



Surf Coast Energy Group (SCEG)

SPRING CREEK VALLEY SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE PLAN Draft, April 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SUMMARY OF PROJECT:

Surf Coast Energy Group (SCEG) recognises the Spring Creek valley as an important ecological and community asset. SCEG is now working with partners to develop a landscape-level sustainability plan that identifies economic opportunities and incorporates elements including conservation of important biodiversity, improving access and amenity to community, improvement to water quality, providing opportunities for enhancing the landscape through community stewardship, and the purchase of important assets in the landscape through the creation of a community land trust. Contingent on the establishment of a permanent settlement boundary at Duffields Road, SCEG will further develop this plan through a series of community consultations and strategic partnerships.

The following activities have already been undertaken:

- assessing technical and legal feasibility of a community-owned land trust
- identification of high value properties in DAL Spring Creek Future Development area
- facilitating partnerships with Landcare and the Catchment Management Authority to attract new conservation investment
- engagement with interested parties throughout the landscape
- assessment of important ecological assets in the landscape
- assessment of important cultural heritage values in the landscape, and
- commission of expert independent assessments of ecological values (Appendix 3)

1.2 RATIONALE:

- There is a statutory obligation and an urgent need to secure and enhance important globally, nationally and state significant biodiversity (including Bellarine yellow gum) and important connectivity between hinterland and the coast
- The valley offers economic and social opportunities given its proximity to Torquay

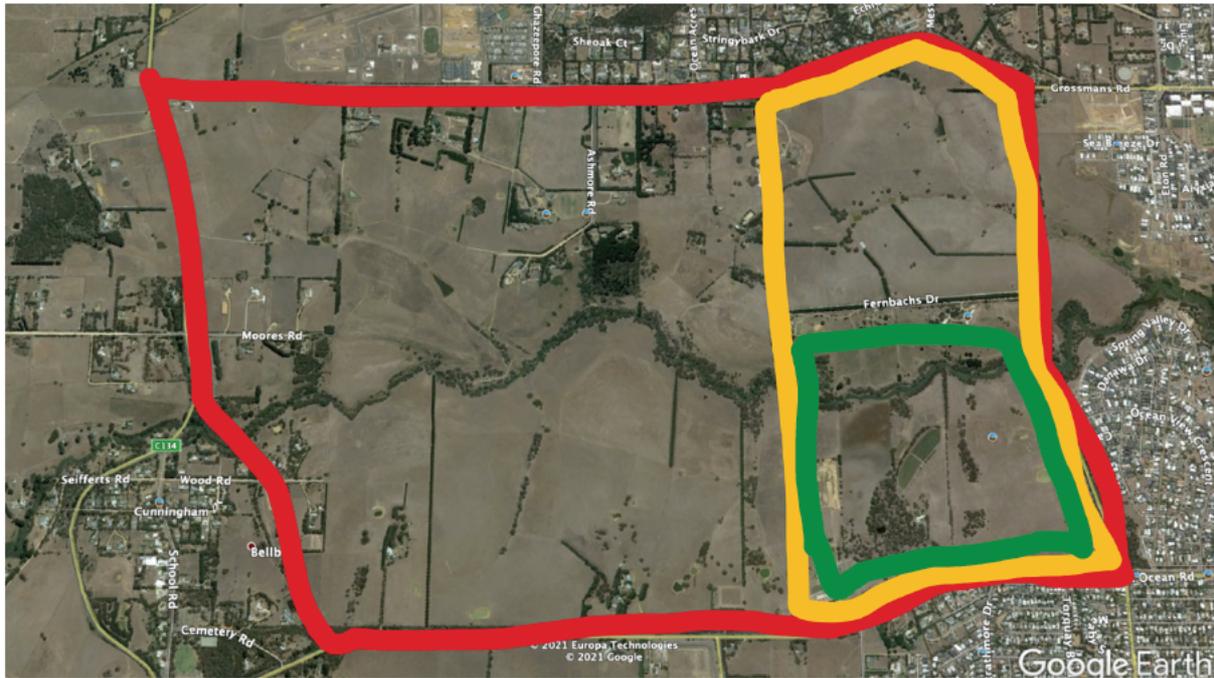
- There is a strong need to make our community and environment more resilient to impacts of climate change, and Spring Creek offers unrepeated opportunity for community to make that response
- The valley offers opportunities for climate adaptation responses, including providing space for ecosystems to adapt, and for communities to develop nature-based responses to the worst impacts of climate change
- The site offers north facing slopes that may suit renewable energy generation
- Within and beyond our region, there is a need for innovative sustainability demonstration sites to replicate local-level sustainability and resilience efforts
- Components of the project are predicated on a final decision to place a permanent growth boundary at Duffields Rd through state govt. DAL process

2. PROJECT SCOPE AND SITE

2.1 PROJECT SITE

SCEG will work with partners on the Spring Creek valley landscape, defined as that between Bellbrae township and Duffields Road.

