

## *Executive Summary*

**Greenlink** is a \$1million community based project, supported in part by Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funds, that aims to establish a link between areas of remnant vegetation in the Warringah, Pittwater and Manly Local Government Areas of Sydney by coordinating the on ground works of volunteer groups and other organisations. The project has funding allocated for the period 2000 / 2001.

The inspiration for Greenlink came from the Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils' *Green Web-Sydney: A Vegetation Management Plan for the Sydney Region*. The plan identified areas of existing remnant bushland and proposed revegetation sites along corridors, aiming to increase habitat areas and allow for movement and genetic exchange of flora and fauna. This document has recently been adopted as a blueprint for the distribution of grant funds throughout Sydney.

Greenlink also seeks to develop links and cooperative relationships with industry, schools, Councils and communities in the area. Thus publicity, education, recruitment and liaison are important facets of the project. Highlighting Greenlink's status as a true community project is the fact that the project's proponent, *Northern Beaches Envirolink Inc* (NBE), is an entirely voluntary organisation with no external funding or administrative support.

The project area now stretches from McKillop Reserve, Harbord in the south to the Warriewood Wetlands in the north. It follows the lines of Dee Why and South Creeks, the north shore of Narrabeen Lagoon and includes the Warriewood Wetlands area.

### *Project Growth*

Greenlink has grown considerably in terms of area covered and groups involved since it commenced. The following table demonstrates this growth and outlines the sites and projects involved in Greenlink.

*Figure 1: Greenlink participant groups.*

<b>Original Groups (1999)</b>		
<b>Group</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Project</b>
1. Reefcare	Long Reef Point	Grassland restoration
2. Friends of Dee Why Lagoon	Dee Why Lagoon	Wetland rehabilitation, bush regeneration
3. Warringah Council	Wildlife Refuge	
4. OzGREEN	Dee Why Wetlands	Riparian rehabilitation
5. Thursday Gardeners,	South Creek	Riparian rehabilitation, bush regeneration
6. Northside Enterprises		
7. Pittwater Council	North shore of Narrabeen Lagoon	Bush regeneration, track construction
8. Friends of Warriewood Wetlands, Pittwater Council	Warriewood Wetlands	Bush regeneration, revegetation, habitat restoration
<b>New Groups / Areas 2000</b>		
Warringah Council	Jamieson Park	Bush regeneration, track construction
9. Friends of Deep Creek	Deep Creek Reserve	Bush regeneration, trail rehabilitation
<b>New Groups / Areas 2001</b>		
10. Friends of McKillop Reserve	McKillop Reserve, Harbord	Bush regeneration, habitat restoration, revegetation.
11. Heron Place Bushcare, Warringah Council	Dee Why Creek	Revegetation, riparian rehabilitation
12. Friends of Anzac Reserve	Anzac Reserve	Bush regeneration, track construction.
13. Friends of South Creek	South Creek Beacon Hill	Riparian rehabilitation, bush regeneration
14. Manly Council	Seaforth Oval	Revegetation

### ***Stakeholder Contributions***

The Natural Heritage Trust grant for Greenlink in 2000 / 2001 totaled \$302,000, providing the foundation for the project. Budget allocations allowed for expenditure on a part-time Project Officer's salary and materials related to the various project components. Typical expenditure items include tubestock, contractors, earthworks, erosion control materials, herbicide and transport expenses for *Conservation Volunteers Australia* workers.

This amount was matched by contributions from Warringah, Pittwater and Manly Councils and a considerable volunteer input. Over the project period, these contributions have exceeded expectations, demonstrating a high level of support from the stakeholders and the community. The following figure depicts the planned contributions against what has actually been spent in 2000 / 2001.

