



Progress and Final reporting template (for grants awarded in 2009 and prior)

Grant reference number:	2007/RR/0001	Total grant amount:	\$ 30005
Project title:	Newnes Plateau Reserve Habitat Protection and Threat Abatement		
Grantee organisation:	Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc		
Person submitting this report:	Kellie Leigh		
Contact number:	02 6351 4515		
Are you the primary contact?	No		
If 'no', what is your role in the project?	Preparation of final report after project completion.		
Report type:	Final		
What stage of the project are you reporting on:	Stage 3 of 3 stages		
Actual period covered in this report:	From May 2010 to 30 th June 2011		
Note that final reports should cover the life of the project			

Use this template to complete your progress and final reports for grants under Restoration and Rehabilitation; Environmental Education; and Protecting our Places Programs. If necessary, please provide additional information as an attachment to this report.

For 2008 and 2009 grantees you must submit with this report an updated **Schedule C – Project Measures** as outlined in the reporting guidelines attached to your Grant Agreement.

Grantees must also complete the Environmental Trust's relevant **Financial Reporting Spreadsheet**.

Note you should still refer to your reporting guidelines which are included in Schedule B of your Grant Agreement prior to completing your report.

You are required to submit **2 hard copies plus an e-copy** of your report (including attachments). For progress reports please include a **tax invoice** for the next instalment of your grant (plus GST if applicable). Late submission of an invoice could delay your next payment.

Post your report to: Grants Administrator
NSW Environmental Trust
PO Box 644
Parramatta NSW 2124

Email to: info@environmentaltrust.nsw.gov.au (limit 10MB per email) and include your grant reference number in the subject line.

If at any stage you require assistance please contact your Grants Administrator (02) 8837 6093.

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Note that the following text boxes will expand to the length required as you write your report.

1. Summary

Provide a summary of progress to date, approximately 100-200 words (cover the life of the project if this is your final report). This may be used for promotional purposes.

The Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve (NPCR), situated near the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area was until recently home to several threatened fauna species which have disappeared due to pressure from feral predators and bush fire. This grant has enabled the control of introduced animals (foxes and feral cats) on the reserve and in conjunction with neighbouring landholder programs has covered approximately 5000 acres of bushland to dramatically reduce predation and competition for native species. Severe erosion caused by illegal vehicle activities has been repaired and a management plan including biological surveys has been developed to ensure that the natural habitats will be managed in perpetuity for the benefit of endangered fauna species. The project employed local workers as well as conservation volunteers from around the world.

2. Background to and objectives of the project

Complete the table below which shows your original objectives and your progress in achieving them

Objectives as per the application	Progress towards achieving objectives
Reduce introduced predators to a level whereby predation has a negligible impact on native species (5-10% of current densities).	Completed. A feral animal strategy was developed, approved and implemented. Over the three years of the project annual control was undertaken by trapping, shooting and baiting, resulting in removal of a substantial number of animals. Follow up baiting was undertaken on the reserve and adjacent land holdings by the NSW livestock Health and Pest Authority. Research and monitoring reports suggest feral animal removal activities were successful.
- Maintain (over short term) current native fauna densities within the reserve	The ongoing control and successful removal of feral predators each year has reduced impacts on native fauna within the reserve. Ecological surveys on the project site detected the presence of many macropods and other critical weight range native mammals who are known to be predated upon by foxes and feral cats.
- Identify the presence (or otherwise) distribution and abundance of extant mammal fauna	The presence of extant mammals was recorded during the project through spotlighting, trapping, and carnivore scat content analysis.
- Cease human-made erosion impacts within the reserve	Access to the reserve was limited to walking trails and erosion control activities were implemented resulting in improved drainage, removal of trail bike trails, rubbish, 4WD tracks, and reduction in impacts on native vegetation.
- Increase community involvement through the use of local and international conservation volunteers	Approximately 60 international student and community volunteers participated in the project. Tasks included rubbish removal and building

	walking and access trails to and across the Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve.
- Improve knowledge of the role, and implementation of, fire management regimes. Increase environmental awareness through interpretive programs	Fire regimes were taken out of the control of AEFI, as the Rural Fire Service stated that any fire management plans were required to be part of an overall strategy for Newnes Plateau and adjacent properties. A management plan has been prepared in consultation with AEFI by the RFS and low intensity burns are integral to it. The project budget was not sufficient for interpretive signage as remaining funds were spent on ongoing fox control for the reserve. However, guided educational walks were undertaken with visiting community volunteers, international student groups, and university student groups. Approximately 80-100 people per year participated in these programs.

