

Alps to Atherton Initiative

A continental-scale lifeline to engage people with nature

NSW Business Plan
2007–2010



This Business Plan was prepared for the NSW Environmental Trust which has provided the Alps to Atherton Initiative with a major program grant.

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DECC 2007/408

ISBN 978 1 74122 561 7

November 2007

Printed on recycled paper

Foreword

What is the Alps to Atherton Initiative?

The Alps to Atherton Initiative is a long-term strategy to strengthen the resilience of Australia's native plants and animals in the face of climate change and other threats, in an extensive area containing globally significant biodiversity and catchments that provide eastern Australia with clean water. It involves communities, agencies and governments in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory in using the best available science, practical community knowledge and environmental stewardship to conserve, restore and connect landscapes and ecosystems for more than 2800 kilometres along Australia's great eastern ranges. These ranges stretch from the Australian Alps near Walhalla, Victoria to Atherton and beyond in far north Queensland.

The great eastern ranges include:

- many unfragmented and interconnected habitats comprising intact natural ecosystems – these provide essential resources for threatened native plants and animals, and clean water and fresh air that are vital for the wellbeing of communities
- spiritual places and Country that include 'Aboriginal song lines', traditional pathways, trade routes, resources and relics that are highly significant for many Aboriginal Australians
- post-1788 cultural heritage items, sites and landscapes that are significant for many Australians.

Governments and the community need to work together to achieve the Alps to Atherton Initiative. Considerable enthusiasm, expertise and resources are available in a wide range of organisations, including Catchment Management Authorities, state and Commonwealth government agencies, local councils, and community and private organisations. There are many connections between the objectives and operations of these organisations and the work required to achieve the outcomes of the Alps to Atherton Initiative. This initiative seeks to acknowledge such organisations and engage them in partnerships so they can retain or gain ownership of programs undertaken under the initiative.

It is recognised that these organisations are already involved in partnerships to undertake other programs that are protecting, restoring and studying the environment; facilitating and planning environmental activities; and educating communities. This initiative provides a significant new opportunity for local and regional organisations to retain their integrity while gaining benefits from contributing to building a conservation corridor on a continental scale. Organisations that are involved in this initiative will also be better able to negotiate for funds and participation in the future.

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1. Introduction

The Alps to Atherton Initiative aims to connect and conserve ecosystems along more than 2800 km of the great eastern ranges of Australia from Walhalla in Victoria to Atherton in far north Queensland. For more information on location, see Figures 1 and 2 and section 1.1.

The Alps to Atherton Initiative is a strategic response to climate change and other threats, and seeks to maintain and improve the environment to help maintain the health of native plants and animals, and of people. It has captured the imagination of many members of the community, who have written letters of support. It has also been the subject of a Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities project proposal led by the Australian National University's Fenner School of Environment and Society. This proposal involves five research organisations nationally and has been developed in partnership with the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW. Several partnership pilot programs, to be managed by various organisations, will also be implemented under the Alps to Atherton Initiative (see Figure 3). For more information on the Kosciuszko to Coast (K2C) and Slopes to Summit (S2S) partnership pilot programs which will be commenced in 2007–08, see section 2.7.

1.1 Location

The area covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative comprises a corridor of primarily natural ecosystems along the great eastern ranges (Pulsford et al 2004), which extend more than 2800 km along the eastern seaboard and contain Australia's richest areas of terrestrial biodiversity (Pulsford and Worboys in press). These ranges comprise substantial sections of the Great Dividing Range and the Great Escarpment, and extend from the forests and woodlands of south-eastern Victoria near Gippsland, north into NSW, around and through the Australian Capital Territory and Kosciuszko National Park, through the large reserves north-west of Sydney (that is, the Blue Mountains and Wollemi national parks), and north to the subtropical forests north of Cairns in Queensland.

The Great Dividing Range is the mountainous watershed that separates the east coast of Australia from inland eastern Australia. It forms the watershed and headwaters for the major rivers in eastern Australia, directing runoff either towards the coast or inland. It ranges in elevation, and includes Australia's highest mountain (Mt Kosciuszko – 2228 metres) in southern NSW. Here, it receives over 3000 millimetres of rainfall annually. In some areas, there are rugged mountains and in other areas the terrain is barely distinguishable from the surrounding landscape.

The Great Dividing Range is located west of the Great Escarpment, to which it varies greatly in its proximity. For example, in south-eastern Queensland and south-eastern NSW, the Great Dividing Range and the Great Escarpment are located relatively close together, whereas in central eastern Queensland they are widely separated, with the Great Dividing Range located a considerable distance inland (see Figure 1). A raised, gently rolling upland or tableland occurs between the Great Escarpment and Great Dividing Range.

The Alps to Atherton Initiative covers an area that is arguably the terrestrial equivalent of the Great Barrier Reef: a linked series of biodiversity hotspots interconnected by a wide diversity of native vegetation. Substantial sections are preserved in a long archipelago of protected areas along the great eastern ranges, including many World Heritage areas, to be conserved in the long term (Worboys 1996, Pulsford et al 2004, Pulsford and Worboys (in press)).

The area extends across three eastern states and the Australian Capital Territory and contains three World Heritage areas; large wilderness areas; state forests

retained for sustainable harvesting of timber; and leasehold, Crown and private land. Connectivity of protected areas is greatest in the southern sections of NSW, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. However, parts of the corridor have been cleared and fragmented and are subject to ongoing significant land-use pressures.

