

Lungs to the Lakes

Cobblers Creek Revegetation project.

By Andy Booth

Cobblers Creek lies approximately 3.5 kilometres south-west of the Bairnsdale CBD. It consists of some very healthy stands of Snow Gum (*Eucalyptus Bauciflora*) on the northern slopes of the creek. This is somewhat of an anomaly to the area and how they got there is not completely known. Also along the steep escarpments of Cobblers Creek are remnants of the critically endangered EPBC listed Gippsland Redgum (*Eucalyptus teriticornis ssp mediana*).

The GPCMN started working on Cobblers Creek three years ago on a site below the Bairnsdale cemetery owned by East Gippsland Water. On discovery that the Snow Gums were not only on this site but extended some 5 kilometres further into Cobblers Creek and Smiths Creek the GPCMN Facilitator saw scope for a much larger project.



A Snow gum happily growing along the Cobblers Creek escarpment.

Picture by Andy Booth

This project took the form of extensive revegetation works on circa 10 adjoining properties that are on and beside the Cobblers and Smiths Creeks. Some of the properties were well vegetated, while others needed help with revegetation. The sites lacking vegetation or indigenous vegetation are still very important to the project and they in time will help create a continuous link of vegetation. This link will be the corridor for birds, mammals and insects to make safe passage to and from the nearby Ramsar-listed Macleod's Morass and the Gippsland Lakes.

To date we have four landholders on board with the Cobblers Creek project. There have been changes of landholders in two of the properties so a reconnection will have to be made with the new owners. The following has been achieved so far:

- Over 16,000 plants have been planted with the help of the Gunnai Kurnnai (GK) NRM crews
- 15 TREES (a carbon offset charity) GJ Gardiner homes, East Gippsland Landcare Network the Landholders and Greening Australia have planted many of these trees.
- Fifteen hectares of weeds controlled.
- Four kilometres of fences have been constructed to stock-proof the revegetation areas.

The GPCMN has formed a strong relationship with Greening Australia (GA) on this project. GA are undertaking vegetation surveys, direct seeding, supplying trees and planters and weed control works over three properties. This work has been a huge success with very high germination rates.



Marty Potts (Greening Australia) direct seeding the Irish Property with a tractor on Cobblers Creek. (Photo Andy Booth)

One of the landholders, Danny Irish, has been a huge supporter of the project. Danny has had around four hectares of land revegetated. This work included direct seeding, weed control, wildflower plots and tree planting. The GPCMN are soon to have members for the Gunnai Kurnnai Cultural Heritage team to survey the sites for the presence of their ancestors.

Recently, the GK "On Country" team worked out at Cobblers Creek for four days. The GPCMN have \$34,000 to spend on employing the GK crews. These

funds were made available through the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA) and the federally funded National Landcare Program (NLP). There is plenty of work for the teams to do. This work ranges from Blackberry spraying, grass selective spraying around existing plantings, cutting and painting of Boxthorn and Hawthorn and maintaining of plantings.

The Lungs to the Lakes project has been supported financially by the EGCMA in paying the GPCMN to supervise the GK "On Country" Team (\$60,000 to date) to undertake weed surveys, monitor planting success, encourage more landholders to join the project and work in with other organisations who are contributing to the project. Their support and contributions are much appreciated. Other contributors to the project are the Victorian Landcare grant which paid for two kms of fencing, East Gippsland Water who contributed \$30,000 to the works on the site below the Bairnsdale cemetery and EGLN for supplying plant and the Wildflower plots throughout the area.

The plans going forward are to expand the project to new landholders; revegetate new areas while maintaining the past areas. Andy Booth the GPCMN Facilitator states: "the Cobblers Creek Lungs to the Lakes project is more than just planting trees; it's linking the landscape and linking the landowners. To date the enthusiasm of the Landholders has been overwhelming".