



**Southern ACT Catchment Group 2019-2020 AGM
Annual Report
July 2021 – June 2022**

Executive Summary

This financial year has been a busy year for delivery on projects delayed due to COVID with SACTCG staff maintaining good productivity and continuing to build stronger connections with our members and partners.

SACTCG projects remain largely member-focused, as site specific projects for groups or capacity building for all groups. This year 8 projects have been acquitted as we worked through the backlog of COVID affected grants. 9 new projects were newly funded bringing the number of projects on our books to 18 at the end of FY in addition to our multi-year Waterwatch and Healthy Waterways contracts. As with last year, we have delivered many grants focusing on small urban Landcare group projects and fire affected ecological communities. Some highlights included the delivery of a large project for bushfire recovery in Namadgi, the development of a Women in Agriculture Network, and the initiation of the Landcare Nursery.

With our Urban Water Officer, Hannah, being off on maternity leave for some of the year we successfully delivered our Community Stewardship and Education Program for the first of a now four-year contract with ACT Government (Healthy Waterways funding). Fiona, Correa, Hannah once she returned in March, and I, delivered above targets with only positive feedback from the funder. We continued to strengthen our relationship with ACT Government and be seen as the key delivery agent for community engagement and stewardship in the South. Whilst this year's delivery was not as heavy on Health Waterway engagement over Hannahs Mat Leave, we delivered strongly in supporting members in project development and funding applications. We scoped 23 projects and submitted 17 grant applications (15 successfully). Partner engagement increased with 21 partners working with us on project delivery. As with previous contracts, communications delivered a consistently high amount of content across social media including facebook, Instagram, youtube and our newsletters.

In bushfire recovery activities we had multiple funded projects, together in excess of \$300,000, which we managed well delivering in extremely tight timelines, thanks to Jeff Eichler who joined us this year. We delivered a large weeding contract in the Gudgenby valley, 18 community engagement events, and 4 workshops. These included community weeding days, invasive weed mapping, vertebrate pest control monitoring, surveys for threatened flora, and interpretive walks (e.g Aboriginal and grass Identification). Volunteers also weeded and undertook mapping in the Tidbinbilla bogs, to help improve its recovery in collaboration with ANU scientists and the reserve.

Our Waterwatch program once again delivered great engagement with over 35 individual volunteers, a high school and a Scouting Group. Volunteers gathered monthly water quality data at 70 sites, undertook 35 biannual RARCs, 53 macroinvertebrate and 6 platypus surveys. This year's Catchment Health Indicator Program report showed our river health improving and urban waterway health generally declining with the increased rain. We have also been working collaboratively again this year with the other Catchment Groups to deliver water education sessions for schools. With the work of Martin Lind (our coordinator for 14 years) this program continues to grow and be seen as a highly successful model for Citizen Science projects in the region and beyond.

Our relationships continue to be maintained with our rural landholders and have been strengthened with the Naas farmers through drought resilience planting events (mostly delivered just after the end of FY). Stronger connections and information sharing has also begun to be built through the Women in Agriculture Network.

We have welcomed the rapid growth in interest from the community at starting new groups in our southern parks and have welcomed four new groups at Bill Kennedy Memorial Park (Holder Landcare), Cooleman Farm Urban Park and Friends of Conder Wetlands, Kambah Microforest (yet to commence work). We also have a project to kickstart a new group for Gibbs place grasslands (AKA little Taylor). With these, our membership now stands at 29 with 18 urban open space and other areas and 11 long standing ParkCare Group members who continue to receive support for administration, advocacy, finances and projects.



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As an organisation we have remained somewhat stable with our staff members throughout the year with a total operating staff of 3.4 FTE throughout the year (noting we will have a variability in hours for some staff over the year). Staff coordination of activities and skills sharing have assisted good coordination of activities and weekly meetings have been heavily collaborative across a range of projects. We sadly said goodbye to Correa Driscoll after three years. Correa has moved to the Commonwealth to gain some experience which we have encouraged in recognition of her great capacity to grow skills early in her career. She has left us with a strong passion for Landcare and working with the community and hopes to return to the Landcare fold sometime in the future. We have also just welcomed Zohara Lucus on board as a project officer and in-house ecologist. Zohara will be working on several citizen science projects and getting out to groups to assist project planning and provide ecological advice. Hannah will be looking after Communications in the interim whilst we look for a new Communications Officer one day a week.

