

The Coastwatchers Association Inc
Annual General Meeting 2022
President's Report

As an environmental organisation Coastwatchers aspires to slow, halt and sometimes reverse the damage our society wreaks upon the country on which we live. Country that for countless generations was kept healthy by its traditional custodians, the Yuin people, before the land was taken from them without their consent. I acknowledge this, and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Welcome all to another online AGM. The current Covid situation led the committee to decide to take the meeting online again.

Committee

The committee that was elected at the 2021 AGM has served since then: Mark Rote (president and treasurer), Gillianne Tedder (vice president), Niall O'Donnell (secretary), Joslyn van der Moolen, Mike Thompson, Julie Taylor-Mills and Lurline Dillon-Smith.

The committee met each month except March, and in addition held a couple of unofficial (non decision-making) meetings with each of the Mossy Forest subcommittee and the Great Eastern Ranges Project subcommittee.

Mike Thompson might not nominate to be on the committee this year, as his ongoing involvement with Kosciusko to Coast and the National Parks Association take up much of his time. Mike is working to combine the connectivity planning maps of GER and K2C with those of NPA. This work may provide a framework to guide some of Coastwatchers' future projects and collaborations.

I am not standing for the role of president.

There is significant need for committee members that have the time to attend to some of the basic administrative responsibilities of an incorporated association and registered charity, empowering those with the knowledge, time and energy to strengthen Eurobodalla's Voice for Nature. We currently have a number of committee members whose dedication and abilities are not matched by available time to give.

Thank you Gillianne, Niall, Joslyn, Mike, Julie and Lurline.

Submissions etc

The following Coastwatchers submissions and letters of 2021-22 can be found on the Coastwatchers website.

- [Objection to Redbank Power Station biomass burning](#) (26/09/21)
- [Draft NSW Mainland Marine Park Network management plan 2021-2031](#) (21/01/22)
- [Train Street Broulee DA049322/22](#) (11/02/22)
- [SHASA - bushfire recovery grant funding with The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation on a Eurobodalla: Regenerate Regional Leadership Program](#) (28/09/21)
- [Thank You letter to NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean](#) 20/09/21

Subcommittees

Coastwatchers Environment Fund Management Committee

New Direction

The Fund committee agreed in July 2021 that the existing model for the Fund was sometimes ineffective and agreed in principle to a new limited role for the Fund committee; that the Fund committee may not be the primary place to determine value for money, and that having the impetus for spending decisions coming from the Fund committee repeats roles best covered elsewhere in Coastwatchers. It agreed in principle to using funds for various simultaneous purposes, provided specific proposals are received, both for fundraising and expenditure, that clearly state purpose, amount, benefit and connection to desired outcome, before the Fund committee makes its decisions.

Following on from this, a new [Delegation for the Coastwatchers Environment Fund Management Committee](#) was adopted on 20/08/21, redefining its role within Coastwatchers, narrowing and clarifying its responsibilities while broadening the scope of its activities.

Funding allocations

- \$1,500 to finance 100 “Saving Forests is Climate Action” signs that Coastwatchers had previously purchased for resale, allowing instead for those signs to be lent or given away to get the message out there, coinciding with the consideration by ESC of a motion to oppose native forest logging in State Forests.
- \$600 on creating 3 iNaturalist projects (for Mogo State Forest, Shallow Crossing and Currowan State Forest). The iNaturalist projects are a citizen science initiative with the purpose of mapping the existence of relevant species in the state forests that trigger exclusion zones for logging.

Combining tax-deductibility with a target-dependent fundraising campaign

A mechanism was developed and approved by the ATO that would allow for the holding of significant donations in trust, dependent on a fundraising target being met, until that target was met, while still allowing tax-deductibility for the donor.

Committee Changes

Bill Barker retired from the Environment Fund committee (thank you Bill for your diligent and thoughtful contribution to the committee); Lurline Dillon-Smith and Linda Chapman were appointed, so the Coastwatchers Environment Fund committee now comprises Reina Hill, June Mills, Mark Rote, Jeff Aschmann, Lurline Dillon-Smith and Linda Chapman.

Online Funding Application Form

Coastwatchers website now includes a downloadable [funding application form](#), whether for spending or fundraising proposals.

Thank you Bill, Reina, June, Jeff, Lurline and Linda.