Within this site, SCEG notes the 240 hectare block highlighted in the DELWP 'Distinctive Areas and Landscapes' draft Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) – as highlighted yellow below. This block is bound by Duffields Road to the east, Grossmans Road to the north, and Great Ocean Road to the south, and extends one kilometre west of Duffields Road. Depending on provisions and zoning outlined in the final SPP, SCEG will focus its efforts to acquire land within this block.



-  Overall landscape project area (~700 hectares)
-  Area targeted by community land trust (DAL site – 240 hectares)
-  Area of highest habitat value (within DAL site)

2.2 ECOLOGICAL CHARACTER AND VALUES

Ecological values and character are detailed in the following expert witness statements by Dr Guy Dutson and Mr Mark Trengove which were commissioned by SCEG in early 2021, as supporting evidence submitted to the state government’s Distinctive Areas and Landscapes (DAL) Standing Committee under Planning Panels Victoria.

Links to these statements are provided in **Appendix 1**.

3 PROJECT ASPIRATIONS

3.1 PLANNING HORIZON: 100 year vision / twenty year strategic plan / rolling five year planning cycle

3.2 GOAL: Protect and enhance the distinctive values of the Spring Creek valley including threatened biodiversity and community assets for future generations, and develop new social and economic options for our community through an innovative, multi-partner landscape-scale approach that is compatible with nature conservation.

3.3 SCEG's 100 year VISION: Community-led management of the Spring Creek valley landscape sees its unique woodland ecosystems restored, and nature thriving while new social and economic opportunities developed in line with looming 21st century challenges associated with energy, economy, ecology and equity (identified in the SCEG submission as the E4 crisis.)

3.4 LANDSCAPE TARGETS (20 year):

- At least 40 hectares of freehold purchased through a community land trust
- At least 200 hectares of private land with improved management of yellow gum
- At least 5 kilometres of new landscape linkages / ecological corridors
- 4 kilometres of waterway buffer restored / improved between Bellbrae and Duffields Road
- 5 x 200 kW community owned solar capacity
- Pilot studies for carbon offsetting, regenerative farming
- Successful return of Growling grass frog resulting from habitat improvement
- Return of woodland dependant bird species to Torquay
- Establish a community science program and database

3.5 PLAN OBJECTIVES AND KEY ACTIONS

Objective 1 – Conserve and enhance the valley's distinctive biodiversity

Action 1 – *Formalise a community land trust in order to purchase suitable parcels of land within the Spring Creek Residential Development area*

Action 2: *Develop management framework for community owned assets*

Action 3 – *Facilitate conservation covenants and Landcare partnerships to improve land management outcomes on private properties*

Objective 2 – Develop community stewardship and public access options

Action 1 – *Build local stewardship opportunities*

Action 2 – *Traditional owners / Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) / employment*

Action 3 – *Amenity plan*

Objective 3 – Sustainable economic activity compatible with nature conservation

Action 1 – *Facilitate regenerative farming*

Action 2 – *Feasibility of solar farms*

Action 3 – *Feasibility/develop of other options incl. carbon offset, nature-based tourism, arts/cultural sector, overnight accommodation*

3.6 SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE PLAN – VISUAL CONCEPT (*Illustrative only*)

Figure 1 illustrates how a community vision throughout the landscape from Bellbrae to Duffields Road. The sketch incorporates a range of economic and social uses of the landscape nestled between natural areas including remnant stands of grassy woodland, riparian corridors, and highlighting ecological connectivity across the landscape. The sketch is illustrative only, and not reflective of the plans of individual landholders, or current zoning provisions.

SCEG notes the importance of working with the community upon finalisation of the DAL process to formulate a shared long-term vision for the landscape. SCEG will commence this process with landowners in the valley, before engaging the broader community and stakeholders using a ‘place-maker’ facilitation process to identify aspirations within the landscape, and develop shared strategies to achieve them.