The area to be conserved and connected through the Alps to Atherton Initiative will be subsequently refined in collaboration with key stakeholders and will be based on priority conservation areas, existing effective conservation initiatives, and connectivity criteria. For an explanation of 'connectivity', see section 1.4.

Figures 1 and 2 show the area covered by the national and NSW sections of the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

1.2 About the NSW Business Plan

This document is a three-year Business Plan for the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative. It has been prepared for the NSW Environmental Trust, which has provided \$7 million over the three years.

This Business Plan outlines activities and investments that will conserve and connect the NSW section of this continental-scale 'lifeline'. It is proposed that each eastern State and the Australian Capital Territory will implement programs to connect the conservation corridor along its full length.

This Business Plan:

- provides background and a rationale for the NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative
- describes ways in which the community has participated and may participate in the project
- describes the vision, mission, goals, approach, and objectives (see Chapter 2)
- describes ways in which the Alps to Atherton Initiative will be managed (see Chapter 3)
- describes outputs and outcomes (see Chapter 4)
- provides an indicative three-year budget (see Chapter 5)
- describes key milestones (see Chapter 6)
- describes ways in which the initiative will be evaluated (the initiative will be evaluated annually) – see Chapter 7 and Appendix 1.

This initial Business Plan focuses on 2007–08. An enhanced Business Plan for 2008–09 will be developed during 2007. The full development of the Business Plan is necessarily iterative and will follow extensive consultations with the community and other stakeholders.

Key stakeholders have been identified and the first of several communications strategies is being prepared. Appendix 5 provides a list of communications techniques to be implemented.

1.3 Background

On 24 November 2006, the Alps to Atherton Initiative was enthusiastically endorsed nationally by each of the state, Australian Capital Territory and Commonwealth Environment Ministers on the Environment, Protection and Heritage

Council of Australia and New Zealand. They agreed to investigate new means of working together to achieve the initiative's vision.

The initiative was identified as a national conservation project because of its special essentially natural status; the richness and significance of species found there (Pulsford 2006); its cultural and social significance (Pulsford 2006); the impacts of climate change on protected areas; the importance of its catchment areas and the importance of connectivity (see section 1.4).

On 24 February 2007, the former NSW Minister for the Environment, the Honourable Bob Debus, announced a decision by the NSW Environmental Trust to fund the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

1.4 What is connectivity conservation?

The Alps to Atherton Initiative is a connectivity conservation program. The concept of connectivity has been described technically as:

1. a structural (physical) component which identifies the spatial arrangement of different types of habitat or other elements of the landscape – this does not imply that the same landscape would have the same connectivity for multiple species or processes (Crooks and Sanjayan 2006)
2. a functional (behavioural) component which includes the responses of individuals, species, and ecological processes to the physical structure of the landscape (Crooks and Sanjayan 2006) – this type of connectivity requires insight into the movement of organisms or processes through the landscape.

A definition of connectivity that combines these structural and functional aspects states:

landscape connectivity is the functional relationship among habitat patches, owing to the spatial contagion of habitat and the movement responses of organisms to landscape structure (With et al 1997; cited in Crooks and Sanjayan 2006).

It is this conceptual approach which underpins the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

The importance of continental scale connectivity conservation has been described (in Soule and Terborgh 1999 and Hilty et al 2006) and recognised as being critical by the Papallacta Declaration¹ (IUCN WCPA 2006) which stated:

maintenance and restoration of ecosystem integrity requires landscape-scale conservation. This can be achieved through systems of core protected areas that are functionally linked and buffered in ways that maintain ecosystem processes and allow species to survive and move, thus ensuring that populations are viable and that ecosystems and people are able to adapt to land transformation and climate change. We call this proactive, holistic, and long-term approach connectivity conservation.

Many projects have been established in the last ten years to attain such continental scale connectivity conservation exist in many different parts of the world. Some examples of projects include:

- Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) in the USA and Canada (Tabor and Locke, 2004, Chester 2006)
- the Terai Arc in Nepal (Gurung 2004)
- the Cape Floristic Region of South Africa (Sandwith et al 2004)
- the biodiversity conservation corridors of Bhutan (Sherpa et al 2004).

¹The Papallacta Declaration was developed at a workshop on continental scale connectivity conservation convened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature World Commission for Protected Areas in Papallacta, Ecuador from the 14–17 November 2006 (IUCN WCPA 2006).

