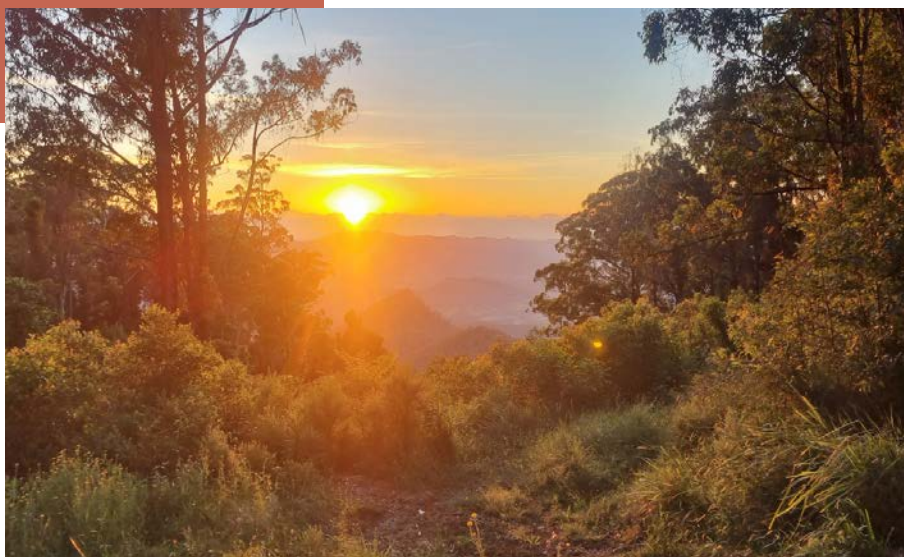


PLC Case Study

MURROOK



Alan & Helen, Killabakh

Alan & Helen Pursch have been proactively involved in conservation on the Mid North Coast for decades – foundational members of Safety Beach Landcare in the 1980's; more recently volunteering with Hallidays Point Landcare and working as subcontracting Bush Regenerators.

When an opportunity to purchase a large parcel of land on the Comboyne-Lansdowne Plateau arose in 2020, the couple acted quickly to secure the purchase and signed up for a BCT Conservation Agreement immediately after hearing about the Conservation Partners Program via an ecologist friend.

The 217.51HA property contains around 83Ha of Rainforest (both Sub-Tropical and Warm Temperate) and 135HA of Wet Sclerophyll Forest communities. It overlooks the Upper Lansdowne Valley and boasts glorious views from the upper reaches of the property.

The Rainforest on the property conforms to the EEC listing for Lowland Rainforest in the NSW North Coast and Sydney Basin Bioregions Endangered Ecological Community under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, and the property supports numerous rare & threatened species of both flora and fauna.

Highlights

Alan & Helen love exploring their property, discovering the remarkable flora, fauna and landforms. They are heartened by the extraordinary natural regeneration of the property in just two years. The entire landscape was blackened and devoid of greenery when they bought it, and now it abounds in lush regrowth, abundant wildflowers and recovering canopy species. “Whenever we explore, we find something new and unexpected – a waterfall with a swimming hole, or an orchid on a moss-covered rock. We learn something new every day we spend at Murrook!”





The Issues

Murrook was heavily affected by the 2019 Black Summer Bushfires and had a long history of logging prior to the Pursch acquisition. Alan describes the property as “wild & beautiful, and extremely steep!” He and Helen are working tirelessly to regenerate degraded forest areas, where weeds have proliferated after the disturbance from logging and fires. The other issue they are trying to manage is erosion that has occurred since the fires due to numerous record-breaking rainfall events over the past two years. Several large landslips have exposed subsoil and occur in remote areas of the property.

Other threats include plant disease – a fungal pathogen called Myrtle Rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is affecting the local *Rhodamnia* population, and may be translocated by faunal movement, wind, rain, human movement through the landscape.

Feral animals have not been observed on the property, which is great news for the abundant wildlife that live there.

The Solutions

Alan & Helen have been well supported through the BCT small grants program, which has enabled the employment of contract regenerators to assist with the weed control on steep slopes. The main weeds are Lantana, Crofton Weed, Passiflora, Tobacco Bush, Inkweed & various exotic grasses. The couple visit the property as often as possible and put in long days of bush regeneration work over and above the works completed by contract regenerators. In this way, they have been able to maintain the primary work areas and expand into new areas steadily over the past two years. The resilience of the site is strong allowing healthy natural regeneration in these areas. Alan and Helen are complementing this with minor revegetation works to supplement species that are depleted in the seedbank, and to stabilize erosion hotspots.

Landslips

One of the biggest challenges for Alan & Helen has been stabilising the landslip areas. These occur on steep slope in remote areas, and it is untenable to undertake traditional remediation works with large machinery.

Adapting an old dune stabilisation technique, Alan & Helen are placing logs across the erosion sites where possible, then collecting and scattering dead fall (branches) and brush matting; broadcasting locally harvested native seed. They have done some native groundcover planting (*Lomandra* and *Dianella*). The erosion sites are slowly starting to show signs of recovery.

BELOW: Deadfall and small bushpoles laid across eroding soil will trap leaf litter and seeds

