

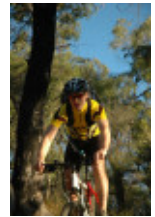


Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Rehabilitating Saltmarshes

Dr Pauline Ross and Susan Siegenthaler from the School of Natural Sciences are collaborating with Gosford City Council to explore ways to rehabilitate saltmarsh habitats at Patonga Creek through a Gosford City Council Ecological Research Grant.



'Saltmarshes are areas vegetated by grasses, herbaceous plants and shrubs and are characterised by stressful environmental factors such as high salinity and occasional tidal inundation' says Dr Ross. 'The Patonga Creek area on the Central Coast of NSW is an important natural environment and water catchment for both the Gosford community and the many species of plants and animals living in the area, some of which are rare or endangered. Despite this importance, scientists and environmental managers still remain unsure of how saltmarshes that have been damaged by recreational usage, such as mountain biking and bush walking, can be rehabilitated at a reasonable rate and cost. This project will determine the essential ingredients needed to rehabilitate the saltmarsh vegetation of the Patonga Creek area.'

The research team will explore whether covering the saltmarsh area with a thin layer of seagrass material or hessian will facilitate spread of saltmarsh vegetation and improve the growth rate of plants that have been transplanted into damaged areas by preventing loss of moisture and increasing nutrient availability. The investigators will also spread sticks over the damaged saltmarsh grounds to form structural foundations upon which new plant seedlings, buds or shoots can take root, in the hope that this will allow spread of new plants into damaged areas.

This research will assist in rehabilitating the Patonga Creek saltmarsh and provide ecologists and environmental managers with effective strategies for continual restoration and management of this valuable natural resource on behalf of the Creeks flora and fauna, recreational fishery, the Central Coast community and the many tourists who visit the area each year.

Project Title: The Rehabilitation of Saltmarsh at Patonga Creek

Funding has been set at: \$13,877

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