Forest Working Group

A busy subcommittee of Coastwatchers, the The Coastwatchers' Forest Working Group, among other things:

- was instrumental in the setting up and launching of the [Breach Watch website](#) and its associated [Digital Toolbox](#) (breachwatch.org.au) which is a citizen science initiative to enable anyone to play a part in making sure that Forestry Corp follows the rules.
- worked with the ACT Greens regarding firewood from our native forests,
- organised the Big Canopy Campout in Mogo in September 2022,
- leafleted residents about logging in Mogo,
- worked with National Parks Association Milton on forest surveys to trigger environmental protections,
- wrote to the Environmental Protection Authority re clearing of forest on private land and also about various breaches of logging rules
- worked with [Zero SE](#) on [Forests Worth More Standing](#) fact sheets (Not logging within the 106,462 hectares of state forest in Eurobodalla would negate 100% of our shire's emissions from electricity, transport, waste and agriculture)
- wrote to Eurobodalla's business chambers re MTB parks and tourism,
- collaborated with others to design, then arrange the purchase and distribution of "Saving Forests is Climate Action" signs

The Forest Working Group will also present their own report to the 2022 AGM.

Thank you Nick, Joslyn and Lois.

Mossy Forest Group

The Mossy Forest Campaign is over as Lot 16 old in May 2022 (for \$1.1 million). We do not know the intentions of the new owner regarding possible subdivision and development. Coastwatchers didn't manage to get a fundraising campaign off the ground after WWF-Australia gave their official "no" to their involvement. The committee lacked cohesion on this issue, which slowed progress. Than you to those members who contacted us to comment on the proposal in July 2021 - your comments were supportive and helpful.

The organisational changes within Coastwatchers (subcommittees with delegated powers, a broadening of the scope of activities of the Environment Fund, development of a mechanism to enable holding donations in trust pending a fundraising target being reached without losing the tax deductibility of those donations) prompted by this "campaign" will, however, be of lasting benefit to Coastwatchers. And work continues to draft a trust deed to define purposes, mechanisms, responsibilities and roles in relation to land ownership, should Coastwatchers (with member approval) wish to adopt and use it in future.

Fighting unbalanced development and unnecessary destruction, while often necessary, wears out those involved and, to quote Bob Brown, simply gives us the right to fight the same battle again in future. And it generally misses those pieces of the puzzle that are in private hands. If we were to raise funds and to buy land to protect it (or to covenant it and sell it on) then the effect on those involved might well be inspiration rather than disillusionment and exhaustion.

Thank you Karen, Courtney and Linda.

Eurobodalla Koala Project subcommittee

The following documents were published in 2021-22:

- The [Eurobodalla Koala Strategy Revised Edition](#). We are as confident as we can be about Eurobodalla koala history and habitat, but the status of Eurobodalla koalas either side of the localised extinction line is now uncertain. The confidence we had until 2013 about the persistence of one or two small resident groups and the occasional dispersing animal within the borders of the Eurobodalla, is no longer there. Managed rewilding of the urban, urban fringe and alluvial agricultural areas should probably be the emphasis, but remote public forests remain the safety valve and are crucial for connectivity. The volunteer Eurobodalla Koala Project will try to move into a new phase involving more advocacy and rehabilitation activity, while still maintaining its ongoing research program. We've reached the point where the need for proactivity and a shift from business-as-usual are urgent.
- The [East Lynne Koala Carrying Capacity Study 2021](#). The study suggests the area could support up to four resident koala groups as a best-case scenario, if natural post-wildfire recovery is accompanied by deliberate land management intervention. There might also be one small koala resident group surviving in the area.
- The [Review of Koala Habitat Significance of Bodalla State Forest 2021](#). This review argues that Bodalla State Forest, where a sighting was reported in October 2021, must be a priority focus for any Eurobodalla-wide koala population revival.

Thank you Keith.

CEMAC

Eurobodalla Shire Council's Coast and Environment Management Advisory Committee has been restructured and Coastwatchers no longer has its own official representative on this important committee.

Thank you Reina and Brett.

Dargues Gold Mine Environment Group Representative

The informative [Report to Coastwatchers on Dargues Gold Mine - August 2021](#) is published on the Coastwatchers website.

Thank you Stewart.

