

Govetts Leap Catchment Group

Advocating for the environment in the Blue Mountains

The Year In Review 2023

The Govetts Leap Catchment Group (GLCG) was formed in late 2022 with the goal of monitoring, improving, and protecting the natural areas within the catchment of Govetts Leap Brook in Blackheath.

A significant impetus for the formation of the Group was the effusion of weeds which occurred within the catchment and in the Blue Mountains National Park following the 2019/2020 bushfires and the negative impact this had on areas which had previously been in good condition after many hours of volunteer and contractor work over a number of years.

The Group is conscious of significant and mature weed infestations on some properties within the catchment which border the National Park and the adverse effect this has by adding to the weed seed bank within the Park and in other natural areas of the catchment.



Govetts Leap

This review details activities GLCG has undertaken during 2023 in an effort to address these concerns, and the outcomes to date.

Weed Mapping and Urban/Stormwater Runoff Assessment

Areas bordering natural areas within the catchment have been visited and serious weed threats noted and mapped by weed type, priority and location. The information has been recorded in a spreadsheet and GIS. Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) has been advised of priority sites.



Connaught Road South

Urban and Stormwater Runoff sites of concern have also been identified and recorded.

On 27th July 2023 a Field Trip was held that visited 3 of these sites.

Outcomes:

GLCG has a useful reference tool and a resource to support land managers in addressing weed and runoff issues.

BMCC has conducted weed inspections at all high priority sites identified through GLCG weed mapping.

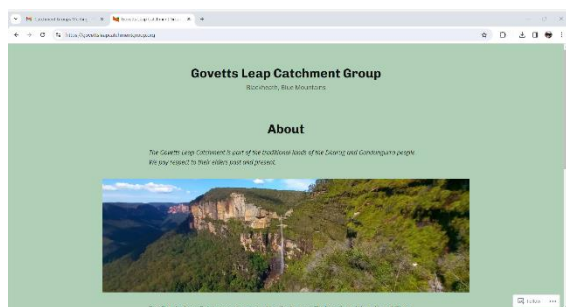
Stormwater runoff issues have been addressed in a very timely manner at the south end of Connaught Road and soft-engineering

work is planned in the near future at the end of Clarence Road and the Prince George/Prince Edward Streets Water Reserve.

The Field Trip provided the opportunity for National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and BMCC staff to meet on site at Shaws Paddock where stormwater runs from urban streets across the National Park and impacts a hanging swamp. A project to address this issue is in progress with funding allocated and design and implementation proceeding.

Website

GLCG has created a website and Facebook page to publicise GLCG goals and operations and



provide links to relevant weed awareness information.

Outcomes:

Provide GLCG with a profile in the community and an avenue for increasing weed awareness and encouraging responsible weed management.

Meetings And Liaison

GLCG has met jointly with relevant BMCC and NPWS staff in formal meetings on four occasions and on 27 July 2023 at the field trip mentioned above.

The Group appreciates the attendance of Trish Doyle, Member for the Blue Mountains and Cr Sarah Redshaw at the meeting held on 09 February 2023 and is encouraged by their interest and support.

Group members met informally with Councillors Van Opdorp and Redshaw on 09 July 2023 and had valuable discussions on issues of concern. The group appreciates their interest.

The GLCG Coordinator instigated a combined catchment group forum hosted by BMCC on 19 July 2023 to facilitate liaison with other Blue Mountains catchment groups and identify matters of mutual interest and possible strategies for action.



Combined Catchment Groups Meeting

Outcomes:

Good channels of communication have been established.

GLCG is very appreciative of the engagement and support given by BMCC and NPWS staff.

These meetings have provided GLCG with a much improved understanding of weed management in the catchment, particularly on urban lands.

Weed Awareness

GLCC has produced 6 posters of priority weeds for display on notice boards around Blackheath when those weeds are in flower and most obvious to the community. The posters have also been disseminated through BANC on-line channels and noticeboards.

