

WATER SUPPLY CATCHMENT STREAM BANK PROTECTION POLICY

1. Objective

To support rural land owners in the drinking water supply catchment to manage their stream banks in a manner which protects and enhances the integrity of Tweed Shires raw water supply.

2. Applicable Sub-catchments

The Tweed River sub-catchments contributing to the town water supply and covered by this policy include:

- The Upper Tweed River (including Kunghur Creek, Midginbil Creek, Perch Creek, Sunday Creek and tributaries)
- Clarrie Hall Dam Catchment (including Doon Doon Creek, Commissioners Creek and tributaries)
- Rowland's Creek and Chowan Creek
- Smiths Creek
- The Upper and Lower Oxley River (including Tyalgum Creek, Brays Creek, Back Creek, Fowlers Creek, Pumpenbil Creek, Wollumbin Creeks and tributaries)
- Byrrell Creek (including Cedar Creek, Kunghurloo Creek, Cabbage Tree Creeks and tributaries).

3. Rationale

Tweed Council has responsibility for the provision of water to over 70, 000 residents within the Shire, and all water is sourced directly from the Tweed River. It is vital to the wellbeing of our community, in terms of health and economic activity, that our water source be protected. To achieve this, Council must take an active role in protecting the environmental health of the freshwater reaches of the Tweed River.

The health of the Tweed River and the quality of water that flows through it is directly related to the condition of land adjacent to the banks of the river and its smaller tributary streams. Because most of this land is in private ownership, land holders who are protecting streams supply a vital service to the community, and should be supported to do this.

Where riparian land management does not conform to broadly recognised principals of best practice, it is in the community's interest to assist landholders to improve their performance. As a minimum standard, Council should aspire to provide off stream water access to cattle where ever practical, to reduce the amount of manure being deposited directly into the river. This is a key activity in reducing the risk of Giardia or Cryptosporidium out breaks in the shire's water supply.

Traditionally Council has concentrated its water management resources in the field of engineering, and this has required major investment in facilities such as water treatment plants, reservoirs and pipe networks.

Through adoption of this policy, Council will implement a River Health Grants program, which will financially support rural land owners in managing their stream banks.

4. Implementation

The aim of Councils River Health Grant Program is to improve and protect water quality. To achieve this, the scheme will supply funding to rural land holders to target the typical problems found on our river banks including erosion and weed infestation. To improve the hygiene of our water supplies, a priority activity will be to supply off-stream stock watering points throughout the catchment.

In almost all situations, healthy river banks are associated with healthy native vegetation. Where practical, revegetation of bare river banks will be encouraged, for water quality benefit, as well as the important role stream bank vegetation plays in protecting wildlife.

5. Eligible Landholders and Activities

- Applicants for assistance under the River Health Grants Scheme should own land zoned rural under Councils planning scheme.
- Generally, a minimum bank length of 100 metres will be considered for funding.
- Subject to agreement and design, funding will be provided for:
 - Fencing, permanent or electric (materials, not labour).
 - Stock drinking troughs – (materials, not installation)
 - Erosion stabilisation – (design, materials, equipment).
 - Revegetation - (minimum width 10 metres – materials and some maintenance).
 - Stabilising stock stream access or crossing points - (design, materials, equipment).
 - Weed control – (primary control, consumables and tuition in appropriate techniques).
 - Maintenance of sites.

6. Selection Process

Applications will be selected based on the potential improvement they can make to the health of the Tweed River and its Water Quality. Value for money will be a factor of consideration, so projects that include a significant land owner commitment to costs will be viewed favourably. Project proposals that achieve multiple aims, for example improving water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat, will also be

prioritised. A panel comprised of Council, State Government and community representatives will be convened to select between projects if the demand exceeds funding availability.

7. Land owner obligations

- Participation in this project does not change the ownership rights of the land owner in any way.
- Land owners will be asked to sign an agreement with Council confirming their intention to complete and maintain stated works, in a certain time frame, for a nominated sum. The basis of the agreement will be good faith.
- Landowners will be expected to maintain their projects in the long term, however they will be eligible for maintenance assistance in the first three years after completion of works.
- Allow access by Council to inspect works or use the site for monitoring or promotion purposes (subject to notification).

8. Funding

The River Health Grants Program will be funded through the Catchment Water Quality Budget.