

NPWS Strategic Additions Proposal

'Faulconbridge Mallee Ridge' Faulconbridge

From the heaths of the plateau to the Blue Gum forest of the deepest valley this land supports a great diversity of life forms. It is a critical site for the rare Faulconbridge Mallee Ash and provides habitat for a range of threatened species. It is a place of significant Aboriginal cultural heritage.

- 1. Location:** two separate properties are included in this proposal. Each is located along the plateau edge and associated valleys of the south-eastern side of Linden Creek with eastern and southern boundaries against the Faulconbridge residential area between Hillcrest Avenue to the south and the Blue Mountains National Park in the north and west.
- 2. LGA:** Blue Mountains City Council
- 3. DP, Lot Numbers and zoning** (zoned E2 Environmental Conservation except where noted):
 - **68-70 Meeks Crescent Faulconbridge:** L1 DP 130267, L1 DP 2385 (E4 Environmental Living), L2 DP 2385 (E4), L3 DP 2385 (E4), L4 DP 2385 (E4), L15 DP 16845 (E4), L16 DP 16845 (E4), L23 DP 28746, L72 DP 833484 (portion E4), L111 DP 751635 (S.E. corner E4), L112 DP 751635, L113 DP 751635, L114 DP 751635
 - **11-49 Hillcrest Avenue Faulconbridge:** L115 DP751635 E2 Environmental Conservation
- 4. Size in hectares:** 148.633392 ha (Meeks Cr 127.353392 ha; Hillcrest Ave 21.28 ha)
- 5. Public or private land:**
 - 68-70 Meeks Crescent Private land
 - 11-49 Hillcrest Avenue Public land: Crown Land Reserve 45482 managed by the BMCC
- 6. Adjacent existing national parks:** both properties border the Blue Mountains National Park and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area to their west and north.
- 7. Natural Values:**

Geology, soils, landforms and microclimates: Both properties contain headwater tributaries of Linden Creek; there are small waterfalls on the Meeks Cr stream. Expanses of Hawkesbury Sandstone form the plateau surface. Sandy soil is of poor quality but supports many plants. Deeper sandy alluvial soils exist along stream banks. The slopes of Meeks Cr mostly face east or west and those of Hillcrest Ave north or south so there is microclimatic and habitat variety.

Ecological Communities: the variety of habitat types encourages a range of communities:

- **Blue Mountains City Council Scheduled communities:**
 - Eucalyptus deanei Tall Open Forest (2E) Blue Mountains Heath and Scrub (5A)
 - Blue Mountains Riparian Complex (6) Blue Mountains escarpment (7)
- **Sandstone vegetation communities** (BMCC Non-scheduled):
 - E.piperita/Angophora costata Open Forest (11B)
 - C.gummifera/E.sparsifolia Open Forest Woodland (11F)

These communities support well over 300 species of plants, 110 species of birds, a range of mammals, bats, reptiles, a large population of frogs and even the remarkable Long-finned Eel.

Threatened Ecological Communities: The Endangered **River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains ... of the Sydney Basin ...** (NSW BC Act) grows in the deep valley of Lot 112 Meeks Crescent. Dominated by *Eucalyptus deanei* of all ages it provides tree hollow habitat for the threatened Powerful Owl. The Endangered *Zieria involucreta* may grow here.

Threatened species: the following threatened species have been recorded:

- **Plants:** *Acacia bynoena*, *Acacia gordonii* and *Acrophyllum australe*
- **Animals** listed as Vulnerable under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act include: the Gang-gang Cockatoo, Glossy Black-cockatoo, Giant Burrowing Frog, Powerful Owl, Red-crowned Toadlet and Spotted-tail Quoll.

