: Greening Australia has managed to rollover Alcoa sponsorship of 2.1 million. Of this fundraising effort, half will go towards H141^o. A new signed agreement with Accor hotel chains for H141^o and biodiversity fund project on the SA side of border.

Geoff Handbury has extended his support of H141^o for 1 million dollars for 5 years. Greening Australia is very committed to this region. There is a desire for greater connection between high level things and things happening on the ground. How do we translate big picture into on the ground.

Dave Warne – Greening Australia Regional Manager

H141^o whole of landscape framework: ‘Fixing’ smaller parts of the landscape will only work if there are other parts for it to join into. Projects within zones will fit with other projects to achieve the overall habitat goals, achievements within zones will build on work within with other zones to increase overall habitat connectivity.

The CAP plans identify critical areas that will be unrepairable in 10 – 15 years (6 most endangered). For H141^o to achieve its goal there are 53,000 ha of protection works to be made for the 6 most endangered areas (within the next 10 – 15 years).

For the 1st time we really know what we want to do and why we want to do it and now we can talk about what happens if we don’t do it.

Jess Gardner – H141^o new website preview

A new H141^o website for the overall alliance has been set up. This will be simpler, using simpler language, more visually appealing, easier to search (get more hits), and will link to organisations and other zones. The aim of this website is to attract people to explore further with only key messages displayed. Further information e.g. plans, zone information, will be available to download or access via links. Feedback will be helpful to finalising the website.

Zone 2 the most active zone in terms of meeting on a regular basis and communicating. A direct link to our “Wimmera Rivers, Woodlands and Wetlands” page will exist increasing the profile of our site also.

Brochure will be available to be downloaded (going through approval process). This will mean that all organisations will be able to promote H141 and get people involved.

Rachael Lloyd – consultation and online survey (please refer to “H1410 Wimmera Rivers, Woodlands and Wetlands 2015 survey results”)

Thanks to all those who participated in the online survey and interviews.

Interviews and online survey reflects the most important elements to participants (these were in agreement). Most agreed that many elements would work if top 4 elements were working.

Suggested improvements: further collaboration, diversify in funding, branding promotion/present achievements/ clearer goals and strategies

Discussion 1: Responding to survey results

- 75% of respondents said don't forget about Government funding, so this is a consideration although private funding sources were being more actively pursued.

Need to promote achievements so far of H141

- There is a need to be clear about which projects can be used (or badged as H141) to promote the H141 brand and promote the H141 vision.
- There are example of projects not being used to promote H141 because of lack of clarity over what is a H141 project and what does that mean.
- Bank Mecu attracted to area because of H141 vision, would like to see project promoted more through H141
- Concerns with doubling up of reporting
- Should it matter if something is already reported on if it is still achieving the H141 planned outcomes
- Suggestion for a more visual ways of showing work – colour coding so work is shown but still badged as project of organisation
- The CMA is creating a method for reporting all projects in the area through mapping which may tie in with highlighting H141 achievements.
- Each group involved in H141 needs to promote the vision much more actively.

Governance

- A lot of people want to contribute but there is a lot of gaps, we need to fill the gaps.
- Alliance members need to commit to H141 vision and contribute to the labelling. It has taken a long time to get the alliance together to work as one. So we are now more at a stage where we have things documented and backed up to achieve a strategy to do this.
- In a vision this big you need as many of the influential stakeholders behind the vision as possible. Greening Australia is happy to take lead in pushing for political recognition of H141 as an organisation that is not reliant on government funding. They are also happy to do this with promotions. Greening Australia is also happy to work with partners who are working on the ground to achieve vision on the ground.
- This group needs to work through how to translate the high level to the low level.
- Focus on what is possible, not what is perfect.

Bryan Haywood – Glenelg Nature Trust “Eaglehawk Waterhole”

Project: 700 ha Tagella

Glenelg Nature Trust is funded through: Grant funded project work, professional consulting service, public fund (philanthropy)

The block was purchased through : Native vegetation council – offset policy (80% of purchase + Nature foundation SA)

Block up above Francis – 3 blocks 700 to 800ha each

Mapping from 1800s show original vegetation type across the block. The dominant vegetation types are blue gum (yellow gum to Victorians)+ stringy bark and bits of bullock. This was a high priority purchase due to gilga (temporary wetlands), large hollow trees. The block also was a good size and location, great condition before purchase, good diversity of species, accessible to community which added to the decision to purchase it.

The block has been divided up into management units. A lot of the habitat areas are still in good condition and are likely to revegetate themselves.

Plan for property – secure/ manage and restore/ protect. First two almost completed, weed and feral animal management underway, whole property under heritage agreement.

The current revegetation works are resources via the following 3 projects: Landscape links (Natural Resources South East), 20 million trees (Federal Government) and Alcoa 1 million trees (Greening Australia).

Euan Moore – Victoria National Parks Association & private conservation reserve manager, Jilpanger

Block was purchased collaboratively.

Restoration has taken place through weed management (main weeds were phalaris which has been hand weeded and African velt grass which has been treated via spraying and weeding) and protection. A 100 year lease was taken out on the surrounding roads to protect the block.

A productive focus of the block has been to identify bird, mammal, reptile, invertebrate, plant and fungi species and enter these into online databases (Atlas of Living Australia) to create records of what exists at the properties. This has been achieved through monitoring when the block is visited and through wildlife cameras.

(note comment from Steffen Schultz: “The Victorian Biodiversity Atlas automatically updates the Atlas of Living Australia but not the other way around” – important to update both as relates to legislation)

The property is under a trust for nature covenant.

