CfC Project Updates

Nature-Based Solutions Riverfest Panel Event

How do Nature-Based Solutions play a role in flood resilience? - October 2025

As part of Richmond Riverfest 2025, on Monday 20th October, North Coast Regional Landcare Network's (NCRLN) Caring for Catchments (CfC) project delivered a half day panel event on Nyangbul Country on the shores of the Richmond River in Ballina NSW. 45 community, science, Aboriginal and land management leaders attended.

The event was facilitated by Mel Bampton, speaker, broadcaster and storyteller and host of the CfC-funded We are the Riverkeepers podcast. Five panellists participated in dialogue:

- **Chris Prescott** – *City of Portland (USA)*
- **Louissa Rogers** – NBS Project, *Richmond Landcare*
- **Oliver Costello** – *Jagun Alliance Aboriginal Corporation*
- **Katrina Curran** – *Australian Wetlands Consultancy*
- **Genevieve Murphy** – *North Coast Local Land Services*

> *"This conversation shows exactly what's possible. The evidence exists, the community is ready — now we need the courage to scale solutions and act."*
>
> *Mel Bampton, Panel Facilitator*

What can we learn from global NBS examples?

Learning from Portland's Johnson Creek Restoration Project, guest speaker Chris Prescott showcased the 25-year NBS transformation including:

- Restoring 63 acres of **floodplain and stream habitat** within a 140 km² catchment
- A "willing seller" program enabling the **removal of homes from flood-prone area**s
- 16 projects **expanded wetlands** and re-meandered creeks
- **Reduced flood impacts** and return of native Pacific salmon species
- One of **21 global case studies** under IUCN Global Standard for NBS

> *"A century of trying to engineer our way out of floods had failed - nature had to be a part of the solution."*
>
> *Chris Prescott, City of Portland*

> **"Nature-based solutions, we call it, care for country...its what you do. You learn from country and you respond to country. It's a reciprocity. It's like breathing."**
>
> *Oli Costello, Jagun Alliance*

Why NBS matters in the Northern Rivers?

Portland's experience resonates with current challenges in the flood-prone Northern Rivers:

- **Community trust & co-design:** Effective NBS rely on long-term, locally led engagement.
- **Government and policy as key partners:** NBS are not yet mainstream in climate policy, and governance complexities—e.g. bureaucratic processes and funding cycles—slow progress.
- **Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK):** TEK should guide restoration, as Indigenous stories, knowledge and law are embedded in landscapes and guide how to care for Country.
- **Multiple benefits:** NBS can strengthen flood resilience, improve water quality, boost biodiversity, support cultural connection to Country and enhance community wellbeing. Wetlands are often overlooked yet critical.
- **Grey and green:** Follow a tiered approach—first consider doing nothing, then natural options, then hybrid solutions, and use grey infrastructure only as a final stage (World Bank).

Graphic Recording Artwork by Dayna Hayman Design, illustrated key points of the day

> ***"Typically the life cycle of a storm water or waste water treatment asset is 20-25 years... the life cycle of a nature based solution extends well beyond that time frame."***
>
> *Katrina Curran, Australian Wetlands Consultancy*

How do NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS play a role in flood resilience?

RIVERFEST CARING FOR CATCHMENTS PANEL EVENT

NYANGBUL COUNTRY, RICHMOND RIVER

20TH OCTOBER 2025

TODAY'S FOCUS:

Talking about NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS across the Northern Rivers

These convos can be hard so... REMEBER THE PASSION WE ALL HAVE FOR THE RIVERS.

COMMON PLACE

River Fest bringing us together!

WELCOME TO BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY

I come from a long-line of tribal leaders - me and my brother have stopped the gas-development to save our land. Now I take care of this sacred site. We ask everyone to RESPECT + MAKE LAND BETTER!

UNCLE PETER ROBERTS

MORNING SESSION

We can learn from anywhere

BUT gotta be backed by Local Knowledge!

WHAT CAN BE APPLIED HERE in the NORTHERN RIVERS?