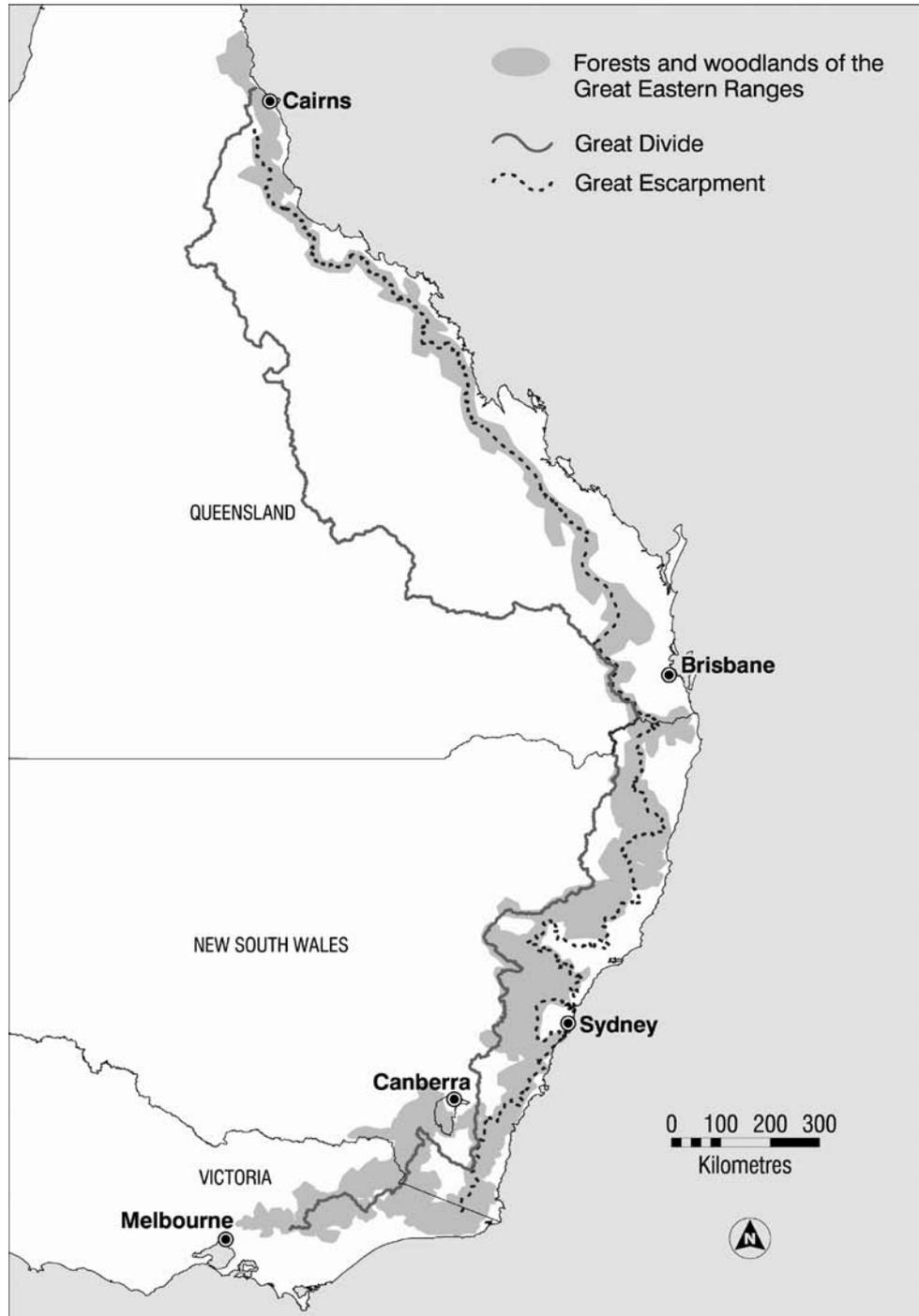


Figure 1: The national Alps to Atherton Initiative aims to link public and private lands using a range of mechanisms, with an emphasis on voluntary partnership, to conserve forests and woodlands along the great eastern ranges from the Australian Alps to Atherton. The proposed area to be conserved is highlighted.



Figure 2: Extent of the proposed Alps to Atherton Initiative conservation corridor in relation to NSW Catchment Management Authority regions and local government areas.