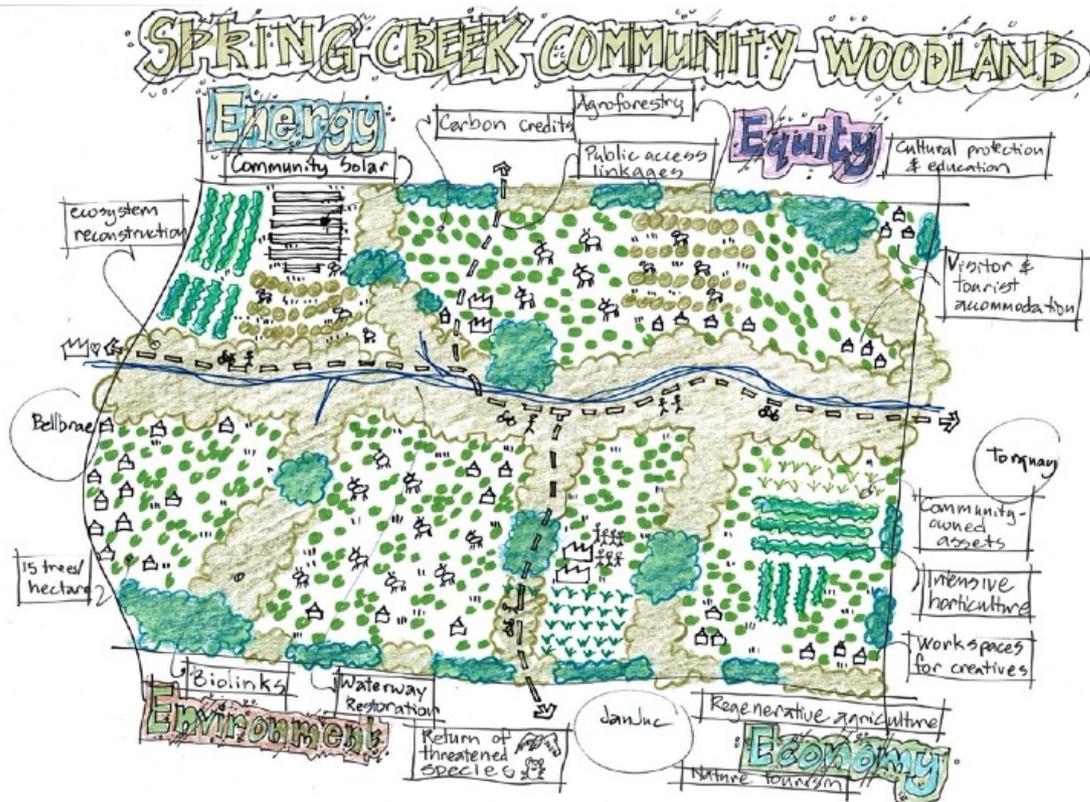


Figure 1. Spring Creek Valley sustainable landscapes vision, accommodating multiple land-uses compatible with conservation of natural values, and community-owned assets (adjacent to Duffields Road town boundary).

4. PRINCIPLES, APPROACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

4.1 KEY PRINCIPLES

The project will employ the following principles when developing this project:

- Ecosystem-based planning
- Community-led
- Incorporate TEK wherever possible
- Evidence-based
- Address cumulative impact – avoiding ‘death of a thousand cuts’
- Precautionary principle

4.2 TECHNICAL APPROACHES TO LAND ACQUISITION AND IMPROVEMENT

SCEG will work with the following hierarchy of approaches to achieve conservation and community outcomes on private land in the SC Valley:

Changing ownership. Under this approach, land would be purchased (or in some cases acquired through long-term lease arrangement) from its owner by SCEG, a community trust, or a third party acting on behalf of community. This would be done with the primary intention of managing it for biodiversity conservation and community purposes outlined in this document.

In some instances, land may also be transferred to public ownership through a compulsory acquisition by state or local government acting on behalf of the community or public interest. Other parties with capacity to purchase and manage land for conservation purposes include Trust for Nature, Green Fleet, Carbon Landscapes.

Land purchase options will be assessed via an investment framework based on the following criteria:

- Property size (ha)
- Presence/extent of remnant yellow gum grassy woodland ecosystem (ha)
- Length of waterway frontage (km)
- Habitat value / potential value
- Condition of understorey
- Connectivity
- Water supply
- Road access / accessibility
- Willingness of owners to enter into discussions/negotiations

Tools – land trust, purchase by the state.

Partners – Trust for Nature, Allens/Linklater

Changing property rights. Rather than outright purchase or leasing, under this arrangement a landowner agrees to forego some of their development or use rights for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. As an example, in conjunction with a land trust, the landowner may establish a conservation covenant over a part of their property, binding themselves and future owners of the property to protect the biodiversity values of the covenanted land.