SHARING SUCCESS + LESSONS

SAFE ✓ ∅ ? SPACE

CONNECTING

CHALLENGES

FUNDING is FAST (political cycles) BUT NATURE is SLOW

GO BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY

FLOOD FUNDS

FLOOD RESILIENCE

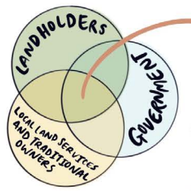
Site Specific design

ecology + resources + plants

GAP: RAISING PROJECT PROFILE + LEARNINGS

AFTERNOON DISCUSSION

GRASS ROOTS RESEARCH



TRUST CRITICAL BUT HARD.

DECISION MAKERS WANT TO COLLABORATE

WALKING + SHOWING ON COUNTRY VERY IMPACTFUL!

JOHNSON CREEK RESTORATION in CITY of PORTLAND OREGON, U.S.A.

CASCADE RANGE

MILD CLIMATE

538 KM² URBAN CATCHMENT · ONE OF 21 IUCN GLOBAL CASE STUDIES.

GREATEST PACIFIC SALMON RIVER in the WORLD!

FOSTER FLOOD PLAIN RESTORATION

Willing Seller Program:

- ✓ Fair house market value offer
- ✓ Remove chronic flood repair
- ✓ No more Fed. funds on property
- ✓ Designated open space in perpetuity.

COASTAL COLUMBIA RIVER

We've been doing this long before the term was coined... NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

SEWER MANDATE

Green infrastructure cheaper than widening the pipes.

THE AREA'S HISTORY for SUCESS

US Endangered Species Act

WHOLE AREA

JOHNSON CREEK RESTORATION PLAN

- ✓ 16 Projects along the creek
- ✓ Moved x60 houses
- ✓ Re-contoured creeks
- ✓ Restored wetlands + floodplain
- ✓ Restored trees, grasses and logs

SALMON SAFE CERT.

40+ FLOODS SINCE 1920s

2500 GREEN STREETS + 400 ECO-ROOFS

TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

PEOPLE

NATURE

Sustainable: food Materials Medicine

LESSONS LEARNED:

Engage the Community with the carrot, not the stick.

"Beavers gonna make dams."

Adaptive management of planting

Modelling constraints

TRIBES HIGHLY VALUED PARTNERS FOR THE CREEK.

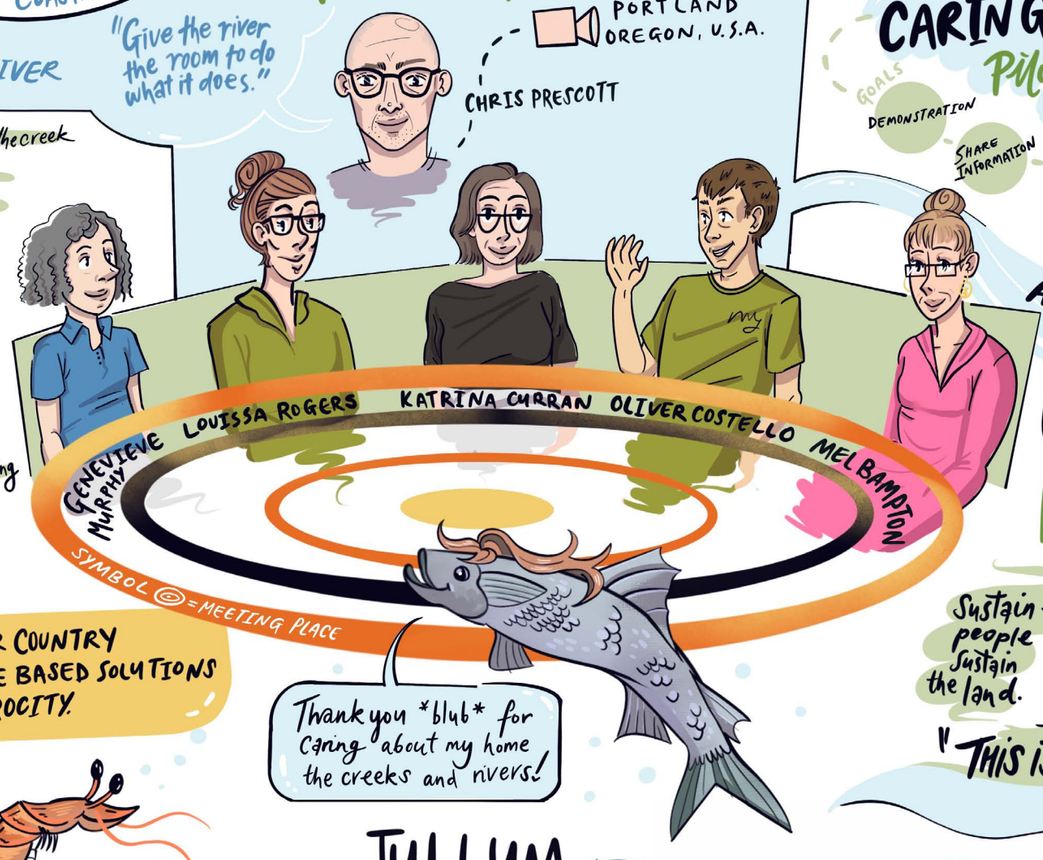
INCORPORATE TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE and collaborate with local Aboriginal Communities through Landcare's Aboriginal Partnership Program.

