

Dear NR Guardians

please take a moment for this important email from our friends at the Threatened Species Conservation Society and SPEAK OUT if you can.

Hi everyone

We have a window of opportunity to speak on behalf of our koalas. The Tweed Valley Weekly (TVW) has invited its readers to send their comments or letters to [editor@theweekly.net.au](mailto:editor@theweekly.net.au) regarding *whether more should be done to save the last of the Pottsville koala population*.

Attached is a copy of the editorial which appeared in this week's (29 October 2015) edition [ <http://www.tweedvalleyweekly.net.au/#!/Fury-friends-deserve-better/c6tl/5630094a0cf213dcead0fdb0> ]. I encourage all those who care about the fate of the declining Tweed Coast koala population to take up TVW's invitation as a matter of urgency, and to pass this email on to other koala supporters, family, friends and/or members of your group/organisation.

As koala expert and leading ecologist Dr Steve Phillips stated at the Koala Information Afternoon at Pottsville on 7 March 2015: *We are facing an extinction event in our backyard and in our lifetime. Extinction is forever and pulling back decline is not an easy task. **The survival of the Tweed Coast koalas does not depend on federal, state or local governments - it depends on the community.** It is our backyard, our koalas. Ultimately what happens to them is up to us. We should hand on an environment to our children and our children's children that is at least as good as the one that has preceded us.*

The following are suggested actions which Council should implement to give the fragile Pottsville/Tweed Coast koalas a chance of survival (please feel free to come up with your own solutions):-

- Retain the koala protection gates at the entrance to the Black Rocks sports field access road
- Lock the koala/dog-proof vehicle access gates at all times with a key provided to authorised personnel
- Disallow any sporting activity which may impact on the koalas and other threatened species at the sports field site
- Re-direct scheduled sporting events to other venues wherever possible, especially during threatened species breeding seasons
- Take the precautionary principle if there is potential for impacts on resident koalas and other threatened species at the sports field site
- Provide a report on how funding could be made available so that the sports field can be revegetated with koala food trees, as recommended by independent ecologists including Dr Steve Phillips and Sandy Pimm.
- Advise Council and Councillors that you believe that the Black Rocks sports field should be revegetated to strengthen the corridor and create a large habitat block with sufficient buffers from life-threatening impacts.

Here are some key points and background information which may be useful in your response:-

- In October 2014 the NSW Scientific Committee made a **Preliminary Determination** for the threatened status of the Tweed Coast koalas to be upgraded to '**endangered**'.
- **Over 200ha of koala habitat was destroyed or severely damaged** due to the Pottsville Wetlands Christmas Day 2014 bush fire. According to Dr Phillips, **30-60%** of the Pottsville Wetlands/Black Rocks koala source population **may have perished** as a result of this fire.
- In 2011 the Tweed Coast Koala Habitat Study (TCKHS) revealed that there were an estimated 144 koalas remaining on the Tweed Coast (with a **50% decline over the previous decade**). In 2014 (prior to the Pottsville Wetlands bush fire) Dr Phillips announced that he believes there are **now as few as 100-110 koalas left**.
- The TCKHS also revealed that there were an **estimated 35 koalas in the Pottsville Wetlands**. In 2015 (after the fire) Dr Phillips announced that he believes there are **probably only 10-15 koalas left**.
- In her email of 5/12/2013 ecologist Sandy Pimm states: ***The Pottsville Wetlands/Black Rocks koala sub-population is critical to the survival of the koala on the Tweed Coast.***

- In his email of 30/9/2014 Dr Phillips states: *Of all the nodes and linkages that were identified by the Habitat Study, the **Black Rocks locality is one - if not the most - important** because the site supports a **resident koala population** that is also the southernmost currently known to occur along the Tweed Coast and the locality is ideally placed to accommodate both north-south and east-west movement.*
- In their initial response to the proposed Black Rocks sports field location within the corridor on 25/9/2002, the National Parks and Wildlife Service stated: **The Service has recommended that this sports field be located outside of the subject site. This is to maintain the integrity of the wildlife corridor and significant koala habitat which would be severed by the proposed access road and infrastructure to the proposed sports field. It would also create human disturbance in this area where it currently does not exist.**
- The Black Rocks sports field is surrounded by **core koala habitat, endangered ecological communities**, is home to **3 threatened species** (koala, bush stone-curlew and osprey), with **primary koala food trees** on 3 sides of the sports field and significant stands of koala food trees either side of the access road. Koalas move between **2 breeding areas** (either side of the access road and 200 metres north-east of the sports field).
- Since the Black Rocks sports field was open to the public in 2010, **over 300 koala and other threatened species-impactive activities** have been reported to Council.
- Since 2011 **82 koala and 67 bush stone-curlew sightings** have been reported to the NSW Bionet Wildlife Atlas and Council.
- Since January 2014 **three Black Rocks koalas** have been **ethanased due to the stress-related disease Chlamydia**. Another **2 diseased koalas** remain **uncaptured** and untreated (one of which is presumed to have perished). Another **8 koala sightings** have displayed **symptoms of this disease**. It is well-documented that **persistent general disturbance exposes koalas to stress which culminates in this fatal disease**.
- Further koala protection was denied at the Black Rocks sports field in September 2014 when Councillors Longland, Polglase, Byrne & Youngblutt passed a resolution to leave the **koala/dog-proof vehicle access gates** (which replaced a permanently locked boom gate) **open during the day** against the recommendations of Council's Koala Advisory Committee and in spite of several reported **daytime on-ground koala sightings** at the site.
- On 21 May 2015 Councillors Longland, Polglase, Byrne & Youngblutt passed a resolution was passed for these **gates to be replaced with a koala grid** at the completion of the Black Rocks precinct koala study. This will allow **easy access both day and night** to those engaged in koala-impactive activities.
- The Tweed Coast/Pottsville Wetlands/Black Rocks koala population is facing **imminent extinction**. It is a time to **maintain and increase, not reduce or remove protection**.
- **A development application** (DA 15/0160) is currently being assessed for a temporary **Men's Shed** to be constructed and operated at the Black Rocks sports field. This **industrial-like facility** (only **20 metres from primary koala habitat**) would pose a **serious fire risk** from the flammable commodities stored within and **increase the level of stress and disturbance** resident koalas are already enduring. An alternative permanent site has been identified by Council at the Barry Sheppard sports field (Hastings Point).

- In his email of 30 September 2014 Dr Phillips states: ***Increasing development pressure being placed on the sports field locality is paramount to an abrogation of Council's responsibilities to koala conservation in the Tweed.*** *The recent issue of the Men's Shed in particular was/is - in my view - little more than a Trojan Horse intended to establish a development footprint within the grounds, and so increase the perceived importance of the site for human-themed activities.*
- In his email of 10 June 2015 ecologist John Callaghan states: ***If the Tweed Coast koala population is to be afforded a realistic chance for survival and recovery over the longer term, a precautionary approach will be necessary and the future of each remaining koala will be critical.***

Please take a few minutes to express your thoughts on this crucial matter so that decision makers and the media are aware that the community will not tolerate the loss of our precious iconic koalas and demand appropriate action to ensure their survival.

Kind regards  
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