



### Streambank rehabilitation

Riparian vegetation is the strip of generally denser vegetation that is found along the banks of streams (meaning all rivers, creeks and waterways). It plays an important role in ensuring the stability of streambanks and therefore water quality and the health of Tuggerah Lakes. In Tuggerah Lakes catchment, many of these riparian zones are severely degraded, which adds to the decline in the estuary's ecosystem.

The main watercourses draining into the Tuggerah Lakes estuary are Saltwater, Tumbi, Ourimbah, Wallarah and Spring Creek and Wyong River.

### Riparian vegetation strengthens streambanks

Many of the streambanks in the Tuggerah Lakes catchment are degraded and suffer from erosion. Riparian vegetation stabilises the creek beds and streambanks because the extensive network of roots hold the soil together and stop it from eroding away. Riparian vegetation is particularly good in times of high flows and flooding when the speed of flood water in streams is reduced because the vegetation provides a natural barrier.

### More riparian vegetation equals better water quality!

Riparian vegetation plays an important role in improving and maintaining the water quality by reducing the erosion of streambanks. This reduces the amount of sediment washing into the water which would otherwise clog up the creek and increase turbidity (suspended solids in the water).

Riparian vegetation acts as a natural filter and reduces the amount of phosphorous, nitrogen, sediments and pollution washing into the water from the surrounding land in run-off. Riparian vegetation also provides shade and reduces the temperature of streams. This, along with reduced nutrient levels, can reduce the growth of introduced plant species and algae.

Streambanks



tuggerah lakes estuary

Get into the habitats





## Riparian vegetation increases plant and animal biodiversity

The riparian zone habitat is an important link between the aquatic environment and the adjoining land. It provides food, shelter and shade for aquatic, semi-aquatic and land animals such as lizards, frogs and birds. In the Tuggerah Lakes catchment, it also supports platypus, yabbies, turtle and even water dragons. Riparian vegetation also provides a green corridor along the streambanks, connecting upper and lower catchment plant and animal populations.

Some people wrongly believe that riparian vegetation increases populations of mosquitoes. The truth is healthy, vegetated stream banks actually reduce populations of insect pests like mosquitoes as they provide habitat for natural predators, such as birds.

## Threats to riparian vegetation and streambanks

The riparian zones of the Tuggerah Lakes catchment are threatened by weed invasion, feral animals, fire, over-grazing, erosion, development, clearing and human activities.



## How You Can Help

- To reduce erosion avoid creating wash when boating through the creeks.
- Pets and stock should not have access to the riparian zone – this will reduce damage to vegetation and soil as well as reduce nutrient loads coming from animal waste.
- Join or form a local Landcare group to help protect or restore your local bushland (you may need approval for certain activities- contact Council first).
- Get a rebate from Council to install a rainwater tank- this will reduce high flows of stormwater entering bushland, creeks and the lakes.
- Boats must be launched and retrieved from public boat ramps only.
- Wash cars on the grass not on a hard surface.
- Grass clippings should be dumped in your green waste, not in or near streams and lakes.
- Reduce the use of fertiliser on the garden.



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