3. Project outputs and activities

This should report against the Project Management Plan outputs from your original application. Provide a summary of activities undertaken to date and the progress on each and outline the 3 most important outputs during this reporting period (cover the life of the project if this is your final report).

<p>All of the key outputs for the project were achieved.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participant recruitment: together with AEFI staff and volunteers, the project successfully recruited a wide range of students/researchers to assist with the project: E Verman of SIT study Abroad (studied foxes and their impact on native small mammals), Jessica Watt from the University of western Sydney (studied avian diversity within NPCR), Kathrine McKay from University of Western Sydney (studied feral pest management program NPCR), and Amy Honeyset of USW (studied feral fauna for adjacent Lithgow WMC property). <p>Other organisations which participated in the project were: the Rural Fire Service for the coordination of a control burn program, Lithgow City Council facilitated studies of feral animals on adjacent land, MGP Pest Animal control contractor for invasive animal projects, and the Livestock Health and Pest Authority who also undertook fox control activities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. A management plan for the Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve was prepared as per the expected project outputs and was used to guide ongoing management activities. 3. A Feral animal management strategy was developed, approved and implemented. Yearly offtake of feral animals was monitored. 4. Researchers and students were recruited, as listed above, for completion of biological surveys, monitoring and evaluation. 5. Erosion control and site remediation were completed. <p>Key Activities undertaken included:</p> <p>Feral animal management -A predator control contractor was employed for annual removal of introduced predators throughout the project, using a combination of baiting, trapping and shooting. The Lands Department then followed up each year with a baiting program, which was part of a Newnes Plateau control program and included the reserve</p>

plus adjacent land owned by local Council and the Australian Defence Force. Initial survey data was collected by a university student from SIT Study Abroad (see report "the abundance of the European red fox and its impact on several species of mammals.." 2008) who carried out sand pad and trap counts on the reserve. The feral predator contractor also produced annual reports on the number of animals removed (see reports "Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve Predator Identification and Management Report" by MPG Pest Animal Management)

Biological surveys - the presence of extant mammals was recorded through spotlighting, trapping, and carnivore scat content analysis. Species detected included brush tailed possums, swamp wallabies, eastern grey kangaroos, common wombat, swamp antechinus and brown antechinus. Additionally, avian surveys were also carried out for the reserve (see report "avian diversity within the NPCR and Secret Creek Sanctuary" 2008).

Erosion control -The NPCR was previously used by mountain bikers regularly and the national championships were held on the property with a comprehensive track being erected. As a result there were a lot of erosion events and rubbish such as tyres which had been used in the construction of jumps and corners. Working bees were held on a quarterly basis with members, volunteers and staff members removing rubbish, covering over tracks and repairing erosion channels. Rubbish was placed in a trailer and this included tyres, wooden pallets, bags of mulch/straw used as buffers on corners, and plastic bunting used as markers. Tracks and vehicle trails were covered over with brush, soil and rocks in order to encourage regrowth and deter continued usage. The fire trail access road to the reserve was graded by an earth moving contractor and erosion damage was removed during that process.

Rubbish removal and walking access trail creation - volunteers assisted to clear away vegetation with cutters and saws in order to access a previously marked out path. Once cleared of vegetation then shovels, crowbars and picks were used to create a stable walking path. Rocks and planks of timber were used to make steps and to stabilise the path in certain areas. Several bridges were also constructed out of round timber and planks, in order to create safe passage over various gullies.

4. Project outcomes

Describe any outcomes that have been achieved during this reporting period (with evidence) or alternatively how you are progressing towards achieving those outcomes identified in your Application and your Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Compare the outcomes with those outcomes projected in Schedule C.

All of the outcomes outlined in Schedule C of the project application were achieved. The most significant outcome was the change in landuse of the reserve, from high impact recreational use, including trail bikes, to wildlife and habitat conservation. There is now limited access for walking only, with all vehicle and bike trails removed and a gate installed. Subsequently the amount of firewood and bushrock removal has been reduced, thereby increasing habitat for native species. Site remediation waste management was completed, including management plan preparation, removal of waste, removal of trail bike tracks and jumps and restoration of erosion damage. Waste removal over the 175ha reserve was completed over 3 years with the assistance of local and international volunteers. Engagement was greater than expected with a high level of volunteer and student participation involved, approximately 350 people over the course of the project including volunteer and educational tour groups.

