

BENGELLO MUST BE PROTECTED



The Bengello sandplain and coast between Broulee and the Moruya River is one of the most valuable natural assets in the Eurobodalla Shire.

Its geology is fascinating. The sandplain is one of the largest and most extensively studied beach-ridge plains on the eastern seaboard of Australia. The data it will continue to yield is critical for the prediction of the impacts of global climate change and sea level rise on sandy coasts.

Bordering the sandplain, water worn gravels are evidence that an ancient river, whose headwaters followed the course of the modern Clyde, ran across this area. Millions of years ago basalt intrusions and other changes to the landscape diverted the entrance of this river to its present location at Batemans Bay. Older still are the granites near Moruya River that have played such an important part in Moruya's history.

Most of the soils have proved poor for agriculture but this has meant that the natural vegetation systems have remained relatively intact. The area continues to support endangered forest ecosystems and significant coastal wetlands. Future fieldwork is needed to verify the boundaries of these ecosystems.

Fires that are too frequent pose a major threat to the forest and dune ecosystems. Action is required to prevent frequent burning. Coastwatchers will be asking the Council to explore how the area might be adequately protected in future by such options as publicity campaigns, offering rewards for information leading to the arrest of arsonists and encouraging the public to take ownership of the fire problem.

Not surprisingly, the forests of the area have been shown to be significant habitat for threatened fauna. Yellow-bellied Glider habitat extends over most of the area and into the hinterland. Other threatened species known to occur in the area include Powerful Owls, Sooty Owls, Barking Owls and Glossy Black Cockatoos. A thorough fauna survey is needed to find out what other animals live in the forests and wetlands and what needs to be done to ensure they survive there.

While there are some records of European history in the area, the Aboriginal history is very poorly understood. An archaeological study of the Bengello sandplain and hinterland should be conducted as part of the Shire's strategic planning.

One of the most valuable water resources in the Shire lies below the sandplain. The groundwater has been used in past droughts, most recently in 2004. If it is to be of use in the future it needs to be protected.

Eurobodalla Shire Council is the largest landholder in the Bengello area. It owns or manages all of the land on the eastern side of George Bass Drive, as well as the racecourse, the speedway and land on the northern side of Waliija Swamp. This last parcel, together with a large private holding to its north, contains the least disturbed ecosystems and the best habitat areas. Council also owns land on the western side of George Bass Drive adjoining Broulee Road.



The future of Bengello hangs in the balance. The community has voiced its strong desire that the environment of the Eurobodalla be protected and draft plans for rural and urban land in the Shire appear to be taking note. However, other forces are pushing for development of the land, especially that west of George Bass Drive as well as land nearest Broulee village around the Fire Station. Extension of the runway and development of the airport are almost certain.

All of the currently undeveloped areas between Broulee and Moruya River should remain in their natural state for present and future generations to enjoy. This can be achieved by incorporating them in Eurobodalla National Park or by Environment Protection zoning and permanent, legally enforceable conservation agreements.

People can demonstrate their support for the preservation of the Bengello area by taking part in community consultation during the exhibition of the Draft Urban Settlement Strategy and Draft Rural Lands Strategy and by making written submissions asking for its protection.

Write to Eurobodalla Shire Council
PO Box 99 or Email: council@eurocoast.nsw.gov.au
MORUYA 2537

A detailed study of the Bengello area has just been released by The Coastwatchers Association Incorporated, Eurobodalla's main environment group for over 20 years.

To cover the cost of production and postage the study will cost \$16 for a printed copy or \$6 for a CD (document in pdf format). The order form is included below.

The Coastwatchers Association Inc.
DETAILED BENGELLO STUDY REPORT
ORDER FORM

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The Coastwatchers Association Inc.
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