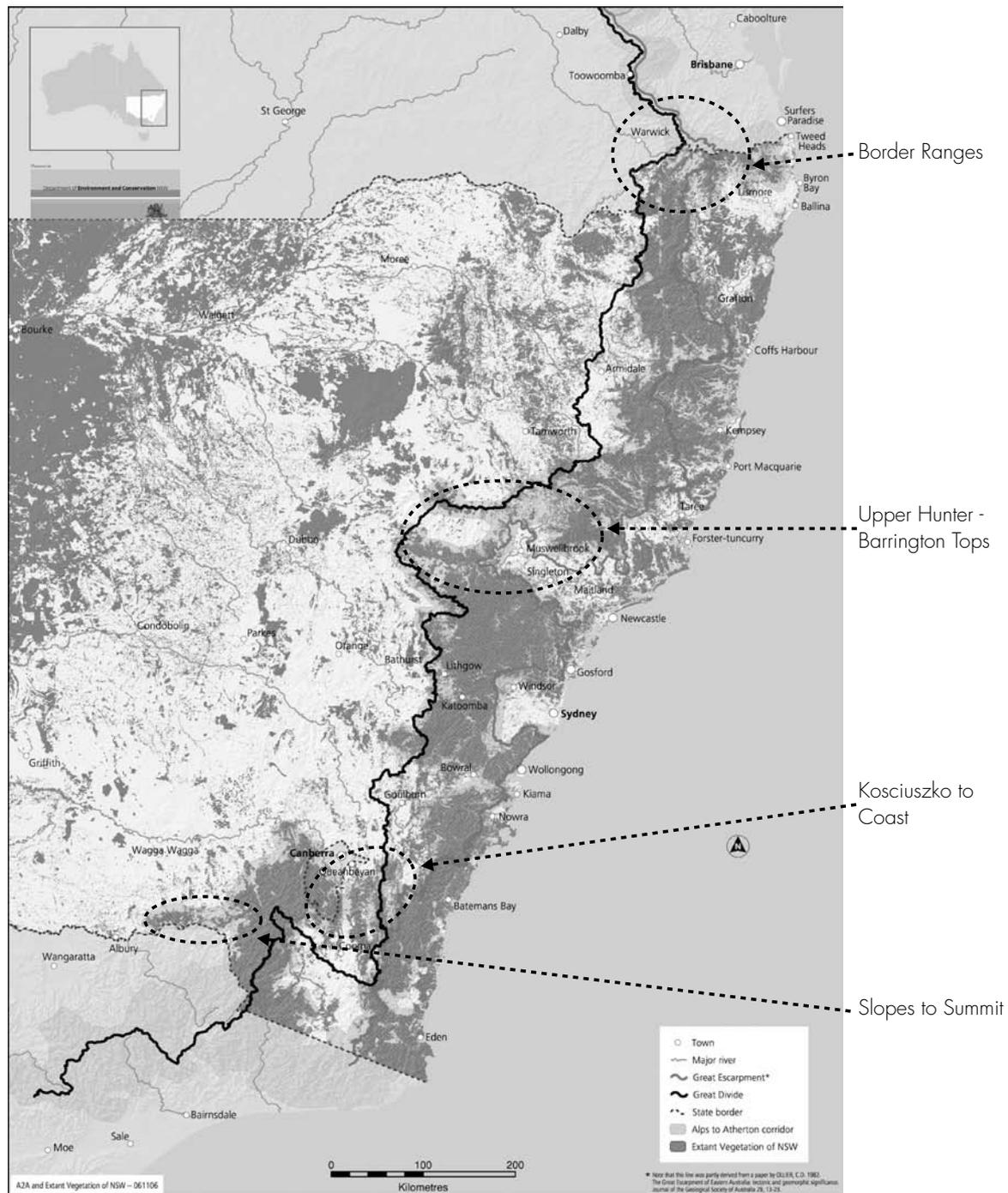


Figure 3: NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative priority partnership programs.

Note: Priority partnership areas for establishing conservation partnerships are indicated by dotted ellipses. The Kosciuszko to Coast and Slopes to Summit partnership pilot programs will be commenced and evaluated in 2007–08. The remaining two programs, and other areas selected through consultation with stakeholders, will be implemented during 2008–09 and 2009–10 and will be included in a revised business plan to be completed by May 2008.

2. Direction

2.1 National vision

Our vision is for the ecosystems of Australia's great eastern ranges to be healthy and connected from the Australian Alps to Atherton (and beyond), which will contribute to the long-term economic, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of the community, and of native plants and animals.

2.2 NSW mission

Our mission is to engage the NSW community, including state government agencies and local government, landowners, industry representatives, community groups and researchers in an effective long-term partnership to conserve, connect, protect and rehabilitate plant and animal habitats and catchments of the great eastern ranges of Australia along the 1200 kilometres of the NSW section of the Australian Alps to Atherton conservation corridor.

2.3 NSW goals

Goals for the NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative are as follows:

Connectivity conservation

Goal 1: A connected NSW conservation corridor contributing to healthy ecosystems and healthy people.

Communicating with the community

Goal 2: An aware, supportive and active NSW community.

People working together

Goal 3: People working effectively together for healthy NSW environments.

Effective administration

Goal 4: An effectively administered NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative that achieves financial sustainability.

Applying knowledge and skills

Goal 5: Applying the knowledge and skills of people wisely for the benefit of conservation in NSW.

2.4 NSW approach

The Alps to Atherton Initiative is structured according to the operational model for conservation planning of Knight et al (2006a). It will be applied both across NSW and locally, and aims to support and empower partners and stakeholders so they can maintain ownership and be the drivers and deliverers of the initiative's goals, through harnessing local knowledge, providing the best available and most scientifically-defensible information, providing innovative institutional arrangements, building capacity and 'mainstreaming' the Alps to Atherton Initiative's vision. 'Mainstreaming' is the process of integrating nature conservation issues into relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral plans, programs and policies (Cowling et al 2002).

The Alps to Atherton Initiative will:

1. Identify the most valuable and most appropriate mix of areas for investment to ensure the effective and efficient deployment of time, funding and resources.
2. Deploy an optimal mix of conservation mechanisms, incentives and organisational arrangements, aimed primarily at private landholders.

2.5 NSW objectives

Objectives for the NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative have been structured to meet the five goals.

2.5.1 Connectivity conservation

Complementary management

- By mid-2008, establish a framework for land managers to help them connect and conserve their land within the area covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

Integrated and national management

- By mid-2008, to have facilitated a national response by governments to connecting and conserving areas covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

Pilot partnership programs

- By mid-2008, to have established and evaluated two partnership pilot programs for the Alps to Atherton Initiative that highlight the benefits of conservation and connectivity (see section 2.7). These programs are:
 - The Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program
 - The Slopes to Summit partnership pilot program

Pilot voluntary Conservation Agreement (vCA) programs

- By 2008, initiate three targeted voluntary Conservation Agreement (vCA) programs as demonstration projects. These programs will highlight vCAs negotiated on private land where land has been set aside for conservation as part of the Alps to Atherton Initiative. VCAs will focus on the areas of:
 - Southern NSW Alps to Atherton corridor
 - Central NSW Alps to Atherton corridor
 - Northern NSW Alps to Atherton corridor.

For more information on vCAs, visit www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/content/conservation_agreements.

Integrated threat management

- By 2009, respond to the main threats to land and ecosystems forming the Alps to Atherton Initiative through an integrated, multi-organisational and landscape-scale approach to threat management which includes Catchment Management Authorities and individuals.

2.5.2 Communicating with the community

Communication is two-way, with the NSW project team listening to the community and stakeholders as well as transferring information and knowledge.

Community forums or workshops and meetings

- By mid-2008, initiate the first of a series of community forums or workshops and meetings to brief communities on all aspects of the Alps to Atherton Initiative.
- By mid-2008, conduct the first annual science forum involving managers and Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities-funded researchers who are involved with the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

Promotion and marketing

- By December 2007, include strategies to organise and provide:
 - a brand for the Alps to Atherton Initiative
 - web-based information
 - printed background information about the concept, importance and values of the initiative, including its role in minimising the impacts of climate change, and in protecting water catchments
 - television footage
 - baseline information to promote community awareness.
- By June 2010, provide a high quality book.