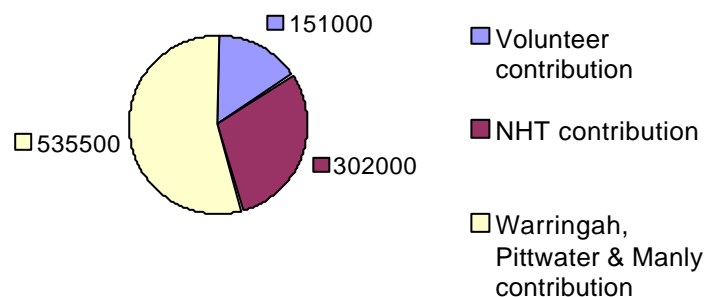
*Figure 2: Planned v Actual contributions 2000 / 2001.*

	<b>Planned contribution</b>	<b>Actual contribution</b>	<b>% Variation</b>
<b><i>Volunteer input</i></b>	\$135,000	\$151,000	+12%
<b><i>Council input</i></b>	\$359,000	\$535,500	+50%
<b><i>NHT input</i></b>	\$302,000	\$302,000	0%

The contributions from the Councils have taken the form of actual financial input and in-kind support. The major cost for Contributor 1 has been to pay for contractors to support, complement and build upon the work done by volunteers in the various reserves. They have also funded tubestock, fencing materials, mulch and other materials used in revegetation and erosion control.

The Community volunteers' contribution has been time spent on the actual project work sites. This is calculated at \$15 per hour, thus the input of approximately 10,080 hours (excluding administrative time) equates to a value of over \$151,000. This is an outstanding achievement and irrefutable evidence of the volunteers' commitment to improved environmental outcomes across the region.

*Figure 3: Relative dollar values of Greenlink contributors*



The establishment of **Northern Beaches Envirolink** as a community group during this time has also been a remarkable accomplishment. The group has managed to overcome various challenges and obstacles as well as successfully coordinate Greenlink to its current position as an exemplary community driven project. The dedication displayed by this wholly voluntary group has been remarkable.

***Environmental Outcomes***

Natural Heritage Trust funds have paid for over 10,500 tubestock grown from seed collected from the various reserves in the project area. The three councils have also planted in excess of 4,000 tubestock and more mature plants within the project area. The local nurseries have devoted considerable attention to the provision of site specific stock to maintain the genetic integrity of the existing vegetation. These tubestock were only planted in areas that were too degraded for natural regeneration to take place, such as mown edges of playing fields, or highly degraded riparian zones.

These plants were all planted by volunteers, either as part of the regular project work days, or on specific planting days. The National Tree Planting Day event along Dee Why Creek attracted approximately thirty participants, and close to 700 trees were planted. Local schools have been involved in several tree planting activities in a variety of locations. These days have been organised by OzGREEN and Manly Council and have made considerable improvements to several highly degraded areas. The local Councils and the volunteer groups have undertaken to maintain these planted areas.

In addition to this revegetation work, Greenlink projects have included a wide range of bush regeneration, riparian zone restoration and stabilisation of erodible land. This has resulted in a significant increase in the vegetated area surrounding Dee Why Creek, the removal of willows at the top of South Creek, and greatly improved potential for the long term survival of several Endangered Ecological Communities (including Sydney Freshwater Swamp Community and Sydney Coastal Estuary Swamp Forest Complex).

***Publicity and Sponsorship***

Greenlink has steadily built a prominent public profile. The installation of Greenlink project signs in 2001 has drawn attention to the project sites and an up to date mailing list ensures that even 'once-off' visitors to Greenlink sites are informed of forthcoming events via the quarterly Greenlink Newsletter.

Dee Why RSL Club generously provided funds for Greenlink tee shirts in 2000. These shirts have been distributed to regular volunteers and others involved in the project, and have been helpful in creating a group identity amongst members.

***Collaboration, Liaison and Coordination***

One of the main challenges for Greenlink has been coordinating the various activities of the groups, the contractors and the Councils. Much of this work has been performed by the relevant Council staff, and Greenlink has sought to facilitate this wherever possible. This has led to a better level of supervision for the volunteers on their regular workdays, resulting in higher skill levels and safer work practices. These skills are essential for effective regeneration work.

Various problems have arisen in this area, particularly with regard to recruitment of volunteers in the Warringah area in the 2000 / 2001 financial year. Greenlink was unable to recruit volunteers over this period, owing to fiscal constraints within the Council.

The other major problem in this area has concerned the Dee Why Lagoon rehabilitation project. Owing to a multitude of bureaucratic obstacles, this project has not been able to proceed, in spite of the determined efforts of the proponents. It is anticipated that this component of Greenlink will be completed in early 2002.

Greenlink's strength as a project lies in the community contributions and effective coordination with local councils. These elements are fundamental to achieving effective and sustainable long term environmental benefits. We hope that the legacy of this project will be an enduring commitment to achieving the goal of regional conservation.