

Noosa Oyster Ecosystem Restoration Project

Report - Public Information Sessions

December 2020

On Monday the 14th of December 2020, TNC facilitated six public information sessions about the Noosa Oyster Ecosystem Restoration Project.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Inform the Noosa community about the project
- Seek further local endorsement for the project
- Seek specific feedback and endorsement for the oyster restoration sites presented (Tewantin, Goat Island, Noosa Sound East, Noosa Sound West and Weyba Creek A and B)
- Gain feedback as to further oyster ecosystem restoration opportunities in the Noosa River estuary

The sessions follow on from more than 70 face-to-face meetings TNC has held with Noosa's local stakeholders about the project, and proposed restoration sites, since February 2020 and the successful Community Engagement Work held on the 7th of December 2020 at Noosa Shire Council.

Location

The public information sessions were held at 'The J Noosa', Noosa Heads (Figure 1). The J was a highly suitable venue, allowing TNC to provide a COVID safe environment for the community to come and learn about the project.



Figure 1: The J Noosa was a highly suitable venue for this COVID safe event

How the sessions were run

TNC designed the sessions to allow maximum access to the community, given the strict local and TNC COVID 19 protocols applicable at the time. The structure was designed to maximise opportunities for individuals to have their views aired, and questions adequately responded to, in a calm and informative environment.

Each of the 9 sessions included two parallel presentations, with a maximum of 12 individuals in each session. For those who attended, and those who could not, TNC also offered to meet individuals, or groups, one-on-one before or after the information sessions, if they preferred. No one took TNC up on this offer.

In each session, the speaker presented the oyster restoration process, referred to site maps of the preferred restoration sites and answered questions on all aspect of the project implementation and governance.

Maps of the Noosa River estuary and the restoration sites were also presented on tables, and some groups gathered around these to discuss river ecology, uses and oyster restoration options in detail. Other groups preferred to receive a general overview and have a general conversation about oyster restoration.

While the speakers facilitated the sessions, three TNC officers took notes and spoke one-on-one with the attendees. After the sessions, attendees were asked if they were willing to complete an exit interview, but with all the enthusiasm and discussion, this was not always possible, so 17 of the 28 attendees were formally interviewed.

Facilitation

TNC facilitated all sessions. The following TNC staff were directly involved in setting up and facilitating the event:

Speakers:	Chris Gillies - Ocean Program Director, TNC, Craig Bohm - Restoration Coordinator – SE Queensland, TNC
Logistics:	Callum Dittes – Oyster Restoration Project Officer, TNC Helen Bowyer - Community Outreach Coordinator, TNC Mikayla Ploughman – Safety Advisor, TNC
Comms:	Rachel Bailey – Director of Communications, Marketing and Membership, TNC Jenny Luu – Digital Specialist, Marketing and Media, TNC

Advertisement

The public information sessions were promoted widely via TNC's sophisticated social media outreach system. In response, 132 people viewed the project on the TNC Website and on social media the event received 16,561 hits (Table 1).

Table 1: Media hits

TNC Website		
Date	Page title	Page views
27 Nov to 13 Dec	Events page: Noosa info sessions	132
Social Media		
Date	Type	Reach
27 Nov to 13 Dec	Facebook event	5,472
3-Dec	Facebook event post	4,569
27 Nov to 1 Dec	Facebook event advertisement	2,907
3 Dec to 13 Dec	Facebook event post advertisement	3,613
TOTAL HITS		16,561

TNC also put out a media release (Appendix 1) to all news outlets. The project team also notified local stakeholders and encouraged them to promote the sessions widely.

After the event, TNC secured articles in the Noosa Today and Sunshine Coast Daily on the 15/12/20 (Appendix 2).

Community Participants

28 community members attended the sessions (9 females, 19 males) (Table 1).

A further 5 individuals confirmed for evening sessions but did not appear, and another 4 people called TNC with information queries about the project and expressed that they supported the project but could not attend.

Table 2: Participants List

1. Peter Thompsett	15. Roland Hill
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2. Wayne Carlson	16. Wesley Manson
3. Bruce Hallett	17. John Lobb
4. Richard Howard	18. Peter Riley
5. David Jones	19. Greg Sheen
6. Prue McGowan	20. Amelia Lorentson
7. Patrick Lloyd	21. Trevor Clarey
8. Bruce Davidson	22. Judith Still
9. Jennifer Marohasy	23. Craig Doolan
10. Peter Morris	24. Rex Halvorson
11. Alana Morris	25. Tom Wegener
12. Alana Roland	26. Lloyd Gamble
13. Alison Cooper	27. Maureen Riggs
14. Sharon Wright	28. Clent Kempstal

Community feedback

Some 17 participants of the 28 participants were formally interviewed. The results are presented below (Table 2). In summary, 15 of 17 respondents expressed unequivocal support for the project and its plans. 2 respondents expressed lingering concerns that were unresolvable on the day. Of the 28 participants, we estimate that 24 of 28 participants expressed strong support for the project and for the projects plans.