5. Reflection on the monitoring and evaluation plan (for grants awarded in 2008 and 2009)

Provide a brief summary on the implementation of your Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. You should include:

- how monitoring has been established
- how data has been obtained
- reflect on what the data is showing
- stakeholder involvement.

grant awarded 2007.

6. Project evaluation

This section gives you an opportunity to evaluate the project as a whole rather than against individual objectives/activities (cover the life of the project if this is your final report).

6.1 Progress

How the project is progressing / has progressed overall.

The project was completed successfully. As outlined, a reserve management plan was prepared, together with a feral predator management strategy. These documents were used to guide the restoration of the land to the status of a conservation reserve. All of the key activities were completed, including erosion control, waste removal, limiting access to walkers only, and ongoing feral predator control activities. There was also a high level of participation by community volunteers and university students. A range of stakeholders participated, and biological surveys and feral control programs were extended onto adjacent land tenures to increase their relevance and effectiveness.

6.2 Issues/challenges

Any problems you have encountered and how you have dealt with, or intend to deal with them. Please include any issues that the Trust, as the funding body, should know about. Include any significant variations from planned approach as outlined in your application. You should refer to the risk management section of your Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (where applicable) and/or any other issues that have arisen.

Overall the project was a success, however there were some issues worth recording. An important issue for the control of feral animals arose, with an early study finding that a nearby waste management facility in Lithgow was serving as a source of foxes for the area. Therefore the ongoing removal of foxes from the NPCR must continue for it to be effective as ongoing recruitment of foxes into the area is expected. This is a common issue in fox control. To address this, local council was approached with the research results (see report "Feral Fauna within Lithgow Waste Management Centre" 2008) with an appeal for support for control of foxes on this site. Unfortunately no support was given and this outcome limits the long-term sustainability of this project. Another approach to council is planned for the near future. Because of the need for ongoing intensive feral animal control, the budget no longer allowed for the interpretive signage. However, this hurdle was overcome by undertaking guided tours with university groups to ensure that project educational aspects continued. The control burn regime was limited as it had to be undertaken by the Lithgow Rural Fire Service (RFS) as part of a larger strategy for Newnes Plateau, a much larger area which connects to the NPCR. Although the burns were successfully planned and integrated into the larger RFS strategy, environmental conditions meant that burns were not undertaken during the last 2 years of this grant. A major fire went through the reserve in 2007 leaving a reduced fuel load, and since then conditions have been unsuitable for burning. The Rural Fire Service has provided a letter of

support in regard to this situation, and is planning future management burns.

6.3 Opportunities

Lessons learned, other opportunities and how benefits from the project could be spread more widely.

As is common with feral predator control programs, the most critical aspect is ongoing control. Foxes and feral cats are widespread, adaptive and in high enough densities that they can recolonise an area quickly if control programs are discontinued. Therefore longer-term projects are critical for success and this depends on sufficient funding. Renewable multi-year funding phases for successful projects would be beneficial to ensure that efforts can be sustained and remain effective for the conservation of wildlife in reserves of any kind. Similarly, large scale funding to facilitate fox and cat control over many land tenures, particularly in edge habitats, would increase the effectiveness of control programs and be more likely to impact source populations of feral predators. Several adjacent landholders were involved in this program however AEFI will seek to build even larger collaborations across land tenures to maximise the impact of feral predator control programs in future.

7. Issues raised from previous progress report(s)

Did you receive specific points to address in this report from the technical review of your previous progress report? If so, please complete the table below.

Points to address	Response/action
Biological surveys were delayed in the mid-phase of the projects.	The feral predator control contractor undertook surveys and provided a report at the completion of year of the project, plus a range of university students undertook research projects to provide data for the project.
vehicle damage to fencing, install adequate security	In 2010 the fence was repaired and security cameras were installed along the fenceline to deter fence damage.
removal of downhill bike track	This track was removed and is continuously monitored.

8. Other

Is there anything else you would like to raise in this report?

