



Coastwatchers

Eurobodalla's environment group

Submission to the Eurobodalla Shire Council

Eurobodalla Draft Rural Lands Strategy

27 November 2015

Background

In a submission regarding an earlier version of the Eurobodalla Rural Lands Strategy, the Coastwatchers Association pointed out that change was occurring in every aspect of life, and will continue to do so. Change has to be embraced not held back. Equally, Planning legislation has to be flexible to allow for that change. Coastwatchers stated:

“A lot has changed since the Rural LEP was made in 1987. The Shire’s population has grown immensely, with proportionate increases in the need for more sustainable land use, wiser use of our catchments and water, and protection of biodiversity on the land covered by the Rural Lands Strategy. Unfortunately, many people still do not understand the need for such protection nor how they benefit from free natural resources.

Numerous studies have revealed how we can do things better and this knowledge needs to be put into practice. The way our grandparents and parents managed the land is no longer good enough to ensure a sustainable future for our grandchildren let alone all the other animals and plants we co-exist with.”

The Strategy Report by Garret Barry Planning Services Pty Ltd, prepared for the Eurobodalla Shire Council, is a welcome addition to resolving the on-going conflict in the local community regarding future rural lands zoning particularly the E3 zone.

The Coastwatchers Association finds the report a positive contribution to the debate, and endorses the thrust of the recommendations. Not everyone will be satisfied, but they must accept that societies expectations are changing, and planning laws and regulations introduced over 30 years ago, if not 60 years, must change to meet societies and governments needs.

E3 Zone

The Association considers that the principal issue to be resolved in this Draft Rural Lands Strategy, is the issue of appropriate zonings in rural land originally zoned E3 (Environmental Management). The Eurobodalla Shire Council in July 2014 resolved that the E3 zone was inappropriate in general rural areas, and they rejected the use of ‘Biodiversity Overlays’ in the final LEP. Coastwatchers reject that latter position.

Coastwatchers endorses the proposal in this Strategy to zone the E3 land to RU1 Primary Production **in combination with Native Vegetation overlays**. This is intended to guard against further habitat loss and threats to biodiversity in the face of subdivision and development. It will help protect against further declines in native species from development and subdivision pressure. The Overlays must form part of the Rural LEP.

Coastwatchers also endorses that the zoning of RU1 be only used on the better agricultural lands. While the Strategy says it is to apply to holdings 100 to 500 ha, there will be some holdings > 500 ha as well as some < 100 ha and the RU1 zone must also apply to them.

The use of the RU1 and RU4 zones is also endorsed for smaller holdings as proposed in the Strategy.

E2 Zone

The Coastwatchers support the recommendation for the continued use of the E2 zone as presented in the 2012 LEP. This covers important wetlands, littoral forests and coastal protection areas.

The Coastwatchers Association requests that besides E2 covering "...wetlands, littoral forests and coastal protection areas ..." the following words be added

"... forests that are of high habitat value and endangered ecological communities ..."

Other Recommendations in Strategy

In total there are over 50 recommendations in the Consultant's Strategy. Most of these have deliberately not been reviewed by Coastwatchers in this submission. Council's responses will be of interest and comment can be made at that point. Some involve matters, which should not be undertaken by Local Government and are the responsibility of the individual landowners or other agencies such as the NBN or State Government Departments.

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