

NSW Government Invests \$5 Million in Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative

August 27, 2024



The New South Wales (NSW) Government has announced the commencement of the Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative, a \$5 million project aimed at improving water quality in the Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond, and Evans River catchments.

The initiative will involve a range of natural flood management techniques to restore and enhance the health of the rivers and their surrounding ecosystems. Key projects include:

- **Macadamia Orchard Management:** Working with macadamia farmers to improve orchard floor management, water-sensitive drainage, and soil stabilization.
- **Waterway Condition Improvements:** Establishing vegetated buffer zones to enhance water quality and ecological benefits through weed removal, off-stream water management, cattle exclusion, fencing, and planting native trees.
- **Redesigned Floodplain Drainage:** Modernizing floodplain drainage infrastructure to minimize environmental impacts while maintaining service levels.
- **Landscape Hydration:** Implementing natural flood management techniques to slow flows, retain soil fertility, and reduce runoff in rural catchments.

The initiative is a collaborative effort involving Rous County Council, Lismore City Council, Richmond Valley Council, Kyogle, Tweed, Byron, and Ballina Shire Councils, North Coast Local Land Services, and the Northern Co-operative Meat Company.

Minister for Regional NSW Tara Moriarty said:

“Our regional and rural rivers are beautiful yet fragile ecosystems and the Northern Rivers region, is prone to drought followed by severe and frequent flooding events, like those we have seen in recent years.”

“This initiative will help the region to respond to the effects of drought and flood by improving the resilience of the landscape and the health of waterways.”

“This is about restoring our Northern Rivers, bringing them back, as far as possible, to their natural state.”

State Member for Lismore and NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery Janelle Saffin said:

“I am proud to be delivering on one of the NSW Government’s key election commitments — \$5 million for high-priority, shovel-ready projects to kickstart the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation’s Watershed Initiative.

“This is a long-term strategy aimed at improving water quality and general health of the Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond and Evans River catchments.

“Water quality of some of our rivers has been tested as being of poor or very poor quality so shifting the dial on that is a high priority for me and I believe it’s in everyone’s interest – townspeople, farmers, commercial and recreational fishers — to have cleaner waterways.

“Rous County Council’s Catchment & Cultural Awareness Manager Anthony Acret has engaged well with me about how the water authority will work closely with local partners from government and non-government on the ground to maximise river health and environmental benefits under a suite of projects which have a truly regional scope.

“In lobbying I just didn’t look at my electorate in isolation; I went into bat for the entire Northern Rivers because river catchments don’t follow electoral boundaries. I hope this is only the start of deeper work to restore river health across the region.”

General Manager of Rous County Council Phillip Rudd said:

“The Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative is an overarching strategy that involves investment in catchment works in upper catchment areas that aim to restore natural hydrologic functions that deliver both improvements in stream bank condition and river health.”

“The project will involve implementation of coastal zone management actions to address high priority estuarine health issues.”

“We look forward to working with our local councils, North Coast Local Land Services and the Northern Co-operative Meat Company to implement this initial series of projects within the Tweed, Brunswick,

Richmond and Evans River catchments.”