



STEP News
No 14 Summer 2011



STEP AGM 2010—2011 *Notice of Annual General Meeting 2011*

The STEP AGM will be held on Thursday 8 December 2011 from 5.15 – 6.15 pm at the Conservation Council Board Room in Childers Street Canberra City.

Agenda

Welcome

Apologies

Welcome and Presidents Report

Minutes of the 2010 AGM

STEP Committee Report

Financial Statement and Auditor's Report

AGM

Election of Office Bearers for the positions of:

President

Vice President

Secretary

Treasurer

3 Committee Members

Nominations will be called at the meeting.

All members and non members welcome. Light refreshments will be provided. Members and non members are invited to join us at the annual dinner after the AGM at Flavours of India Upstairs in Garema Place 62573690 – bookings are essential. Please email me at limestone@grapevine.com.au and provide names and number of seats needed.

AGM GUEST SPEAKER:

Professor Peter Kanowski, Fenner School ANU.

Peter Kanowski is Professor of Forestry in the Fenner School of Environment & Society at the Australian National University. His roles comprise academic and professional leadership; research and teaching focused on natural resource policy, and on sustainability; and policy learning and development, and community engagement, associated with forest and environment issues. Peter works in each of these arenas with a diversity of partners and stakeholders; internationally, nationally, and locally. One of Peter's roles is as a member of the Advisory Board of National Arboretum .Canberra.

Eucalypts of Lot 100

Eucalypts of Lot 100, our new STEP pamphlet is wrapped into your copy of this issue of the STEP Newsletter. This pamphlet powerfully communicates the STEP vision to plant a microcosm of the vegetation typical of the Southern Tablelands region of NSW and ACT. It presents the Eucalypts planted on the STEP site on 16 fold out panels and includes an image of a mature tree with accompanying text explaining the botanic, geographic and functional features. The concept for the pamphlet originated with the suggestion from STEP member, Max Bourke, that STEP should apply for a grant from the newly established Bjarne K Dahl Trust (visit <http://dahltrust.org.au/about-us/>). This trust aims to promote community education about Eucalypts. Our STEP pamphlet includes information about the position of Eucalypts in the southern tablelands landscape as the rationale for the planting design for Lot 100. The creative design for the STEP pamphlet is the work of Mariana Rollgejser, a professional designer. Max Bourke wrote the text for the tree descriptions and David Shorthouse arranged for the photos and final editing. There will also be complimentary signage. The National Arboretum project Team recently arranged a meeting on site for the NAC Signage Designer, David Lancashire to meet with STEP to discuss the NAC branding, signage products and STEP's requirements. He will recommend to the NAC the products will be necessary for STEP signage and design new one if needed. STEP will contribute to the cost of signage production using the remainder of the Dahl Grant funding.

Peter Kanowski's talk will discuss opportunities for community education at the National Arboretum Canberra and include the possibilities for STEP to be a partner in the planning and program of such activities. STEP has a long term aim to be an education resource and centre for restoration of natural ecosystems of the Southern Tablelands. Drawing on his observation of innovation here and overseas, Professor Kanowski has agreed to share his thoughts on ways that STEP in collaboration with the National Arboretum itself and also with the Friends of the National Arboretum, can collaborate with ANU to identify, develop and share formal and informal educational resources at the National Arboretum, Canberra.

STEP Annual Report November 2011

Planning for the STEP Garden

In the 2010 – 2011 financial year, STEP received the completed design maps for the STEP Garden Master Plan prepared by Barbara Payne, Quandong Design Pty Ltd. The Master Plan and its implementation have been supported by a DECCEW Environment Grant, *Growing our Natural Capital*. STEP held the community launch for this plan at the March 2011 Festival of the Forests. Members can visit the Master Plan on the STEP website and arrangements are in place to have it permanently displayed in the assembly area near the water tank on Lot 100.

Ongoing work to implement the STEP Master plan.