PANEL EXPERTS

"Give the river the room to do what it does."

PORTLAND OREGON, U.S.A.

CHRIS PRESCOTT



GENEVIEVE MURPHY · LOUISSA ROGERS · KATRINA CURRAN · OLIVER COSTELLO · MEL BAMPTON

SYMBOL ◎ = MEETING PLACE

Thank you *blub* for caring about my home the creeks and rivers!

CARING FOR COUNTRY is about NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS it's all RECIPROCITY.

CARING FOR CATCHMENTS Pilot NBS Project

GOALS

- DEMONSTRATION
- SHARE INFORMATION
- EDUCATION + TRAINING
- CULTURAL + SOCIAL COHESION
- ENVIROMENTAL MARKETS

CATCHMENTS:

- Richmond River
- Clarence River
- Brunswick River
- Tweed River

PROJECTS:

28 on Ground
5 Education
2 Combined

A CATCHMENT is the EXTENT OF WATER BODIES that FEED INTO A RIVER

STORM WATER INFRASTRUCTURE = 20-25YRS

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS HAVE NO USE-BY DATE!

HOPES FOR THE Future

Sustain the people Sustain the land.

Respect local Landowners connection to land

"THIS is my creek"

PLACE BASED ACTION = CONNECTION TO COUNTRY + EACH OTHER!

Ballina, Northern Rivers N.S.W

JULLUM

Nyangbul word for Mullet

DAYNA HAYMAN

RiverFest 2025

Australian Government

NSW GOVERNMENT

This project is funded by the Australian Government through the Northern Rivers Recovery and Resilience Program 2022-23 administered by the NSW Reconstruction Authority. Delivered by North Coast Regional Landcare Network.

Caring For Catchments

North Coast Regional Landcare

Barriers to overcome

The panel discussed key constraints limiting NBS uptake including short-term funding cycles that don't match nature's timelines, moving institutional mindsets beyond grey-infrastructure solutions, challenges of maintaining NBS sites long term without funding and the need for a local "iconic" species to mobilise public support.

> ***I kept reflecting on the mullet…the mullet run for us is similar to salmon in North America, but not many people understand that.***
>
> *Oli Costello, Jagun Alliance*

So what can we all do to lift the profile of NBS?

- **Share stories, data, and lessons** learned from on-ground NBS projects
- **Engage with First Nations people** to ensure NBS are culturally informed
- Use NBS standards including ANU **Nature Based Solutions** for Flood Mitigation Guidelines and IUCN Global Standard for Nature Based Solutions.
- **Talk to your local council, State and Federal MPs** on the importance of integrating NBS and Traditional Ecological Knowledge into policies.
- Visit and **learn from Country**: your nearest creek, stream or river to swim, fish, play - **notice how you feel**

> **Nature-based solutions work when we design with landholders, not for them - trust, local context and shared outcomes are essential.**
>
> *Genevieve Murphy, North Coast Local Land Services*

> ***It is good for us as a society to have nature-based solutions…and that sense of wellbeing that you get from having healthy waterways.***
>
> *Louissa Rogers, Richmond Landcare*

How can I learn more?

Visit **Riverfest 2025** *richmondriverfest.com*

Learn about other NBS projects including:
Heal the Rivers and
Nature-Based Solutions Building flood resilience in the Lismore catchment

Learn more about **Caring for Catchments**

Listen to **We are the Riverkeepers** podcast

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