Victoria National Parks Association is really keen to be more involved with Habitat 141°. In particular Euan emphasised that it doesn't always have to be tree planting. Volunteers want to and can help with:

- Monitoring – bush searches – concerned about emerging weed African Orchid
- Mapping – eg. rabbit warrens
- Weed control (eg. boneseed is best handweeded)
- Camera monitoring
- Seed collection

There is a desire for more technical support and sharing opportunities for private conservation managers and especially absentee landholders who may not yet belong to the local landcare group.

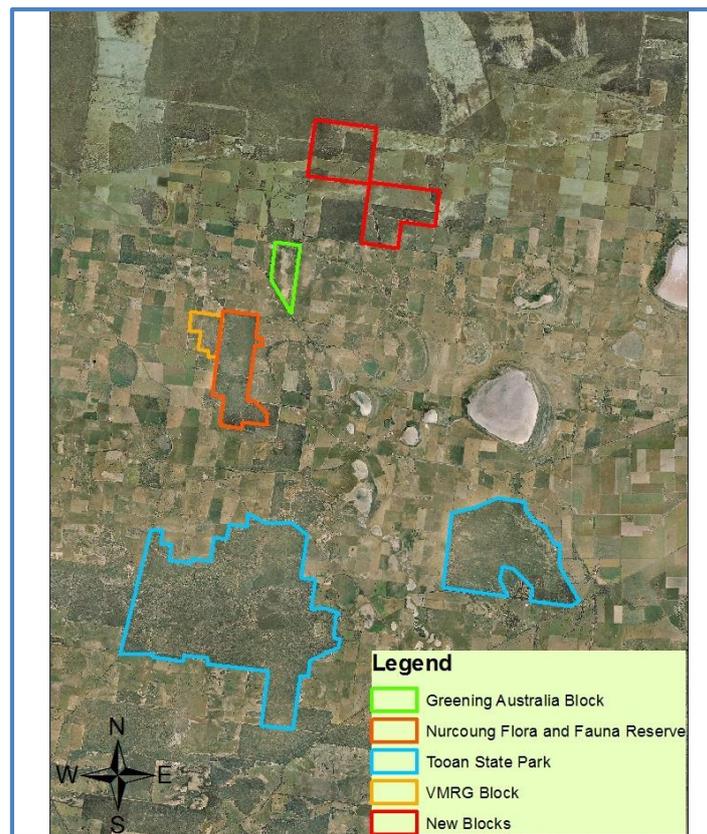
Nikki Jordon – Bankmecu landbank promotional video

An example of a good marketing tool and a great project – check out the link

<http://www.bankmecu.com.au/why-bank-with-us/sustainability-and-community/our-conservation-landbank.html>

Jess Gardner – Property purchase opportunity

A property purchase opportunity exists in the northern part of the Nurcoung Malleefowl Corridor just below the Little Desert National Park. The landholder is only talking to us, would like to see it go to conservation but obviously just can't give it away. A significant strategically placed addition to the emerging corridor.



2 titles, 600 ha and 400ha respectively – equal parts remnant and cleared

Key species discovered on property – malleefowl x2 active nests, hooded robin, forked spyridium, silky mouse, red-tail black cockatoo.

Title 1 - \$275,000

Discussion 2: Revegetation of privately purchased land

How to purchase private land for re-vege when there is a Landholder willing to sell for H141°.

Past success: Original Nurcong block has been purchased by Carbon Funds, Bankmecu landbank, Eaglehawk waterhole and private individual and collective purchases.

Possible ideas: Crowd funding possibility to purchase, buy a block and restore the things for you and leave the rest for farming? (600 ha), buy the block subdivide and sell farmland (small farmland blocks aren't viable out there), subdivide and lease to pay for management.

Possibility to utilise offset funds e.g. Horsham City Council, Housing development people. Idea has been discussed before about the benefits of having an offset bank. Maybe more pressure has been applied.

How can H141° be used to support the purchase of this block and other blocks like this?

- who is going to manage it into the future. If there are people and support mechanisms in place for ongoing management needs to be part of plan to buy it.
- Look into cooperative type arrangements; How do we encourage property co-operatives? Could have a property section on the H141 page. Promote the story through the websites of partnership organisations/ pictures.
- Relaunch of H141 website – invite potential investors (property purchase) to launch to get them familiar with the project. (Possibly launch the crowd funding there). Groups have membership base that can be attracted.

What attracts people to buy a block of land for conservation?

- Finding out about the area through community organisation (Mallee Fowl group) and got to know area through tree planting days.
- The fact that there is so much support for doing these types of activities, technical skills in revegetation. Creating a network of sharing skills e.g. how to use a wildlife camera, how to treat phalaris and velt grass. Taking away some of the concerns and challenges would make this more appealing.
- People attracted to the assets on this land e.g. flame heath or potential industry (wallaby grass harvest).

Where to from here? Job List

- Direct traffic on the web through member organisation websites to promote the H141 idea. What is the focal point to get people to want to have a look?
- Use the launch day as a focal point – launching point to attract people to the H141 idea.
- Steering committee is currently only a group of 5 that wants to expand be more inclusive: The steering committee will send out notifications before and after steering group meetings to give people the chance to come along. The steering group will do the work set at this meeting and share ideas with the wider group when things haven't worked to think of fresh ideas.
- Wider group responsibility: To promote the vision by sharing projects and stories that can promote H141. To share ideas when things haven't worked. To meet up with the bigger group every 6 months/ a year