Tools – conservation covenants

Partners – Trust For Nature or Bush Heritage

Changing practices. Rather than affecting property rights, this approach involves SCEG supporting landholders to change their practices in order to protect, conserve, or restore biodiversity on their land, and/or to support community outcomes. This may happen through supporting, educating, or informing landholders to change their outlook – and create a sense of shared responsibility for biodiversity conservation.

Tools – fencing, restoration, regenerative farming

Partners – Torquay Landcare, SCIPN, CMA

**adapted from Australian Land Conservation Alliance 2019*

4.3 PARTNERSHIP AND LEARNING APPROACH

Key to the success of this strategy are SCEG's partnerships with multiple agencies, organisations and community groups. There are multiple organisations in our region including NGOs and within the Impact investor community who have, both independently and collaboratively developed and funded similar approaches. SCEG will work with, and learn from groups who have direct experience with conservation land purchases, as well as other approaches outlined in our methodology including the use of covenants and voluntary improvement measures on private property.

This includes local Torquay based environmental regeneration and funding expert, Nigel Sharp who heads up Odonata Foundation, (odonata.org.au), Mt Rothwell (mtrothwell.com.au) and Tiverton Group (Tiverton-Rothwell.com.au). Nigel's organisations are experts in comprehensive nature conservation and regenerative enhancement projects in Victoria and beyond and have secured funding on multiple occasions and involving multiple stakeholders for acquisition and management of many projects. As relevant examples, note the following Odonata and Mt Rothwell projects in our region and beyond:

1: Mt Rothwell, Little River, Vic- 450 hectare conservation project including the reintroduction of threatened species. Funding \$3.2 m
Partners/stakeholders/supporters- Tiverton , DELWP, University of Melbourne , Australian National University, Australian Ecosystems, City of Geelong, Trust for Nature, Wettenhall Foundation, Odonata Foundation, Birdlife Australia and over 80 local volunteers.

2: Tiverton Sanctuary-Darlington, Vic- 1,000 hectare Victorian Volcanic Plains conservation and restoration project- \$5.0 m
Partners/Stakeholders/Supporters- Tiverton Group, University of Melbourne , La Trobe University, Zoos Victoria, Trust for Nature , DELWP, Greening Australia, Odonata Foundation.

3: Glenmore - Brisbane Ranges , Vic- 600 hectare extension of Brisbane Ranges corridor- \$3.0 m.
Partners/Stakeholders/Supporters- Tiverton , Mt Rothwell, Cassinia Environmental, Trust for Nature, PPWCMA, DAWE, multiple volunteers.

4: Great Cumbung - 33,000 ha Murray Darling Basin corridor project at intersection of Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Rivers- \$55 m.
Partners/Stakeholders/Supporters- Tiverton Group, The Nature Conservancy, Wyss Foundation, Fairfax and others.

Other partners and advisers include Trust for Nature, Australian Bush Heritage, GreenFleet, The Nature Conservancy and Carbon Landscapes. We also work with renowned local ecologists Dr Guy Dutson and Mark Trengrove, both of whom provided expert witness statements to the government DAL consultation process, on behalf of SCEG. Letters of Support are included in **Appendix 1**.

5. ACTION PLAN

(yellow – in progress or already undertaken)

Objective 1 – Conserve and enhance the valley’s distinctive biodiversity			
Action 1.1 – Formalise a community land trust in order to purchase suitable parcels of land within the Spring Creek Residential Development area			
Activity	Timeframe	Partners	Status
1.1.1 Legal advice on trust options, DSG status, etc.	2021 (post DAL)	Allens Linklater	partially completed 04/21, to be revised post DAL
1.1.2 Develop financial model (including cost and revenue models) to inform prospectus	2021 (post DAL)	Horizon Business Planning	
1.1.3 Develop social and environmental cost/benefit analysis, including willingness to pay survey	2021 (post DAL)	Horizon Business Planning	
1.1.4 Establish a fund governance framework	2021 (post DAL)	Trust for Nature (TfN)	SCEG Public Fund Committee in place, new members formalised early 2021, discussions with TfN on fund governance
1.1.5 Fund-raising / capital raising (prospectus to identify opportunities for community funding, crowd-source, philanthropy, impact investment funds, public finance, etc.)	2022-2025	Trust for Nature (TfN) Nigel Sharp / Odonata Allens/Linklater	SCEG has DSG to enable tax deductible donations
1.1.6 Develop fund purchase criteria and investment framework	2022	Trust for Nature (TfN) Nigel Sharp / Odonata	Outline developed mid 2020 To be refined post DAL
Action 1.2: Develop management framework for community owned assets			
1.2.1 Select and appoint a governance group (steering committee, or similar)	2021 (post DAL)		Developed governance FAQs and brief to support pro bono (June 2020)