Great Eastern Ranges Project subcommittee

Since Coastwatchers' formation in 1983 conservation strategy has shifted a lot - in Australia and globally. Bush Heritage Australia's emphasis, since their inception in 1991, has shifted from preservation of beautiful places to a more whole-of-landscape approach. Isolated refuges for flora and fauna lack resilience over the long term, especially with the added pressures and changes brought by climate change. Connectivity between these refuges increases the chances of survival of their biodiversity.

Connectivity at a landscape scale requires more than the preservation of unspoilt areas: there aren't enough of them. It requires collaboration with other land uses (farming, residential, recreational) and other land users, owners and custodians.

Two ambitious Australian landscape connectivity projects are Gondwana Link in WA and The Great Eastern Ranges on Australia's eastern seaboard from Queensland to Tasmania and incorporating Kosciusko to Coast.

Coastwatchers has partnered with Great Eastern Ranges Ltd to implement the Great Eastern Ranges - South Coast Project, healing and regenerating our region following the devastating 2019-20 bushfires. Wildlife and communities will benefit from on-the-ground works that help connect landscapes and communities. Funding of over half a million dollars over three years is being provided through GER's grant from the Australian and NSW governments' Bushfire Local Economy Recovery Fund and a partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature - Australia.

Details of the GERP subcommittee activities are contained in their separate report to the AGM.

Thank you Keith and Joslyn.

Eurobodalla Gold Mining subcommittee

Exploration with a view to gold mining (likely open-cut) is being carried out just to the west of Batemans Bay and Moruya. The subcommittee has contacted the Environmental Defenders Office in relation to this matter. The Eurobodalla Gold Mining subcommittee delegation was developed during 2021-22, though not finalised until July '22.

Thank you Matt, Sam and Niall.

Affiliations and collaborations

Coastwatchers continues its membership of the Nature Conservation Council NSW, the National Parks Association NSW and the South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA), and has renewed its membership of Australian Forests and Climate Alliance. It continues to work collaboratively with local groups such as NCMG, SHASA and 350Eurobodalla. The Forest Working Group has worked closely in 2021-22 with NPA Milton, Brooman State Forest Conservation Group, Canberra Forest Alliance, Sero South East and SERCA.

Finances

Coastwatchers finances continue to be stable and sound. There has been a large increase in activity as a result of the Great Eastern Ranges Project, and a large increase in our bank account's closing balance is mostly a reflection of GERP funding not yet spent.

Xero Accounting

The expansion of Coastwatchers activities promised by the Mossy Forest campaign, and then delivered by the Great Eastern Ranges Project, has led to the adoption of Xero Accounting, a professional level financial and reporting system, allowing for better updating and dissemination of financial information and an easier transition between treasurers.

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

The administration of the Register of Environmental Organisations (the tax-deductibility scheme of which the Coastwatchers Environment Fund is a part) changed, necessitating the registration of Coastwatchers as a charity with the ACNC in order to retain our tax-deductible-gift-recipient status. This has been done, and has brought benefits to Coastwatchers including helpful guidance and advice on governance matters (resulting in the adoption of a conflict of interest policy for Coastwatchers), and charity tax concessions. Coastwatchers is now a registered charity.

Membership

Membership was at 92 on 30 June 2021 and at 94 on 30 June 2022. Steady!

Websites

The “Who We Are” section of the public website was expanded with some information about the members of the Coastwatchers committee, and also on the make up of the various subcommittees. Most of Coastwatchers’ various actions continue to be listed on the website also.

The Coastwatchers Committee website (passworded and not found by search engines) is set to be closed down soon as its content is being moved to Google Drive, allowing for easier collaboration and maintenance than the website.

Facebook

Facebook continues to be an avenue for broader engagement with some Coastwatchers members.

Conclusion

My focus as president has been on the internal workings of Coastwatchers, clarifying roles and responsibilities, reducing organisational dependence on any one person and hopefully enabling an expansion of Coastwatchers activities while limiting the work burden on the committee, or on any one person in particular. Have I been successful? It’s probably too early to tell. The next step is for me to step down from my role as president, and to reduce the time I devote to other roles I’ve taken on in Coastwatchers. I do this with mixed feelings, but with an undiminished belief in the good that a strong Voice for Nature can achieve in and around the Eurobodalla Shire.

Sincerely yours,
Mark Rote