SAVING OUR SPECIES

Forest eucalypt dieback associated with over-abundant psyllids and Bell Miners

2018-2019 annual report card

Summary

Projects	Managing Bell Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD) on the NSW North Coast: Toward best practice management for landholders.
Total expenditure	$114,000 ($109,800 cash; $4,200 in-kind)
Partners	Office of Environment and Heritage; participating landholders

Photo: John Turbill

Determination name:
Forest eucalypt dieback associated with over-abundant psyllids and Bell Miners

NSW status:
Listed

Commonwealth status:
Not listed

Management stream:
Key threatening processes

Project 1: Managing Bell Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD) on the NSW North Coast: Toward best practice management for landholders.

Project Description

Engagement of Northern Rivers Fire and Biodiversity Consortium as the delivery partner was contracted late in year one of this three year project. The time required to develop the rigorous project methodology took longer than expected, but has been achieved in consultation with a BMAD Technical Reference Group. Two private land trial sites have been recruited and engaged and baseline biodiversity assessments completed, and an initial burn plan done for one site. A communications plan has been drafted to guide production of community education and engagement materials for the project. A draft literature review has been completed that summarises the current research on management of BMAD. Extended dry weather has prevented initial weed treatment as Lantana is presently non-receptive to herbicide. One site requires extensive Lantana treatment prior to burning to ensure a safe prescribed burning operation as the property was initially planned to accommodate all 50 ha of the trial, however the heavy lantana presence and steep terrain meant it was necessary to develop a second trial site. The second site was then secured and there are accessible burn treatment areas available that have existing control lines in place. A burn plan for this site is now able to be developed and approvals sought to conduct burns at both sites.

Investment

Participant	Cash	In-kind
Office of Environment and Heritage	$109,800	$0
participating landholders	$0	$4,200

Actions and milestones

Action / milestone
Engage and recruit landholders with BMAD affected forest and complete management agreements for all trial sites. Conduct baseline biodiversity assessments at trial sites.
Develop communications plan detailing the media items to be produced and disseminated as the project develops.
Complete literature review collating current best management practice and effectiveness research to inform trial design. Develop scientifically rigorous trial design to enable collection of appropriate data for developing a landholder decision support tool for managing BMAD sites. Contract burn plan preparation and obtain burn approvals for all treatment sites. Complete initial primary treatment for all sites (mechanical or chemical weed control or bush regeneration, or prescribed burning).

Outcomes and successes

A major challenge has been the development of a scientifically rigorous research design that will have capacity to detect ecological change over the relatively short period of the study. There are significant knowledge gaps in relation to the operation of BMAD as a landscape scale threat. Some first year actions will now need to be delivered in year two and additional support to the project partner is likely to be required to ensure the project's success. These include obtaining the necessary burning approvals, preparing the burn plan for one site and implementing the initial on ground treatments and subsequent monitoring at both sites.