Operating systems have been vastly improved with the updating to a central file storage system for all staff to access files remotely. This has assisted better management of working from home. Our media and social media presence have remained strong again through the year and been a great backup for delivering communication messages and we have more than doubled our Facebook following from 685 in June 2021 to over 900 in June 2022.

The year ahead

We will be delivering the second year of the 4 year Community Environmental Education and Stewardship contract (2021-2025). We are in now in our 3rd year of a 3-year contract for Waterwatch (2020 -2023) which includes water education for 4 hours/week.

With our previous bushfire Recovery grants near completion, we can continue to work in Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla on similar community recovery activities through a new ACT Environment Grant (commencing September 2022). We will be completing several projects already in train including a drain stencilling grant, restoration of Monash Grassland, Naas valley rural revegetation, Outward Bound Riparian revegetation, the Landcare Nursery construction at Lions Youth Haven, and several member group projects.

In terms of new projects we will be delivering 6 new Adopt a Park Grants and 6 new Environment Grants (2022-23 round), including a collaborative project with the other two Catchment Groups to work with Ngunawal elders on interpretation of Aboriginal Heritage places where our groups operate. We will continue with engagement of Naas valley landholders in partnership with ACT Government (NRM) in final delivery of the Future Drought Fund project of revegetation around rural waterways and dams.

With our great team we look forward to another productive year, strongly supporting our members and community. We will be looking to offer further support of our members and are improving our working relationships with both TCCS volunteer management and Parkcare Volunteer management to help streamline processes for groups.

I would like to thank our members and particularly the Executive Committee for their ongoing support in governance and oversight. I would also like to thank my work colleagues Fiona, Martin, Correa, Hannah and Jeff, whose work delivering projects, linking with the membership and the day to day running of the office has been indispensable.

Martine Franco
Executive Officer



PROJECTS

The below list includes projects worked on in 2021-22 and their status as of July 2022.

Previous years funded projects

Smart Farms Round 3

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|-------------------------|------------|
| 1. Women in Agriculture | PROGRESSED |
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ACT Environment Grants 2020/2021

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| 1. Mt Taylor Pink-tailed Worm-Lizard habitat protection | COMPLETED |
| 2. Bird and bee friendly gardens in the Holder Wetland Precinct | PROGRESSED |
| 3. Enhancing Bird Habitat at Hughes Grassy Woodland | PROGRESSED |
| 4. School 'Adopt-a-Tree' Biodiversity Plantings on Simpsons Hill | PROGRESSED |

ACT Environment Grants 2018/2019 (commenced December 2018 and extended)

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|---|-----------|
| 1. Restoration of the Griffith Woodland | COMPLETED |
| 2. Rehabilitation of Natural Temperate Grassland at Mugga Mugga Cottage | COMPLETED |
| 3. Habitat corridor in the Uriarra Creek Catchment | COMPLETED |
| 3. Tidbinbilla River Floodplain Restoration | DELAYED |

Adopt-a-Park 2019-2020

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| Urban open space small stewardship projects TCCS members | - 1 project | COMPLETED |
| | - 4 projects | PROGRESSED |

Drain stencilling

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| Bushfire Recovery Grant (Landcare ACT from Landcare Aus BFR Wildlife) | COMPLETED |
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2021-22 newly funded projects

The below list of projects is in addition our multiyear EPSDD contracts: Waterwatch (2020-2023) and Healthy Waterways Community Environmental Education (2021-2025)

ACT Environment Grants

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|---|------------|
| 1. Riparian Rescue with Outward Bound - Murrumbidgee plantings | PROGRESSED |
| 2. Protection of Pink-tailed worm lizard habitat on Tuggeranong Hill and Farrer Ridge | COMPLETED |
| 3. Red Hill weeding – herbaceous weed control | PROGRESSED |
| 4. Improved Native Diversity and Cooling of Monash’s Pond and Grassland sites | PROGRESSED |
| 5. Screen Planting for Featherstone Gardens | PROGRESSED |

