

Draft Environmental Action Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

What types of projects are proposed in the draft Plan?

The Environmental Action Plan includes the following priority project areas that have been developed in close consultation with key agency stakeholders and the wider community:

- **Water quality projects** to address soil erosion, river health, nutrient runoff, acid sulfate soils, and to protect coastal floodplain wetland and saltmarsh habitats.
- **Biodiversity projects** to improve the management of Council's bushland reserves, address environmental weeds and pest animals, remove fish barriers in waterways, improve landscape connectivity for wildlife movement through our region, and address animal blackspots.
- **Sustainability & Environmental Performance projects** to minimise our carbon footprint, reduce our resource consumption, enhance environmental planning and management, and implement adaptation for Climate Change.
- **Dredging & Boating Improvement projects** to improve navigation for boating and undertake improvements to boating facilities and access to waterways.

How will the projects be implemented?

A range of methods are proposed to be used, including:

- Using existing controls of Council to guide development & building activity
- Continue existing programs such as waste management and noxious weed control
- In-house resources and staff time to develop improvements to processes and practices of Council
- Collaborations with other groups, individuals and agencies

- Through projects funded by developers to offset the environmental impacts of new development
- Prioritisation of the work so that the most important issues can be dealt with first and in a systematic way
- Through the possible implementation of an Environmental Levy, so that funds are available to match funds sought through external grant programs
- Through applications for external grants
- Cost-recovery charges, user fees, and using the general revenue of Council

Do other councils have an Environmental Levy?

Yes, most of our neighbouring coastal councils have an Environmental Levy, around the 4-6% is typical. Inland councils away from the coast tend not to have an Environmental Levy as development pressure is impacting less in these areas, and they don't have sensitive coastal or estuarine environments to manage.

Projects implemented by other councils show that a levy can enable the Council to leverage external grant funding, multiplying the levy by a factor of at least 2 to 3.

Revenue for the environment raised by nearby councils:

- **Great Lakes Council** has a 6% levy which generates **\$1.7M** annually for environmental projects in its region (including 1% specifically for dredging).
- **Port Macquarie-Hastings Council** has a levy which generates \$432,000 towards its annual budget of **\$1.3M** for environmental projects in its region.
- **Kempsey Shire Council** has a levy which generates **\$468,000** annually for projects.

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What's in it for me?

In addition to the obvious environmental benefits, the proposed projects will also generate a range of other benefits for the community.

The local economy benefits by:

- Providing employment opportunities during the implementation of projects,
- Protecting and enhancing our beautiful natural environment which attracts people to visit and move to our area, and
- Increasing fish stocks and oyster productivity through improved water quality.

All of these things will also improve our lifestyles by providing enhanced recreational opportunities:

- Cleaner rivers to fish and swim in,
- Improved boating access, and
- Better managed natural areas to visit, picnic and to see our local wildlife.

How much will a levy cost me (and for how long)?

Based on the 5% levy proposed in the draft Environmental Action Plan, the following average **weekly** amounts would apply to each rating category.

While a 5-year term is proposed in the draft Plan, applications for a special rate variation are generally approved for 3 to 5 years. This is determined by the Division of Local Government.

Residential	Farm	Business
91c	\$1.52	\$3.14

Will Council still seek grants for the projects?

One of the main reasons Council is considering introducing an Environmental Levy is because the levy funds will provide Council greater opportunity to obtain external grant funding thereby value adding to projects.

External grant programs often require matching funding, so without a dedicated source of funding for environmental projects Council has difficulty in securing the necessary funds, or is often ineligible to apply for grants.

How can I get involved in developing and undertaking projects?

Council is seeking to establish good working relationships with local community groups and individuals to assist in the development and implementation of environmental projects in our region.

If you have any ideas about projects which you think would deliver against one of the objectives of the Environmental Action Plan, please contact Council.

For further information please call Andrew Paget, Environmental Project Coordinator on 6592 5375 or email andrew.paget@gtcc.nsw.gov.au