With the arrival of the Master Plan in February 2011, David Shorthouse assisted by Barbara Payne has taken the leadership role for its implementation. David and Barbara has been ably supported by STEP Committee members Andy Russell, Tony Lawson and Jens Svensson and also by some very dedicated STEP members – Lainie Shorthouse, Margaret and Max Bourke, Jenni Andrews, Lee Pearson and Jenny Campbell, all of whom have attended regular Thursday morning working bees at the STEP site for three or four hours each time. A weekday morning is a convenient time for the majority of STEP committee members, who are not in full time employment. Of course, other work activities have been undertaken on weekends when other members who are in fulltime work, can provide support. Groups such as the Conservation Volunteers Australia, ANU students and STEP members and friends have come to the weekend and special activities and provided significant people power. As a result, the two main STEP visitor paths have been constructed, the large rock landscape formation and the mark up for the grid of monoculture plantings of understorey species in middle garden bed have also been completed. Experimental solutions for the protection of the new plantings from mowing by the Arboretum contractor and from kangaroos and hares - have been devised by using arborguards to fence off small areas. A clever hand watering system was devised by Jens Svensson, using poly pipe running under the paths with tap connections for hose fittings and fed by the STEP recycled water tank. The species plan for the initial planting of the STEP Botanic Garden in the central garden bed is completed and seven species have been established. We hope that in collaboration with Seeds and Plants Australia, the Australian Native Plants Society Growers and Greening Australia we will source the plants for our next planting scheduled for the cooler part of autumn 2012.

Maintenance of the STEP site

The weed spraying and hand weeding of the STEP site is an ongoing challenge. More people power at the Thursday working bees during the spring weed surge is needed to support this effort.

The Project Team at the National Arboretum have been amazing and have supported STEP in so many ways. Regular meetings at the site have discussed issues such as the mowing regime, weeds management and drainage. Adam Burgess has assisted with meeting STEP's resource needs for weed matting, mulch, large and small rocks, water, sign frames and weeding equipment. After STEP received the funding from the Chief Minister's Department in February the NAC Project Team also assisted with the selection, transport and construction of the STEP shed and tools and the provision of compost bins at the site. STEP is looking forward to sharing a common Arboretum shade house, weed bins and composting facilities with the project team early next year.

Financial support

The auditor's report shows that STEP is in a very healthy financial position, thanks to the excellent work of our treasurer and membership officer - Andy Russell and the STEP auditors Robert Johnson and Garry Goodman of Hardwickes Chartered Accountants. The audit report shows that the STEP accounts are in good shape. STEP attracted significant financial support during 2010. In October an ACT Government grant of \$16,058 was received. Also a donation was received from the Australian Native Plant Society Canberra Region of \$2,000.00. STEP also received a donation of \$1,200 from Andy and Janet Russell's Open Garden event. Then in January 2011, STEP was awarded \$7,500 by the Bjarne K Dahl Trust to produce a pamphlet – *the Eucalypts of Lot 100*.

Invitation to STEP Working Bees

Weekly 'working bees' on Lot 100 have continued this year. Big advances have been made and 7 species are now established.

The 'working bees' take place on Thursday mornings from 8.30 to 11.30am and include a short break for morning tea and chat. Newcomers are most welcome to join in this activity, which is a great way to learn new skills or to share skills with others. For further information contact David Shorthouse at djshorthouse@apex.net.au

In February 2011, the then Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope made a donation to STEP from the ACT Community Initiatives Fund of \$2000.00. This Grant has been acquitted. However the expenditure of the other grants is still underway.

STEP Membership and networking

It is eight years since STEP became an incorporated association in July 2003. In that time we have maintained a membership base of between 50 and 70 members and established a strong network of support among the conservation management groups in the ACT. STEP by its very nature as a planning and growing organisation is constantly increasing the skills and knowledge of our members. However, we realise that an increase in membership alone is not going to give us the people power we need to continue with our project. Partnerships and networking with other like minded organisations are essential to create extra leverage for our projects. This year our events have included collaboration with the Friends of the National Arboretum, the Conservation Volunteers Australia, the ANU Neighbourhood Volunteering Day and the American Embassy. A special mention must be made here to recognise the contribution from Jenny Andrews, Friends of Aranda Bushland and Margaret Ning, Friends of the Grasslands. Jenny is a very experienced self taught horticulturalist and Margaret is a self taught expert in plant identification and weeds management. Both have spent many hours working on the STEP site.

STEP is constantly on the look out to develop its partnerships and to find ways to link the activities in our project to other groups and contribute to their activities. Whenever we host a STEP event we attract new people who help us to build and maintain our voluntary workforce.

Of particular importance for STEP is finding ways to work in partnership with our neighbours in the Molonglo Valley to increase our effectiveness and find these resources. For example the Conservation Council and the Molonglo Catchment Group are currently looking at ways to assist STEP and the other conservation groups in the lower Molonglo Valley to improve the conservation values of the habitat on our sites prior to the development of this area.