Bushfire Recovery

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Landcare ACT Bushfire Recovery Grant (from Landcare Aus) | COMPLETED |
| 2. Landcare led- Bushfire Recovery | PROGRESSED |

Future Drought Fund (through ACT Gov)

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| 1. Naas Valley revegetation on rural lands (2 contracts) | PROGRESSED |
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Stronger Communities Grants

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| 1. Landcare Nursery | PROGRESSED |
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Other activities

In 2021 / 2022 the SACTCG staff team:

- Prepared funding applications for **18** (15 successful) new projects including 2022-23 Adopt-a-Park Grants
- Prepared final reports and acquittals for **8** funding agreements
- Signed up a new groups at Bill Kennedy Memorial Park (Holder Landcare), Cooleman Farm Urban Park and Friends of Conder Wetlands.
- Fostered new groups to form at Gibbs place grasslands (AKA little Taylor) and with Kambah Microforest
- Held an all groups meeting (24th March)
- Delivered NRM Farm dam presentation with Minster Vassarotti
- Shared a stall at the ACT Volunteers Expo, Seniors Expo's and bus depot markets
- Spoke in 7 news interview on Bushfire Recovery
- Submitted a submission to the Enquiry into Environmental Volunteerism and presented to the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee hearing. This included consultation collaborations with LACT and the other two Catchment Groups and members.
- Submitted a submission to the review of the Murrumbidgee Corridor Management Plan
- Provided input into the Office of the Commissioner of Sustainability and the Environment report on ACT Environmental Volunteers
- Assisted on the Landcare Awards Steering Committee and event
- Attended the Conservation Council Environment Day dinner
- Attended National Landcare Conference and Awards (2 staff and 3 committee members) in Sydney
- Assisted promotion for the ACT award nominations and represented the partnership award nomination
- Distributed Southern News editions (Project Officer)
- Participated in the LACT Weeds Working Group
- Participated in UMCN meetings as a committee member (EO)
- Attended Urban Park Coordinators meetings and individual member work planning meetings
- Represented SACTCG on the Members Council of Landcare ACT (EO)
- Represented the ACT on the Members Council of the National Landcare Network at monthly teleconferences and participated in workshops on Commonwealth policy and Programs (e.g NLP review) (EO)
- MF attended a meeting with Minster Vassarotti at the beginning of her term as minister
- MF attended meetings of the Bimonthly new Biodiversity Conservation Forum (Conservation Council).
- MF attended the monthly meeting with other CG's and LACT

Staffing

2021-2022 Staffing:

Staffing hours and task allocations were as follows:

- Martine Franco: 30 hrs/ wk Executive Officer
- Martin Lind: 26.75 hrs/ wk delivered the Waterwatch Program (incl. WW education and steamweeder).
- Fiona Spier: 18.75 hrs/ wk assisted office administration and project management.
- Hannah Edwards: 15 hrs/ wk assisted delivered Healthy Waterways Project (March – July 22).
- Correa Driscoll: 33.75 hrs / wk on Communications and Project management
- Jeff Eichler: 37.5 hrs / wk June 21 - April 22 and
30 hrs / wk May 22 - June 2022 delivered Community Bushfire Recovery projects
- All office and equipment, workers compensation, Associations Liability (Professional Indemnity) and Public Liability and Personal Accident insurances were up to date in the year.
- All staff underwent Performance Reviews.
- 3 staff received First and training and all have WWVP check



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2022-2023 Staffing

All staff have contracts till 30th June 2023 with current hours as follows:

- Martine Franco: 30 hrs/wk: Executive Officer
 - Martin Lind: 26.75 hrs/wk: Waterwatch Program (this included WW education and steamweeder).
 - Fiona Spier: 18.75 hrs/wk: Office administration and project management.
 - Zohara Lucas: 18.75 hrs /wk: Project management (ecological) - commencing 13th September
 - Jeff Eichler: 22.5 hrs /wk: Community Bushfire Recovery project management
 - Hannah Edwards: 15 hrs/wk: Healthy Waterways project management
22.5 hrs/wk: Healthy Waterways and Comms from 22nd Sept.
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- ML, MF and FS are eligible for long service leave