See Appendix 5 for more information on promotion and marketing.

Information

- By mid-2008, develop background information to help the community understand all aspects of the Alps to Atherton Initiative, including:
 - its purpose and vision
 - its economic and social benefits
 - private landowner benefits
 - ways in which projects developed under the Alps to Atherton Initiative will combat feral animals, fire and weeds.

News

- By early 2008, develop a regular national newsletter to circulate amongst all stakeholders to inform, inspire and communicate with them.

2.5.3 People working together

The NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative focuses on people working together to achieve a shared vision.

National Alps to Atherton Initiative partnerships

- By mid-2008, to have instituted a regular forum for coordinating cooperative national management of the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

Sharing of values

- By mid-2008, provide opportunities for people in the community to communicate and share their interests, values and ideas on the initiative. Forums could include public meetings and web discussion space.

Adaptive management working groups

- By 2008, establish adaptive management for actions which include researchers, managers, property owners and community representatives, and which is based on experimental research information.

2.5.4 Effective administration

Efficient administration will contribute to the success of the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

NSW management

- By the last quarter of 2007, refine and institute a governance model for the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative and appoint approved staff and consultants.

Management and administration background assessment

- By the last quarter of 2007, assess relevant other Environmental Trust projects, and harness guidance information and strategic implementation information that mutually benefits and complements this project and other projects funded by the Environmental Trust.
- By the last quarter of 2007, assess investment mechanisms provided by projects funded by the Environmental Trust and other programs, to ensure complementary resourcing.
- By the last quarter of 2007, inform all other Australian landscape-scale environmental funding programs (such as the National Heritage Trust scheme) of the strategic importance of resourcing the Alps to Atherton Initiative as a basis for complementary resourcing.
- By the last quarter of 2007, conduct an audit of potential strategic initiatives with Catchment Management Authorities and other land management agencies to establish investment priorities for the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

National Memorandum of Understanding

- By the last quarter of 2008, develop (and have signed) a national Memorandum of Understanding (or equivalent instrument) that facilitates a cooperative and integrated approach by the Australian Capital Territory, NSW, Queensland, Victorian and Commonwealth governments to achieve the goals of the Alps to Atherton Initiative.

Governance model

- By the last quarter of 2007, in cooperation with the Commonwealth, NSW, Queensland, Victorian and Australian Capital Territory government agencies and based on the Memorandum of Understanding (or equivalent), advise the Environment Protection and Heritage Council of Australia and New Zealand on how to refine and institute a governance model to achieve national coordination and integration of projects conducted under the Alps to Atherton Initiative, including a specific capacity to:
 - establish national connectivity conservation research priorities
 - establish national connectivity conservation threat response priorities
 - implement Alps to Atherton Initiative 'State of the environment' reporting
 - access significant additional funding from a range of emerging opportunities.

Financial resourcing

- By 2010, achieve a financial governance model for the Alps to Atherton Initiative, which achieves continuity of the national program beyond 2010 and includes consideration of resourcing opportunities such as:
 - carbon credits
 - BioBanking
 - water catchment resource rental
 - Commonwealth government funding
 - state government funding
 - sponsorship/philanthropic contributions
 - industry contributions.

Threat management coordination working group (NSW)

- By 2008, work closely with Catchment Management Authorities to establish a governance capacity to manage priority threats to the natural values of the Alps to Atherton Initiative, at a landscape-scale and through an integrated approach, which includes private property owners, local government organisations, and state government organisations.

2.5.5 Applying knowledge

The Alps to Atherton Initiative will achieve more when the knowledge of the community, of scientists and of managers is combined. Considerable resources will be devoted to research.

Community attitude research

- Undertake community attitude research and develop a communications and marketing strategy for the Alps to Atherton Initiative by September–December 2007.

Research and evaluation

- By 2008, establish a research, monitoring, and evaluation capacity to identify:
 - baseline natural and cultural values of the area covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative
 - baseline social, economic and recreational values of the area
 - the overall environmental health of the area
 - any change in the condition of natural values in the area
 - the principal threats to natural and other values in the area.
- By 2009, establish the baseline natural values of, and principal threats to, connectivity conservation in the area covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative.
- By 2009, identify priority areas for financial investments.
- By 2010, identify the change in the condition of natural values due to the implementation of integrated investment.
- By 2010, integrate into the NSW *State of the environment report*, the first annual 'State of the Alps to Atherton Initiative environment report' on the natural health of the environment covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative, including:
 - trends in the condition of key fauna species
 - trends in the condition of catchments
 - the status of nationally significant threats
 - the overall 'health status' of the area covered by the initiative.

2.6 Focus for 2007–08

In 2007–08, the NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative will focus on:

1. achieving community awareness
2. successfully initiating two connectivity conservation pilot projects, the Kosciuszko to Coast and Slopes to Summit partnership pilot programs (see section 2.7)
3. implementing extensive community consultation
4. building business partnerships
5. identifying investment priorities
6. achieving workable and practical governance for the project.

2.7 Kosciuszko to Coast and Slopes to Summit partnership pilot programs

2.7.1 Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program

The Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program is a proposed tablelands conservation corridor that links the Australian Alps with forests on the Great Escarpment of eastern Australia and the south coast of NSW. It forms a key link between the alpine communities on Australia's highest peak, Mt Kosciuszko (2228m), and a wide range of mountain and tableland forests, natural temperate grasslands and woodlands, and coastal forests, wetlands and heaths. Large

variations in topography, soils and rainfall create a very rich diversity and range of habitats.