1.2.2 Develop site management plan supported by business plan	2021 (post DAL)		
Action 1.3 – Facilitate Conservation Covenants and Landcare to improve outcomes on private properties			
1.3.1 Identify sites with high conservation potential	ongoing	Local ecologists	Expert witness statements from Trengrove and Dutson
1.3.2 Partner with Trust for Nature (TfN) on facilitating covenants	ongoing	Trust for Nature, Bush Heritage?	Site meeting with TfN held in March 2021 and letter of support secured
1.3.3 Partner with Landcare and CMA to facilitate improvements on individual properties	ongoing	Surf Coast Inland Plains Network (SCIPN) Corangamite CMA	Surf Coast Inland Plains Network (SCIPN) secured \$25k grant from Corangamite CMA in March 2021 to fund fencing of remnant vegetation and woody weed removal
Objective 2 – Develop community stewardship and public access options			
Action 2.1 – Build local stewardship opportunities			
Facilitate the 100 year community vision for the Spring Creek Valley site using a specialist 'place-maker' facilitator	June-Dec 2021 (contingent on funding)	Patagonia Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) SCIPN	Initial discussions held with Patagonia regarding funds Funding proposal to TFFF will be submitted in April 2021.
Develop 20 year action plan to address on-ground priorities throughout landscape	June-Dec 2021	Community members SCIPN	
Engage existing environment groups in on-ground actions (Landcare, Coastcare, Friends groups, etc.)	2021 (post DAL)	Torquay Landcare Jan Juc Coast Action Surf Coast Inland Plains Network (SCIPN)	
Action 2.2 – Incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge			
Design/develop a TEK component with Wadawurrung & local groups	June-Dec 2021 (contingent on funding)	Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Vascal?	

Explore feasibility of indigenous rangers/guides for public or community-owned properties	Jan-Dec 2022		
Action 2.3 – Amenity plan			
Identify options for public/open space (based on DAL outcome) through a facilitated ‘place-making’ process	2021 (post DAL)	Surf Coast Shire GORCAPA	
Work with Surf Coast Shire and GORCAPA to assess options for linking proposed amenity to existing public land assets	2021 (post DAL)	Surf Coast Shire GORCAPA	
Objective 3 – Sustainable economic activity compatible with nature conservation			
Action 1 – Facilitate regenerative farming	2021 (post DAL)	Landcare network and groups Academic partner?	
Action 2 – Feasibility of solar farms	2021 (post DAL)	Redmud Green Energy	
Action 3 – Feasibility/develop other options incl. carbon offset, nature-based tourism, arts/cultural sector (based on DAL outcome / zoning) Facilitate ‘place-making’ community vision process	2021 (post DAL)	Carbon Landscapes Ashmore Arts	

Appendix 1 - Letters of Support and Expert Witness Statements

Link to file containing the following documents:

Letters of Support:

- Nigel Sharp (Odonata, Mt Rothwell)
- Stewart Guthrie (Ashmore Arts)
- Trust for Nature
- Dale Tepper
- Torquay Coast Action

Expert Witness Statements:

- Mark Trengrove
- Guy Dutson

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Appendix 2 – SCEG team members and relevant experience/capacity

