

Marcus Beach Bushcare Association (MBBA) Submission to Noosa Council's Draft Coastal Hazards Adaptation Plan (CHAP)

The MBBA congratulates the Council for producing a report that is clear and contains well documented guidelines underpinned by modelling that is based on credible data sources, as well as taking note of issues raised during public consultation.

In relation to the Eastern Beaches, which is area in which our organisation undertakes habitat regeneration, the MBBA concurs with the CHAP that, of the seven options canvassed, Option Three is the most appropriate response to the projected increase in coastal erosion that will take place as a result of the predicted changes in climate.

- Option 3: Dune revegetation, augmentation and management

Noosa Shire showed foresight in that they did not permit development right to the edge of the foredunes like the Gold Coast, and therefore it does not face the immediate problems of some southern coastal areas. An 11km coastal strip of natural vegetation comprising of the hind dunes, protects private and public assets. While the modelling shows that in the long term, David Low Way, Peregian and Victory Parks and some private homes are at risk, Noosa has the luxury of having time to put the appropriate measures in place, but no time for complacency.

It is important that the Council undertakes forward planning on budget allocations to protect or re-locate public assets, as well as making appropriate changes to the planning scheme so that no further development, private or public, takes place in high erosion risk areas. The Council also has a responsibility to ensure that prospective buyers of property are made aware of the long-term risk.

In relation to the implementation of Option Three the MBBA stresses that work needs to begin now because:

- Dune revegetation is a slow and long term in nature with revegetated areas taking many years to provide a dune stabilisation/protective benefit.
- The natural resilience of the dune system has been greatly compromised by the predominance of weedy species such as Asparagus Fern which outcompete native species and inhibit germination of native plants, thereby reducing biodiversity.
- The work done by volunteer Bushcare groups, while reducing species-inhibiting weeds and contributing to biodiversity, covers very small areas of the coastal foredune system and is insufficient to achieve Option Three.

- The dune system is a dynamic interactive system which requires a whole of system approach rather than a piecemeal project conceptualisation.

What is required to support Option Three:

- A comprehensive fully costed operational plan for the 11km strip of Noosa Coastal Reserves, short term (five years) initially, extending to medium term (twenty years).
- A public education program aimed at increasing the awareness of why the dunes need to be protected and how fragile the hind dunes are.
- Measures to stop human damage of the dune system due to increased foot traffic on tracks, off leash dogs, children and adults climbing dunes, the illegal cutting down of vegetation, illegal structures and paths.
- Increased volunteer labour through re-invigoration of Bushcare groups and other avenues such as Skilling Queensland.
- Recruitment and publicity program to attract more volunteers.¹
- More research into the most cost-effective and efficient ways to undertake dune regeneration projects.²
- Ongoing data collection on how the dunes accrete and diminish with particular reference to storm and surge events.³

Community Stewardship:

It is vitally important that the community understands and embraces the need to protect the natural assets that Noosa has, in particular the beach areas which tourists and locals alike value highly. Community stewardship requires that people move from valuing the coastline to **taking an active role** in its care.

There are demonstrated benefits in this. For example, the Council's own Bushland Operational Assessments (BOA's) show that, while most of the Coastal Reserves have deteriorated, the areas where Bushcare groups are active have improved and expanded in

¹ MBBA is currently in discussion with Noosa's Environment Manager and Bushcare Coordinator re this

² MBBA is currently conducting a three-year citizen science project on best method for the eradication Asparagus Fern and is in consultation with USC re other ways to measure the health of an ecosystem.

³ MBBA has engaged Dr Javier Leon of USC to create profiles of the three coastal creeks that are located in the MBBA work area to measure the movement of the creek and dunes after adverse weather effects.

ecological quality, particularly in those areas where Bushcare groups work in tandem with contract labour.

This is a model that could be part of the “mix” in regeneration efforts, but **it does require resourcing**. Turning “valuing” into “active doing” doesn’t just happen; it requires a sustained recruitment and training program, on ground supervision and support, ongoing publicity and promotion, and the provision of equipment.

A community participation model also has additional benefits to participants and the community including: health, wellbeing and social benefits; increased knowledge and appreciation of the natural environment; and an increased sense of community. Unlike labour inputs and ecological outputs, these benefits are less easy to quantify, but should be factored in to a cost benefit analysis of any community stewardship model.

Conclusion:

The MBBA endorses the approach taken to the Eastern Beaches by the CHAP. While being aware that a more detailed working report is a necessary next step, the MBBA contends that **resources need to be mobilised as soon as possible**. Our organisation is actively developing methods to work more efficiently on coastal regeneration, mentoring other Bushcare groups, and exploring ways to collect data that documents changes to the dunes.

The MBBA recognises the need for more substantial data to inform decisions going forward to deal with the challenges of climate change and the impacts it will have on the coastal reserves. We are a small group with very limited resources, but are looking at the bigger picture, and seek support from the Council in these efforts.

Marcus Beach Bushcare Association
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