Located on the drier rain shadow sections of the tablelands, the corridor extends south from Canberra/Queanbeyan to Bredbo on the Murrumbidgee River to near Bungendore and Tallaganda National Park in the east where it interconnects with the forests of the Great Escarpment. These tableland areas have been affected by more than 180 years of rural activities including grazing, clearing, farming and more recently, the expansion of rural urban subdivisions.

The main focus of the program will be to strengthen the connectivity and resilience of existing woodlands and natural temperate grasslands and interconnecting forests that extend across the tablelands south of Braidwood through Captains Flat to Bredbo. This can be achieved through increasing the commitment of landowners, community groups and land managers to managing conservation and rehabilitation of a range of habitats that occur on public and private land.

Bush Heritage Australia is leading this program in partnership with the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Greening Australia, Upper Murrumbidgee and Molonglo Catchment Coordination Committees, NSW Nature Conservation Trust, Friends of Grasslands, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and Queanbeyan Land Care.

Funding has been provided for:

- increasing awareness and support
- encouraging landholders to enter into voluntary conservation agreements for land with high conservation values
- providing incentives to improve conservation management of threatened natural temperate grasslands and woodlands
- community consultation and involvement
- working in partnership.

2.7.2 Slopes to Summit partnership pilot program

The area covered by the Slopes to Summit partnership pilot program extends west along the upper Murray River catchment from the summit of Mt. Kosciuszko, and includes the dry rain shadow forests and endangered grassy box gum woodlands on the south-west slopes near Albury. With the Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program, this program will help to protect the rich diversity of habitats for plants and animals that occur along the greatest elevation and climatic gradient in Australia.

The program's main focus is to protect and strengthen the health, connectivity and resilience of the forests and grassy box gum woodlands. This can be achieved through increasing the commitment of landowners, community groups and land managers to managing conservation and rehabilitation of a range of habitats that occur on public and private land. This program will also identify priorities for implementing complementary conservation activities that support the achievement of the Murray Catchment Management Authority's catchment action plan.

The NSW Nature Conservation Trust is leading this program in partnership with the Murray Catchment Management Authority, the Department of Environment and Climate Change and organisations including Bush Heritage Australia, Greening Australia, Charles Sturt University, Australian National University LandCare, CSIRO, other government agencies, landholders and land managers. and community groups.

Funding has been provided for:

- increasing awareness and support
- community consultation and involvement
- encouraging landholders to enter into voluntary conservation agreements and incentive programs.

2.8 The NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative relative to government objectives

The Alps to Atherton Initiative NSW objectives are consistent with the strategic directions identified by:

- intergovernmental agreements and Commonwealth legislation for the conservation of biodiversity in Australia
- *The national strategy for the conservation of Australia's biological diversity* (Australian Government 1996)
- *The national biodiversity and climate change action plan 2004–2007* (Australian Government 2004)
- *The directions for the national reserve system – A partnership approach* (Australian Government 2005)
- *The national reserve system programme 2006 evaluation* (Gilligan B 2006)
- *The indigenous protected areas programme 2006 evaluation* (Gilligan B 2006)
- *Conserving Australia: Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas* (The Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts 2007)
- *The state plan, a new direction for NSW* (NSW Government 2006)

2.9 The NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative relative to the objectives of the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW

The NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative objectives conform with DECC strategic priorities including:

- *Adapting to climate change impacts on biodiversity in NSW, 2007–2008* (NSW Government 2007)
- the corporate plan
- DECC's draft biodiversity strategy
- Objectives a, b c, g of the *NSW Environmental Trust Act 1998*
- the objectives of a wide range of state environmental legislation including the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

3. Governance, planning and communication

3.1 Governance

The Alps to Atherton Initiative involves a wide range of agencies, community organisations, research institutions, landholders, industries and land managers. As it is a national continental-scale initiative with state, regional and local components, it also involves all levels of government. For the program to be successful, it will need to harness significant levels of co-investment through integrating and aligning activities, and maximise the use of cash and other in-kind contributions, meaning all levels of government and partners must work together.

As a result, governance will be undertaken on three levels: nationally, on a state level, and on a special projects level.

3.1.1 National governance

The Environment Protection and Heritage Council of Australia and New Zealand have enthusiastically supported the concept and have agreed to establish an interstate working group of officials to advise on how the initiative may be progressed along the entire length of the great eastern ranges and beyond. The Program Manager will represent the NSW government on this working group and will act as a conduit to the Environmental Trust subcommittee (see next section).

3.1.2 State governance

State project teams will manage the Alps to Atherton Initiative on a state level.

3.1.3 NSW governance

Environmental Trust subcommittee

In NSW, overall direction for the Alps to Atherton Initiative will be provided by the Environmental Trust subcommittee, whose responsibility is to provide broad project direction and support. The subcommittee has already been established, with members drawn from key stakeholder organisations (see Table 1). Terms of reference have been developed and ratified by the members of the subcommittee (see Appendix 2). It is proposed that the subcommittee initially meet every four months for the first year, then half-yearly thereafter.

The Environmental Trust is also the principal funding agency for the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative. The objectives of the Environmental Trust as detailed in the *Environment Trust Act 1989* are outlined in Appendix 3.

