

Media Release

Making connections on the Tablelands to save species

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) and its partners will officially launch a major revegetation project on the Tablelands today (Tuesday 9 August).

The project, funded by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative of \$600,000 over the next two years, will help restore connectivity between islands of rainforest on private land and World Heritage rainforest in the high-altitude areas of the Southern Atherton Tablelands.

Landscape connectivity plays a vital role in strengthening cool climate habitat for species such as Golden bowerbirds, Lumholtz tree kangaroos and Herbert River ringtail possums which are limited to cooler, high altitude rainforest.

Climate modelling scientists at James Cook University identified the project area as a key priority for rehabilitation.

The project involves private landholders on the Tablelands, scientists, community groups and government agencies collaborating to restore rainforest corridors and provide wildlife refuges on land for species at risk from rising temperatures.

Already more than 6,000 trees have been planted over two hectares.

The trees were planted by Tablelands Regional Council staff, volunteers from Conservation Volunteers Australia and National Green Jobs Corp adjacent to Maple Leaf Nature Refuge on Kenny Road near Mount Hypipamee.

WTMA Board Chair Assoc Prof Peter Valentine said WTMA applauded the Australian Government's commitment to building more climate resilient landscapes.

"Restoring landscape connectivity and strengthening the ecological integrity of the Wet Tropics on the Tablelands will help to protect the unique species and characteristics of the World Heritage Area," Assoc Prof Valentine said.

"WTMA values the partnerships it has formed in developing and implementing this project," he added.

Future works will involve replanting an additional four hectares, weed control and fencing to exclude cattle to improve 35 hectares in two critical wildlife corridors at Rock Road and East Evelyn Road.

ENDS

Additional information

Scientists from James Cook University, the University of Queensland, and Griffith University will investigate new ways of converting pasture to rainforest, and encouraging ground-dwelling animals like rainforest skinks and frogs, to move into revegetated areas by introducing structures that mimic their natural habitat of fallen and decaying wood. Traditional owners, and community groups including Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands (TREAT), the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group, and Malanda & Upper Johnstone Landcare Association are also involved in the project.

One of the biggest threats to the Wet Tropics ecosystem is climate change. Modelling suggests that even a 1°C rise in temperature will reduce the habitat available for high-altitude specialists by 50%. Revegetating cleared land and restoring wildlife corridors across the landscape in cool, high areas, will increase the amount of habitat available as a climate refuge, giving our unique Wet Tropics animals a better chance of surviving the extremes of a changing climate.

Media notes

The launch will be taking place at 3-4pm on Tuesday 9th August at Lot 2SP118068, East Evelyn Road. Associate Professor Peter Valentine, Chair of WTMA, will be attending and planting some trees with project partners and landholders. Media is welcome to attend. Please contact us for directions. Alternatively, we will have a professional photographer / videographer with us, and would be happy to forward a package of information, photos, and quotes the following day (Wednesday 10th).

For more information contact

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DIRECTIONS

WTMA Caring for Our Country "Making connections" Launch
9 August 2011

★ Brad and Kim Eaton's Property is on East Evelyn Road, about 100m from the East Evelyn / Millaa Millaa Lookout (it's the first drive way after the lookout). Look out for the **purple flags** on the highway and driveway.