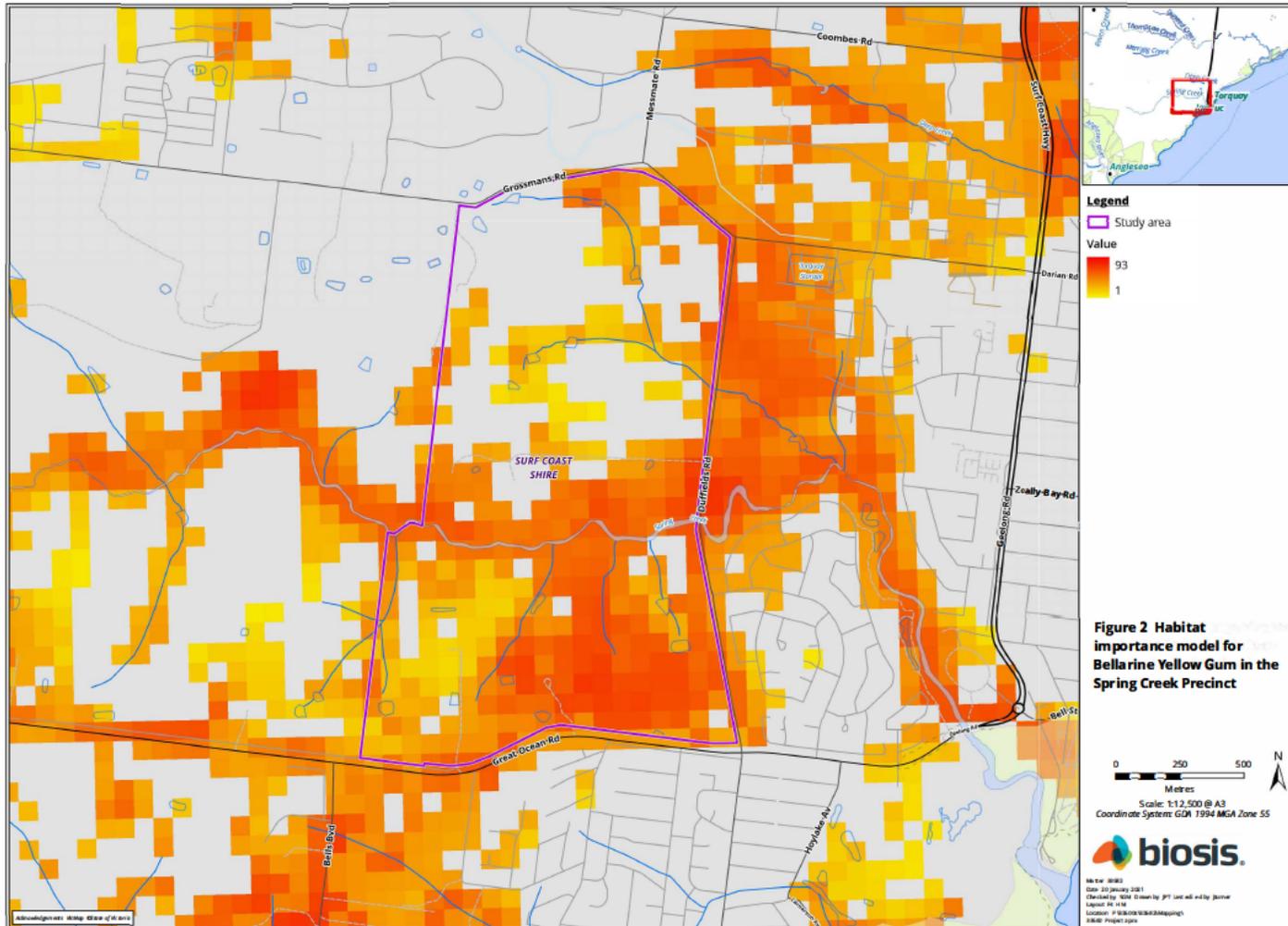
TEAM CAPACITY

SCEG Committee Member	Relevant experience
Graeme Stockton (Chair)	Community leader and long term involvement in community-based environmental stewardship groups. Proprietor of West Coast Indigenous nursery since 1988. Strong regional ecological restoration expertise.
Perry Mills (Treasurer)	Landscape architect with 20+ years experience and focus on ecologically sensitive design.
Matt Fox (Member, Public Fund Committee)	Conservation and land management consultant, with 25 years professional experience in international and domestic conservation sector, specialising in coastal management, conservation funding and financing, and landscape-scale conservation planning. \$50m+ conservation fundraising track-record.
Andrew Wilson (Public Fund Committee)	Andrew has 12 years experience in banking and finance at ANZ, with specialisations in product management, pricing and data modelling. Andrew now runs a business planning company, helping environmental organisations with planning and financial modelling. Andrew has a double bachelors degree in commerce and environmental biology and is an MBA candidate at UNSW, specialising in Social Impact.
Richard Marks (Member)	Civil and chemical engineer with over 50 years' experience in the planning and design of water related projects. Owner and Principal of InterWater Pty Ltd a water and environmental engineering consultancy operating throughout Victoria.
Katie Traill (Member)	Engagement officer with b-alternative, environmental education background, publishing and project management.
Isabelle Asfar (Member)	20 year career in project management delivering training, strategy development, systems design, environmental sustainability initiatives and public speaking across a diverse range of fields such as telecommunications, electronics recycling, eco retail, residential volume building, commercial construction, construction materials recycling, and high-end residential construction.
Barry Lierich (Public Fund Committee)	Certified Practising Accountant (retired) with expertise in financial systems, financial management and governance
Shari Maver (Secretary)	Shari has been a Physiotherapist, academic and researcher, currently holding a position at Australian Catholic University as Lecturer. She has been involved in various community groups with a special interest in environmental projects.
Adrian Ford (Member)	Adrian completed his PhD in sustainable energy transitions at the University of Melbourne in 2020 and is now a Research Fellow with the Energy Transition Hub and director of the national peak body Coalition for Community Energy. Prior to this, he worked in