Table 1: Membership of the Environmental Trust subcommittee

Member and Affiliation	
Dr Richard Sheldrake (<i>Chair</i>) Deputy Director General Conservation Policy and Landscapes Group Department of Environment and Climate Change	Dr Judy Henderson Chair Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
Mr Michael Bullen Director Native Forests Operations Department of Primary Industries	Mr Geoff Scott Chief Executive Officer NSW Aboriginal Land Council
Ms Lorraine Cairnes NSW Nature Conservation Council Executive Council	Prof. Robert Whelan Dean of Science University of Wollongong
Dr Graeme Worboys Vice Chair (Mountains Biome) IUCN (The World Conservation Union) World Commission on Protected Areas	Ms Bronwyn Petrie NSW Farmers Association
Mr Bernard Carlon Director Business and Community Relations Department of Environment and Climate Change	Cr Jan Barham Mayor Byron Shire Council
Mr Andrew Cox Executive Officer National Parks Association of NSW	

NSW program team

The NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative will be administered by a small NSW project team consisting of staff from the Department of Environment and Climate Change. The project team will meet twice-yearly with the Environmental Trust subcommittee, and table progress reports at these meetings. The project team will also provide input to the national Alps to Atherton Initiative working group, and to stakeholder groups and two working groups (Aboriginal and scientific) – see section 3.1.4.

The project team will consist of four people:

- **Program Manager** will be responsible for managing the Alps to Atherton Initiative including coordinating policy, planning, communication and reporting; developing and implementing the Alps to Atherton regional conservation strategy within NSW; maintaining high level connections with key stakeholders in the community, governments, agencies in other states and research and academic institutions; and maintaining links with relevant national and international organisations to develop and market the Alps to Atherton Initiative's brand and information.

- **Senior Conservation Analyst** will be responsible for identifying areas for investment and developing ecological objectives for conservation programs that manage conservation across all tenures of land. There will be a focus on developing programs that target private landholders using a range of voluntary conservation mechanisms including incentives. The position will liaise with scientific and academic institutions to develop partnerships that research key ecological issues such as identification of ecosystems and species at risk from climate change or other threats, and adaptation strategies required to mitigate those risks.
- **Senior Community Relations Manager** will be responsible for developing, promoting and marketing the Alps to Atherton Initiative to ensure that it becomes widely known and involves the community. The position facilitates conservation outcomes through targeted programs such as nature based tourism in areas covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative, and ensures that the initiative is strongly supported and where possible becomes self-sustaining.
- **Section Coordination Officer** will maintain information and reporting systems, prepare progress reports, manage the budget, report on financial management and ecological outcomes, organise meetings and travel for the project team and support the Program Manager.

3.1.4 Governance on a special projects level

To ensure the application of best practice and effective collaboration, working groups will be established to guide decision-making by both the Senior Conservation Analyst and Senior Community Relations Manager. These working groups will include:

- a **scientific/technical working group** to provide specialist knowledge on ecological issues, systematic conservation planning, natural resources management, communication, and economic and social issues management
- an **Aboriginal working group** to provide specialist input on matters of importance to indigenous Australians
- other **community working groups**.

The membership of these working groups will comprise experts from a diverse range of partner and stakeholder organisations. Numbers will be kept as small as possible, but will ensure, firstly, an effective depth and breadth of knowledge, and secondly, strong collaborative links with influential partner and stakeholder organisations.

The Senior Conservation Analyst and Senior Community Relations Manager will be responsible respectively for day-to-day involvement of partners and stakeholders, and the identification, undertaking and implementation of research to support partners' and stakeholders' decision-making and implementation activities.

Figure 4 shows how all the levels of governance will work together.

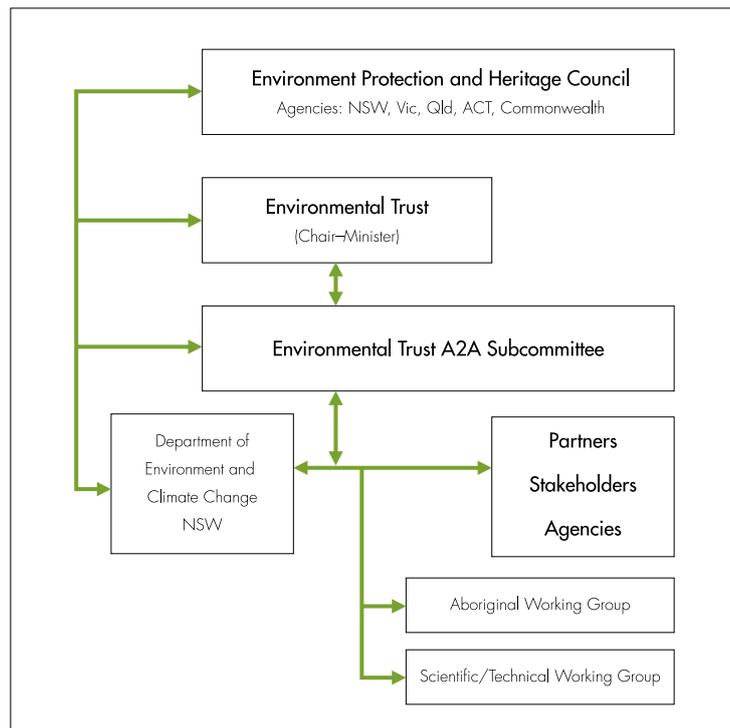


Figure 4: Governance of the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative

3.2 Implementation planning

Implementation of the objectives will be guided by operational planning documents prepared at three levels which are:

1. **a strategic level** – the strategic Alps to Atherton Initiative operations plan will guide national operational matters, and in its turn is guided by this Business Plan and other tactical plans developed by the other state governments. It has been prepared by the national working group under the leadership of the Environment Protection and Heritage Council of Australia and New Zealand.
2. **a tactical level** – this Business Plan will guide NSW issues, and has been prepared by the Environmental Trust subcommittee and the Department of Environment and Climate Change’s NSW project team.
3. **an operational level** – the NSW operations plan is a simple 12-month operational document prepared by the NSW project team which links, in the context of this Business Plan, objectives, budgets, operational actions and performance evaluation tasks.