This support echoes the outcomes of virtually all 70+ one-on-one meetings the project has held with stakeholders in the past 12 months and represents a fantastic result.

From the public information sessions, four participants however, expressed strong objections to the project, objections which were unreconcilable at the time. Two of these participants raised matters unrelated to the project (access to historic water quality data + the projects potential contribution to the spread of 2378 Tera-chloro-dibenzo-dioxin). Another participant strongly objected to the project having linkages to the Noosa Parks Association. The fourth participant raised concerns about a raft of issues relating to oyster abundance, river health, project partners and the results of past river management actions. Although TNC invested heavily in this individual, looking to find some common ground or agreement, the participant remained unconvinced about the project's relevance.

Table 2: Survey Responses

Questions	Women		Men		Comments
	YES	NO	YES	NO	
Q1. Did you receive the information about the project you were seeking today?	4	1	12		The 'no' person was very focused on water quality and access to water quality information they thought we were hiding. It was difficult to convince the individual that we were not responsible for this information, even after one of the other workshop participants cleared this up and provided details of where the information is available.
Q2 (a) Are you happy for the project to proceed?	5		10	2	One 'no' individual struggled to uncouple this project from the past NBRF/USC project and our relationship to the Noosa Parks Association One 'no' individual raised issues beyond the scope of the project to address
Q2 (b) If no, what are some of your concerns?					Concerned about the project with the presence of netting and the commercial fishing. Track record of past projects – follow-up. Concerns about genesis. Passed through many hands,

					<p>originally Biosphere (not community run). Not a local priority. Vestige of last council and targets not met.</p> <p>Permits – state driven and state needs to be more involved.</p> <p>But including issues raised. Transparency around funding links to NPA.</p> <p>Only to proceed under conditions. Contained in activated charcoal area to combat 2378 Tera-chloro-dibenzo-dioxin.</p> <p>I would like to get involved.</p> <p>Not sure you will actually be measuring H2O quality? Mostly want to know how the success (or otherwise) of the project will be measured in terms of water quality. I sediment / high turbidity could be a problem, would like to know will be contingency to mitigate this potential issue.</p>
Q3 Would you like to receive further updates on the project as it rolls out?	6		10	2	More emphasis on historical context.
Women attendance - Total			9		
Men attendance - Total			19		
Total Attendance			28		


Follow up

Participants who expressed a desire to be kept informed, have been added to the project's mailing list and will receive updates about the project. Participants who wished to be directly involved in the project are being connected with relevant activities to their interests.

Appendices

1. Media Release
2. Print media secured


Appendix 1: Public Information Sessions - Media Release

<div data-bbox="205 365 308 383">Media statement</div> <div data-bbox="205 392 367 412">Thursday 3rd December 2020</div> <div data-bbox="568 302 758 392"></div> <div data-bbox="244 454 675 479">Learn about efforts to restore Noosa's oyster ecosystems</div> <div data-bbox="205 490 702 526"><p>The Noosa community is invited to learn about The Nature Conservancy's efforts to restore oyster ecosystems in the Noosa River estuary.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 533 707 571"><p>Public information forums will be held on Monday 14 December. Community members can register to attend any session.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 580 695 616"><p>This is a free event, however due to COVID-19 restrictions, bookings are essential, and capacity is limited.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 624 711 680"><p>Craig Bohm, Project Manager, The Nature Conservancy, will provide an update on the Noosa project including the history of oyster ecosystems in the Noosa River estuary and the scientific process supporting their recovery. There will be time for Q&A's in each session.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 689 715 745"><p>"Oyster-dominated ecosystems were once common in the Noosa River estuary and throughout south-eastern Queensland. By restoring them, we'll boost the health of the estuary and provide food and shelter for fish and other marine life," Craig said.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 752 606 770"><p>"Noosa's oyster ecosystems can recover but they need our help to get started."</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 779 707 817"><p>Over the past year, restoration scientists have busy been collecting new environmental information to help inform the design and location of reefs.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 824 699 880"><p>The Nature Conservancy has also had more than 70 meetings with community members who contributed a wealth of local knowledge on the environmental history and condition of the Noosa River Estuary.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 889 707 945"><p>"The combination of scientific and engineering advice and local knowledge will help ensure these new shellfish ecosystems will have the best chance to re-establish and thrive in the Noosa Estuary," Craig said.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 954 692 992"><p>"Each new oyster bed will grow on a foundation of locally sourced rock and oyster shell carefully positioned to align with the best areas for natural oyster recruitment and fish habitat."</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 999 702 1037"><p>He said in just a few years the oyster beds were expected to contain millions of oysters and attract more than 100 marine species.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 1046 707 1102"><p>"The Nature Conservancy is working closely with the Noosa Shire Council to deliver this project and is thankful for the support of The Thomas Foundation and Australian Marine Conservation Society," Craig added.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 1108 707 1164"><p>This project is part of The Nature Conservancy's national shellfish restoration program that aims to rebuild 60 of these ecosystems around Australia. If achieved, Australia will be the first nation in the world to have recovered a critically endangered marine ecosystem.</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 1173 245 1189">Details</div> <div data-bbox="205 1191 507 1209"><p><i>Info Sessions – Noosa Oyster Ecosystem Restoration Project</i></p></div> <div data-bbox="205 1209 355 1227"><p>Date: Monday, 14 December</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 1229 346 1247"><p>Session length: 30 minutes</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 1247 601 1265"><p>Time: 10.30am, 11.15am, 12pm, 1.15pm, 2pm, 2.45pm, 5pm, 5.45pm, 6.30pm</p></div> <div data-bbox="205 1265 485 1283"><p>Location: The J Noosa, 60 Noosa Drive, Noosa Junction.</p></div> <div data-bbox="702 1314 715 1330">1</div>	<div data-bbox="884 327 1366 380"><p>RSVP: To Callum Dittes at callum.dittes@tnc.org. Please include your full name, phone number, which the session you'd like to attend, and number of seats required.</p><p>Please note: Due to current restrictions, registrations are <u>essential</u> and capacity is limited.</p></div> <div data-bbox="884 409 979 425">More information</div> <div data-bbox="901 436 1326 479"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn more about the Noosa Oyster Ecosystem Restoration Project• High resolution photos and footage of the reefs are available to download here.</div> <div data-bbox="884 508 971 524">Media enquiries</div> <div data-bbox="884 530 1075 548"><p>Laura Griffin, Currie Communications</p></div> <div data-bbox="884 555 1090 573"><p>E: laura@curriecommunications.com.au</p></div> <div data-bbox="884 580 973 595"><p>M: 0400 170 663</p></div> <div data-bbox="884 629 1046 647">About The Nature Conservancy</div> <div data-bbox="884 656 1394 768"><p><i>The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organisation dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we focus on getting things done efficiently and with the greatest positive impact for conservation. We're a trusted organisation working in 70 countries on innovative solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. Our priorities are to tackle climate change and protect land and water. To learn more about The Nature Conservancy in Australia, visit our website or follow us on Facebook.</i></p></div> <div data-bbox="1375 1314 1388 1330">2</div>
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Appendix 2: Media secured