Larger posters have been produced and displayed in a prominent location on a sandwich board at the Blackheath Growers Market and the BMCC Weeds of the Blue Mountains Bushland booklet has been distributed there.

Members of the Group assisted on a BMCC Bushcare stall, focusing on Weed Awareness, at the December Blackheath Growers Market.

Weed awareness information is available on the GLCG website.

Outcomes:

Increased publicity regarding weeds and their appropriate treatment.

Blackheath Golf Course and Community Club

Govetts Leap Brook traverses the Golf Course, and the catchment is impacted by uncontrolled and longstanding priority weed infestations on natural areas of the Golf Course.

Head waters of the stream are principally on community land at Valley View Swamp to the west and the Water Reserve area near Prince Edward and Prince George Streets to the north. Both of these areas have active Bushcare groups managing weed issues and both areas have seen significant and on-going soft engineering works undertaken by Council to address urban runoff issues.

GLCG is concerned that the resources and work dedicated to these areas is undermined by the lack of weed control on the golf course immediately downstream.



Bushcare Volunteers at Golf Course

GLCG wrote to Golf Course Management to advise of the Group's concern and offer the opportunity to discuss the issue with a view to providing practical assistance. Eventually an arrangement was made with volunteer groundsman Steve Marsh and through this, several work sessions with experienced Bushcare volunteers were scheduled. These resulted in over 100 hours of voluntary work, and the removal of large infestations of mature Gorse trees, Portuguese Laurel, Himalayan Honeysuckle, Blackberry and other weeds.

GLCG does not intend this assistance to be on-going and would like to see the development of an effective, supervised weed management program for the golf course given its strategic location along Govetts Leap Brook and impact on the National Park.

Outcomes:

A significant and longstanding infestation of priority weeds has been substantially reduced lessening the threat of weeds spreading to the Blue Mountains National Park.

Did you know this is a weed?



Mentzelia

This is an environmental weed which can take over bushland. It is very common in gardens and the borders of natural areas in Blackheath. It spreads readily from seed, the corms (bulbs) being washed downstream, or by spreading underground.

You can do some simple things to reduce its spread:

- Cut off the flowers and make a decoration
- If the soil is damp pulling it out by hand

Please dispose of all dead flowers and corms in your green bin.

For further information, obtain the free 'Weeds of Blue Mountains Bushland' booklet from the library, or go to weedsbluemountains.org.au.

Govetts Leap Catchment Group
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Railway/Highway Corridor

GLCG is very conscious of the weed threat posed by uncontrolled weeds along the Western Railway and Great Western Highway corridor and considers that the obvious presence of weeds along this corridor undermines and renders difficult BMCC efforts to encourage responsible weed management amongst local landholders and sets a bad example to the wider community.



Broom in Rail Corridor

On 25th January 2023 GLCG wrote to the NSW Minister for Transport and Secretary for Transport (copied to Trish Doyle MP) regarding the problem. A reply from the Transport for NSW (TfNSW), Director, Customer Response on 23 February 2023 indicated that work was scheduled along the Blackheath-Mount Victoria rail corridor in the near future.

A response to this was sent by the combined catchment groups on 25th October 2023 requesting that TfNSW commit to a long term, properly funded program for weed control across the Blue Mountains rail corridor.

The BMCC has engaged with both rail and road agencies to attempt to establish such programs. The initial focus is planned to be on areas with catchment groups. To date there has been little visible progress.

Outcomes:

Although the response to GLCG correspondence was promising, effective action is slow to occur.

Conclusion

2023 has been a productive year for GLCG . Important contacts have been established and there have been significant weed control and urban/stormwater runoff improvements as a result.

The Group is very appreciative of the time, interest and support provided by BMCC and NPWS staff and in particular Eric Mahony and Sue Cunningham of BMCC and Monica Nugent of NPWS. The Group is also grateful to Steve Marsh for helping to facilitate and assisting with the weed work at the golf course.

GLCG is committed to working cooperatively with land managers to achieve best results and is very supportive of BMCC efforts to fulfil obligations arising from the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015.

Govetts Leap Catchment Group

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