STEP monitoring program

One of our important objectives as an organisation is to recognise and find ways to gain community support for the importance of ecosystem connectivity across the landscape of the Southern Tablelands region and particularly within the lower Molonglo Valley area. Under the auspices of the ACT Environment Grant 2010/2011 entitled **Growing our Natural Capital** and working in partnership with the Molonglo Catchment Group Coordinator, Andy Westcott, STEP coordinated a workshop for the Park Care Groups in the local Molonglo area in August 2010. The workshop was well attended and supported by local park care groups as well as the Molonglo

Catchment Group, Friends of the Grasslands, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and many other Environment Groups in the ACT and NSW region. A copy of the Report of this workshop is on the STEP website. The Workshop recommendations included setting up a monitoring program on Block 100. Jens Svensson joined the STEP Committee just over a year ago. He has worked on Eucalypts at CSIRO and trained in Sweden in forestry management. During the last 12 months he commenced the monitoring program on the STEP site and has recorded on a spread sheet measurements for each tree and included comments about health of each one. His work on monitoring will be featured on the STEP website in 2012. Tony Lawson and Roger Hnatiuk have been undertaking Frog Watch Reports at the National Arboretum for the past three years. This newsletter includes the details of the first siting of frogs at the STEP ephemeral wetland on page 4.

STEP educational resources

In 2010/2011 we have continued to build our people power and increase our capacity to manage the STEP project. Our objectives include sharing the skills we have as a committee with each other, providing opportunities to learn on the job to those who come and work with us, learning from our partnerships, projects and events and providing opportunities at the STEP site for formal and informal learning. We are slowly and surely making good progress in all areas of our work.

STEP extends our special thanks to Warren Saunders, Seeds and Plants Australia (and to Geoff and Terry). They have shown a steadfast contribution to keeping up new knowledge of local species and the collection and germination of seeds. We have had many enjoyable conversations about plants, the needs of the STEP site. We have also purchased interesting plants for STEP and our own gardens.

Best wishes to all our members and friends for a Happy Christmas and another productive year in 2011. We hope to continue to develop the STEP project as part of the National Arboretum, so that together we can enjoy a national educational and community project for Canberra and Australia.

Cathy Robertson, President. Nov 2011

STEP hosts visit by Friends of the National Arboretum.

By David Shorthouse

With our 16 species of eucalyptus trees now well established and the first understorey plantings underway, STEP invited the Friends of the Arboretum to a guided tour of Lot 100 on 23 October.

About 30 Friends and STEP hosts came on a lovely Sunday afternoon. After a short explanation of the master plan for Lot 100, Cathy Robertson, Andy Russell and Lainie and David Shorthouse led our visitors through Lot 100, showing them the new plantings, describing our successes and failures, and outlining our hopes and aspirations for the future.

Our visitors were very pleased to see our site and expressed surprise as to how much we have achieved.

Lot 100 is a bit off the main route for visitors and the Friends can play an important part in directing the Arboretum's visitors to our regional botanic garden for the Southern Tablelands.

STEP will be hosting visits on the second Sunday of the month when the arboretum is open to car access.

Why not come along to the next open Sunday on 11 December when there will be STEP hosts at Lot 100 between 11 am and 1 pm.

If you have links with other groups with skills in propagating native plants that we need for the central garden please contact us and let us know how you may be able to help to STEP.

Frog Watch and the STEP site

Roger Hnatiuk has contacted STEP News with the splendid news from the Frogwatch program's point of view that a frog was recorded for the first time at the STEP Lot 100 ephemeral wetland. Roger noted that some STEP people may already know of this, but thought that it would not be more generally known.

Roger informs us that Frogwatch observations began at the site in March 2010. They have continued approximately quarterly since then. A *Lymnodynastes tasmaniensis* (or more than one at times) was heard from the farmland to the north, but never at the site.

Then at the October recording, a *Crinia parsignifera* was observed actually at the site on the western end of the wetland. There was a little water still in the wetland at the time. Roger expressed his view that this is great news. He believes that if there are no other observations from STEP people, then this at least documents the approximate length of time for frogs to move onto the site.

Roger hopes that if anyone has kept any records of frogs heard at the STEP site they should let him know. If you have any observations to report or if you would like to join the Frog Watch Team you can contact Roger at:

