



EAST GIPPSLAND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Media Release

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Silt worms to the rescue at Port of Bairnsdale

A swathe of silt worms has been laid at the Port of Bairnsdale and they are busy doing their job helping to halt erosion. Before locals start heading down there to witness some exotic species at work, Bairnsdale Urban Landcare Group president, Ann Robson can explain. “Our Port of Bairnsdale site is very steep and some of our former plantings are threatened by erosion and land slippage with the amount of urban water runoff and soil movement,” she said. “These silt worms are long hessian-covered rolls filled with rice husks – lightweight enough to handle, but hopefully very effective at reducing slippage.”

Last week’s working bee during National Volunteers Week saw several BULG members joined by Federation Training VCAL students and a group from the Green Army. The combined group cleared debris and rubbish, prepared the beds and installed the silt worms horizontally along the hillside. These will help support the existing indigenous species and the 750 new seedlings due to be planted soon. The 2016 program has been made possible through a Victorian Landcare Grant of \$8,970, coordinated through the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA). The project was developed with assistance from East Gippsland Landcare Network Facilitator, Paul Harvey.

Amanda Bartkowski, EGCMA Landcare Coordinator, said the project builds on previous riparian restoration projects undertaken by BULG. “They are a small but enthusiastic group doing terrific work along the Mitchell, which has helped make the walk so popular in the community” she said. “It was great to see them link up with Federation Training and Green Army for this activity.”

BULG president, Ann Robson, said she was proud of the achievements of such a small Landcare group over the years, and thanked the other teams for their support, which made greater progress than the group could have achieved alone.

“We had a very harmonious morning with three different groups who haven’t worked together before, having fun and protecting the environment. These young people are our environmentalists of the future and we will continue to partner with them. We don’t see it as just giving to Landcare, as we also get a lot out of it,” she said.

Federation Training VCAL teacher and BULG member, Sarah Lamble, said her Year 11/12 group was enthusiastic about the shared activity, which was part of their personal development program: “It’s great to be involved in these community projects, and especially when they can see the environmental benefits of protecting the area around the river.”

Alyson Harrington led the Green Army group, delivered by EnviTE Environment and Workways Australia, and said they were delighted to be able to gain skills while working on such a worthwhile project.

Since 2010 there have been more than 3,500 seedlings planted around the Port of Bairnsdale, with 46 species of riparian plants represented, including the Flora & Fauna Guarantee-listed *Acacia caerulescens* or Limestone Blue Wattle.

The project will include new plantings of groundcover to discourage invasive weeds. The group will be trialling large trays of ground cover species planted as mats in a checkerboard pattern, with the aim that these will spread and link up, forcing out the pest plants.

Expected benefits include: revegetation of the steep slope, widening the habitat corridor up to the roadway, protecting community infrastructure such as the walking track and boardwalk from falling soil and rocks, improving soil retention, promoting a self-sustaining ecosystem, and further encouraging fauna diversity.

BULG conducts monthly working bees and welcomes new members. More information on Landcare activities can be obtained from the Landcare coordinators at Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning, Bairnsdale, or at www.egcma.com.au/what-we-do/316/.

Captions:

- 1. Bairnsdale Urban Landcare Group members Sarah Lamble (also leading Federation Training's VCAL group), Maxine Semple, Ian Robson and Ann Robson laying silt worms on the south bank at the Port of Bairnsdale last week.**
- 2. Green Army helpers at the Bairnsdale Urban Landcare Group working bee at Port of Bairnsdale included Roger Smith, team leader Alyson Harrington, Zoe Zurbo and Sean Lennon, pictured with BULG president, Ann Robson (second right).**
- 3. The silt worms installed on the steep south bank of the Mitchell River, where they will help support the new plantings.**

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