NA

Checklist	Attached?
<p>9 Will you be seeking a variation and/or an extension to this project? (Progress reports only) Select If yes, please attach Variation Proforma(s) plus any additional information</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>10 Updated Schedule C (for grants awarded in 2008 and 2009) Ensure you update <i>Schedule C</i> and provide it as an attachment.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>11 Communication Ensure you provide copies of media coverage, publications and materials produced as an attachment.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>12 Other attachments Provide any other attachments that are relevant to your project.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>13 Financial reports</p>	
<p>Progress reports Ensure you use the Environmental Trust's Progress financial reporting proforma and provide as an attachment.</p> <p>Include a tax invoice for the next instalment of your grant (plus GST if applicable).</p>	<p>Proforma <input type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p>Invoice <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Final report Ensure you use the Environmental Trust's Final financial reporting proforma and provide as an attachment.</p> <p>Please ensure that the financials are properly certified. Improper certification could delay the acquittal of your grant. Please refer to the Trust's reporting guidelines for details regarding the proper certification of financials, dependent on the amount of funding received and the organisation type.</p> <p>Unspent grant funds Ideally, all grant funds should be expended at the time of submitting your final report.</p> <p>Are there any unspent grant funds remaining? Select</p> <p>If yes, please return any unspent funds to the Trust. To return funds you should include a cheque for the amount of unspent grant funds, (plus GST if you are registered for GST), made payable to the Environmental Trust OR contact your Grants Administrator prior to submitting your report to discuss your options.</p>	<p>Proforma <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p>Independent certification (community organisations) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p>Cheque for unspent grant funds <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Appendix A – Communications

➤ Summary of biological surveys and reports produced by this project (attached)

A. Honeysett (2008) Feral Fauna within Lithgow Waste Management Centre. University of Western Sydney, for Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc, Lithgow.

J. Little (2007) Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve Plan of Management. Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc, Lithgow.

M.G. Priestly (2011) Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve Predator Identification and Management Report. Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc, Lithgow.

W.E Verman (2008) The abundance of European Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and its impact on several species of mammals in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales. Student report SIT Study Abroad program, for Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc, Lithgow.

J. Watt (2008) Avian diversity within the Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve and Secret Creek Sanctuary. University of Western Sydney, for Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc, Lithgow.

➤ AEFI Newsletter coverage, attached (newsletter reach approx. 700 people per issue)

Issue 10.2 and 11 (2007) – editorial plus call for volunteers.

Spring 2009 – editorial update

Issue Autumn (2010) – editorial, 3rd phase of project.

➤ Photos attached in Appendix B. Please see above reports and newsletters for more photos, figures and tables.

Appendix B – Project Photographs

The Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve site and habitats



Damaged fence caused by 4WD vehicles accessing site in year 2, fence was repaired and security cameras installed.



International Student volunteers constructing the walking trail through the reserve.





All communications to be addressed to:

Lithgow District/Chifley Zone
NSW Rural Fire Service
PO Box 294
LITHGOW NSW 2790

Telephone: (02) 6353 1862

e-mail: ian.jackson@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Inspector Ian Jackson

Lithgow District/Chifley Zone
NSW Rural Fire Service
Cnr Silcock & Bent Streets
LITHGOW NSW 2790

Facsimile: (02) 6352 3077



Aus Eco Systems

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

1 November 2012

Kellie Leigh

Following our recent conversation the following is provided for your information.

1. As part of the NSW Rural Fire Service obligation to prepare a Risk Management Plan for bush fires in Lithgow, the northern escarpment of which the nominated land is a part, was designated SFAZ for the purpose of that plan
2. One of the nominated treatments for the risk to that area was to undertake prescribed burning within that SFAZ
3. As a result of this and in consultation with the management of Newnes Plateau Conservation Reserve a number of areas were identified and planning commenced for these.
4. An area to the north of "Secret Creek Reserve" was identified
5. Weather conditions – high levels of rainfall – have prevented any burning being undertaken in the area.
6. Environmental factors identified to exist within the nominated burn area specifies a narrow window of opportunity for burning – being early Autumn – which for the previous years has had some of the highest rainfall for many years
7. The identified burns are still present on the RFS district plan and will continue until completed

If you require further information or wish to discuss this further please contact
Inspector Ian Jackson on 6353 1862

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "I".

Ian Jackson
Inspector
Community safety Officer