Regionally significant communities mapped under LEP 2015:

- **Eucalyptus deanei Tall Open Forest (2E)**: please refer to Threatened Communities
- **Blue Mountains Riparian Complex (6)**: lines the main tributaries of Linden Creek. Included are the ferny surrounds of the Peggy's Pool waterfalls in Lot 1 DP 130267.
- **Blue Mountains Escarpment Complex (7)**: found on wet rock faces and ledges. Species include uncommon or rare plants like *Acrophyllum australe* (Vulnerable), *Alania endlicheri*, the Green Rock Orchid *Rimacola elliptica* and Christmas Bells *Blandfordia cunninghamii*.
- **Blue Mountains Heath and Scrub (5A)**: grows across the plateau surface. It is a complex mosaic of plants that includes mid-to-lower Mountains species of *Acacia oxycedrus*, *Baeckea brevifolia* and ***Eucalyptus burgessiana***, the Faulconbridge Mallee Ash.

ROTAP species not yet transferred to the Threatened Species lists include *Alania endlicheri*, *Atkinsonia ligustrina*, *Austromyrtus tenuifolia*, *Blechnum ambiguum*, *Epacris crassifolia* subsp. *crassifolia*, ***Eucalyptus burgessiana***, *E. multicaulis* and *Rimacola elliptica*.

Unusual/interesting assemblages of plants not already detailed include: ***Eucalyptus burgessiana*** or **Faulconbridge Mallee Ash heath** (and woodland). The Hawkesbury Sandstone ridge provides critical habitat for this rare mallee that has been greatly impacted on by development and too many fires. The type specimen was only collected from here in 1953.

8. **Local catchment values**: Both properties sit within the headwaters of Linden Creek, a major lower Mountains tributary of the Grose River. In 2008 the Grose was declared a **Wild River in NSW**. The NPWS is required to maintain associated freshwater ecosystems and safeguard fresh water conservation at the highly natural end of the spectrum (NSW OEH 2018).
9. **Wildlife Corridors**: Linked on their northern and western boundaries to the National Park, the properties provide ready access for all faunal species to continuous good quality bushland around the fringes of the suburban area. Special faunal residents include the Long-nosed Bandicoot, and the Spotted-tail Quoll and Powerful Owl that are both classified as Vulnerable.
10. **Heritage and social values**:

Aboriginal heritage: this is a place of great significance to Aboriginal People. The Darug People had a strong connection with this sandstone country. It played an important role in providing shelter, waterholes, tool making grooves and grain grinding pits on sites that in the immediate environs extend from the emu art site of Ticehurst Park through to the National Park. Sandstone benches allowed for movement into the valleys and then along the streams to access the fresh water and aquatic life in Peggy's Pool and the waterways beyond.

Non-indigenous heritage and social values: the ridge was subdivided in the 1870s. Hillcrest Avenue remained a rare Crown Land Reserve for Water Supply. The Hon. John Meeks MLA who owned the Meeks Cr property from 1880, organised stone steps to Peggy's Pool from Everton House. Subdivision from 1916 reduced the property size but a large acreage in the valley and on the western NPWS boundary remains as bushland. Recreational activities today include bushwalking on trails and social media-promoted geo-caching near Peggy's Pool.

11. **Current threats, including impacts on adjacent national parks** include the usual issues of erosion of unsealed tracks, unmanaged recreational users particularly on trail bikes, weed invasion, pest animal species, overzealous hazard reductions and intrusion by neighbours. **Two major issues take precedence** however: the **urgent need to protect the significant Aboriginal heritage of this land and to conserve the habitat of *Eucalyptus burgessiana***. The possible development of E4 land in Shirlow Avenue and HR fires seriously threatens both.

To conclude: the addition of the Hillcrest Ave and Meeks Cr properties to the National Park would:

- Consolidate land with great conservation values including substantial biodiversity, threatened species, rare/unusual plants and the **critical habitat of *Eucalyptus burgessiana*** into the one management organisation, and would remove the possible future threat of residential expansion
- Provide for the protection and appropriate management of very important **Aboriginal heritage sites** that are continuous with others elsewhere along the southern rim of Linden Creek
- Minimise future negative impacts of changes in water runoff quantity and quality, through the National Park and World Heritage Area into the Grose River, a **designated Wild River** in NSW