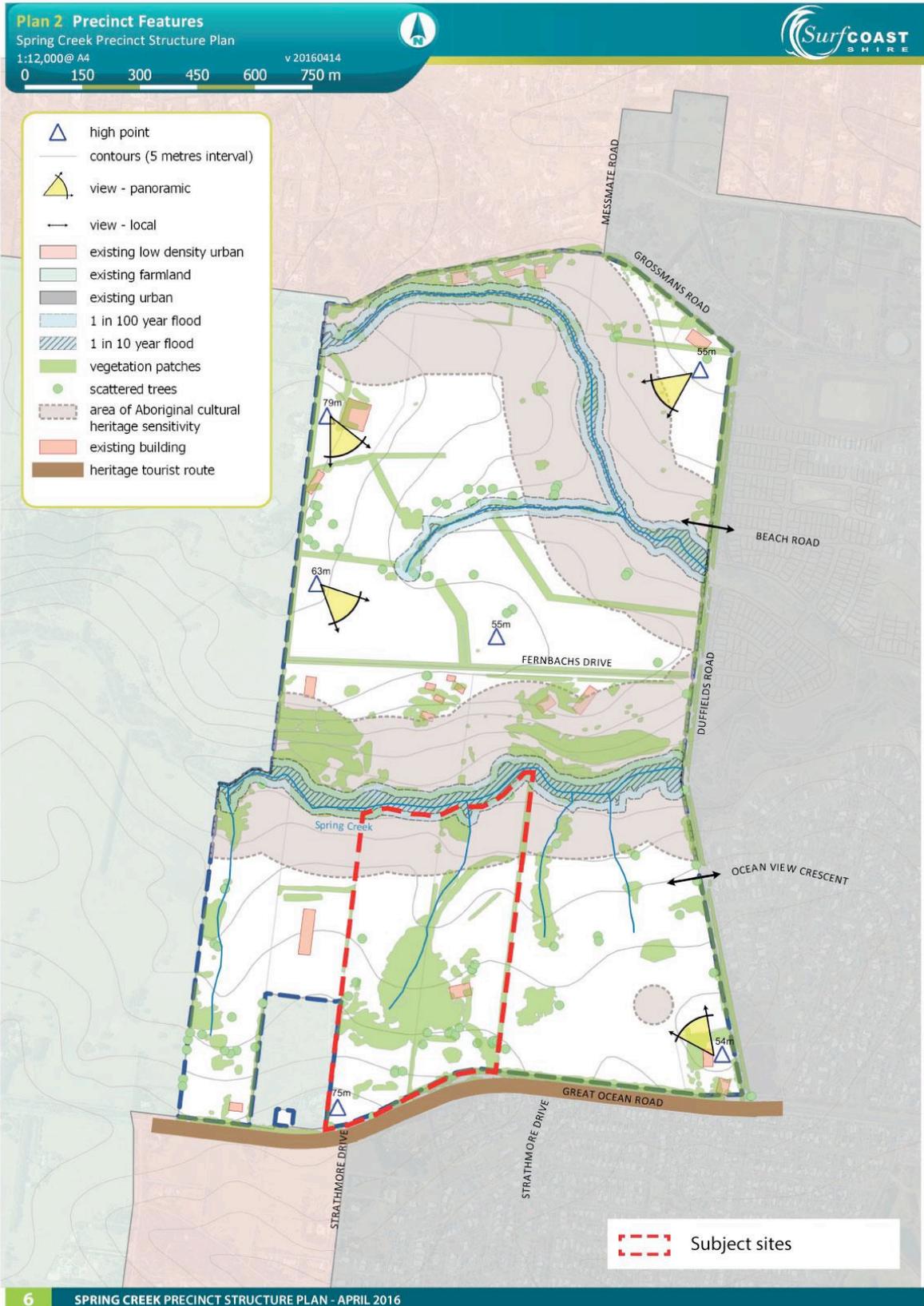
	innovation and corporate partnership roles with international development and environment organisations in Australia and the United Kingdom after a decade working as a corporate lawyer.
Stephen Prendergast (Member)	Market and social research with 33 years experience. Founder of market and social research agencies Prescience Research and FutureEQ which both specialise in human choice behaviour and data modelling. Honorary Fellow of the Australian Research Society.
Rory Tonkin (Member)	Environmental science and horticulture background, currently running consulting business focused on renewable energy 'off-grid' advice and recycled materials.