The project secured articles in the Noosa Today and Sunshine Coast Daily – 15/12/20

NEWS SPECIAL OUR REGION'S HEALTH WORKERS ARE STRESSED AND BURNED OUT, SURVEY REVEALS **More**



❏ The Noosa River oyster restoration project has been outlined to Noosa residents

ENVIRONMENT

Back from brink: Bold bid to restore Coast river life

PETER GARDINER
15th Dec 2020 8:00 AM
Subscriber only

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Noosa is part of an ambitious world first large-scale environmental oyster reef restoration program aimed at increasing marine biodiversity and providing hundreds of jobs.

Public information sessions on Monday by The Nature Conservancy at The J in Noosa Junction gave insights into the contentious \$2.4 million oyster reef rebuild.

The project is part of the conservancy's 60 projects in Australia to rehabilitate its depleted bays and waterways.

[Dredging the river mouth the way to 'bring back the fish'](#)

[Noosa's troubled waters](#)


The Nature Conservancy project manager Craig Bohm said if the goal is achieved, Australia would be the first nation in the world to have recovered "a critically endangered marine ecosystem".

In just a few years he expects the oyster beds to contain millions of oysters and attract more than 200 marine species.

Mr Bohm said Australia would be the first nation in the world to have recovered a critically endangered marine ecosystem if the projects succeeded.

"By restoring them, we'll boost the health of the estuary and provide food and shelter for fish and other marine life," he said.

"The combination of scientific and engineering advice and local knowledge will help ensure these new shellfish ecosystems will have the best chance to re-establish and thrive in the Noosa estuary."



❏ Traditional fishing and food gathering involved traditional owners piling up large mounds of oyster shells.

"Each new oyster bed will grow on a foundation of locally-sourced rock and oyster shell carefully positioned to align with the best areas for natural oyster recruitment and fish habitat."

He said oyster-dominated ecosystems were once common in the Noosa River estuary and throughout southeast Queensland.

Noosa River marine researcher Dr Ruth Thurstan said Lake Weyba was described in 1876 as a major oyster source for the local Indigenous people.

"A visitor to the Noosa region the following year said he came across large mounds of oyster shells within the Teywanta area," Dr Thurstan said.

One of the middens formed "a natural wharf of considerable extent" used by the settlement's supply vessel.

Half of the restoration budget is from The Nature Conservancy, The Thomas Foundation and Australian Marine Conservation Society. The other \$1.2m is being funded by Noosa ratepayers.

According to The Nature Conservancy:

1. Shellfish reefs are Australia's most critically endangered marine ecosystem with less than 10 per cent remaining.
2. Every hectare of oyster reef per year would filter 2.7 billion litres of seawater, remove 225 kilograms of nitrogen and phosphate and produce 275kg of fish.
3. Provide up to 850 jobs in maritime construction, science, fisheries and associated service sectors with half of these in regional areas.

[noosa bring back the fish](#) [noosa river health](#) [oyster reef restoration](#) [the nature conservancy](#)

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Noosa