Appendix 3 – Site Maps, target properties

3.1 Habitat importance model (S. Mueck, Biosis 2021)



3.2 Cultural heritage sensitivity (Surf Coast Shire, 2016)



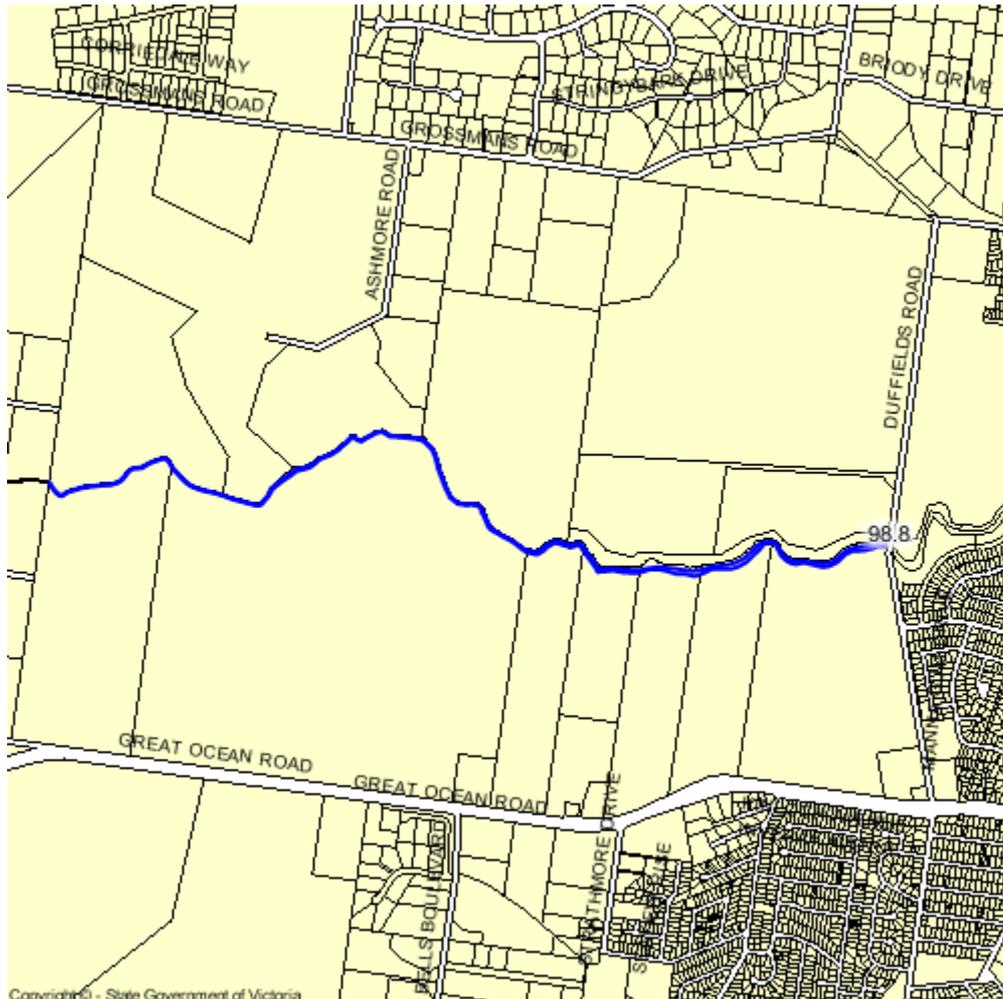
3.3 Property boundaries (Land Victoria, 2020)

Property Report from

ww



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Planning Overlays:

- FARMING ZONE (FZ)
- SCHEDULE TO THE FARMING ZONE (FZ)
- URBAN GROWTH ZONE (UGZ)
- URBAN GROWTH ZONE - SCHEDULE 1 (UGZ1)
- ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OVERLAY (ESO) ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OVERLAY - SCHEDULE 1 (ESO1) LAND SUBJECT TO INUNDATION OVERLAY (LSIO)
- LAND SUBJECT TO INUNDATION OVERLAY SCHEDULE (LSIO)