A risk assessment has also been prepared (see Appendix 6).

3.3 Stakeholder engagement and communication

3.3.1 Identifying stakeholders

A wide range of partners and stakeholders will have input into determining the direction of the Alps to Atherton Initiative. These include Catchment Management Authorities, landholders, land management organisations, Aboriginal groups, conservation groups, state and Commonwealth governments, state agencies, local government, industry, research organisations, and the wider community. Existing partners and stakeholders are detailed in Appendix 4.

3.3.2 Communication

During the implementation of the Alps to Atherton Initiative, there will be a number of communication strategies developed reflecting different stages in the project.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change will contribute to the development of a marketing and awareness campaign.

It is envisaged that, as part of the communication process for priority geographic areas within the Alps to Atherton Initiative corridor, local community relations working groups be established involving local agencies and landholders. These groups would be involved in developing communication strategies for their area.

3.3.3 Strategic alliances

The Alps to Atherton Initiative is largely about developing alliances with stakeholders and communities and encouraging participation among various landholders in key areas. Accordingly, future communication strategies will establish significant ongoing alliances, and the success of this initiative will depend on the ability of managers to achieve and maintain strategic alliances in the longer term. Strong relationships are already being established between the Department of Environment and Climate Change and organisations such as Bush Heritage Australia, Greening Australia, the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, LandCare and the Nature Conservation Trust. These organisations will be significant in implementing the initiative.

Inter-government liaison has also begun with the Queensland, Australian Capital Territory, Victorian and Commonwealth governments at Ministerial as well as agency levels.

4. Outputs and outcomes for 2007–2010

Based on the goals, objectives and focus, a number of specific actions will be implemented which will achieve planned outputs and outcomes.

4.1 NSW outputs

The key outputs planned in NSW for 2007–08 are described in Table 2 .

Table 2: Key outputs planned for the NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative

Key output	Description
Goal 1: Connectivity conservation	
Incentive mechanisms	Identification of incentives available to encourage private landholders to engage in conservation. These may include market-based incentives, motivational incentives and tradeable environmental options such as establishing priority BioBanking sites, accessing carbon credits/trading, gaining water licences and removing perverse incentives.
Land management status assessment	An audit and gap analysis of all conservation programs and mechanisms that are currently operating in the Alps to Atherton Initiative corridor and have been completed.
Identification of optimal mixes of conservation instruments	Identification of complementary conservation instruments and incentives which are designed specifically for individual regional programs.
Initiate Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program	Initiation of pilot connectivity conservation project.
Initiate Slopes to Summit partnership pilot program	Initiation of pilot connectivity conservation project.
Integrated threat management	Implementation of priority threat response projects.
Goal 2: Communicating with the community	
Brand established	Implementation of the process for developing, marketing and 'mainstreaming' the Alps to Atherton Initiative.
Public awareness of and support for the Alps to Atherton Initiative	Achievement of community and stakeholder awareness of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the outstanding and unique biodiversity and cultural heritage values of the great eastern ranges of NSW 2. the importance of maintaining and restoring connectivity among, and integrity of, the ecological communities of the great eastern ranges so they will continue to provide essential ecosystem services, especially water, and will retain their rich biodiversity 3. understanding the benefits of points 1 and 2 in ameliorating the potential effects of climate change on individuals, species and populations 4. the role that individuals or groups can play in ameliorating the threats.

NSW project team awareness of community and stakeholder concerns, needs, and values	Achievement of the organisations that govern the Alps to Atherton Initiative's awareness of community and stakeholder attitudes, needs and views through liaison, meetings, commissioned surveys, and other means.
Information	Completion of background information on the Alps to Atherton Initiative.
News	Regular publication of the Alps to Atherton Initiative newsletter.
Goal 3: People working together	
An agreed vision	Development of an agreed community and stakeholder vision for the Alps to Atherton Initiative.
Interstate working group coordination	Facilitation of the establishment of an interstate working group representing government agencies in NSW, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and the Commonwealth to advise the Environment Protection and Heritage Council of Australia and New Zealand on ways in which the Alps to Atherton Initiative's vision might be implemented along the full extent of the area covered by the initiative, and beyond.
Establish a NSW community and stakeholder group	Establishment of a NSW community and stakeholder group, the primary role of which will be to advise on all aspects of achieving connectivity conservation.
Establish NSW working groups	Establishment of two working groups including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a technical/scientific working group to provide specialist scientific, social, cultural and economic expertise 2. an Aboriginal Working Group to provide guidance on Aboriginal involvement, advice and support.
Establish specialist NSW subgroups	Establishment of NSW leadership groups comprised of partners and key stakeholders who advise on implementation matters, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Private land conservation (e.g. Greening Australia, Nature Conservation Trust of NSW, Department of Environment and Climate Change) 2. Restoration ecology (e.g. Greening Australia, Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife) 3. Formal protected areas (e.g. Bush Heritage Australia, Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, Indigenous Lands Corporation, Department of Environment and Climate Change) 4. Conservation and industry (e.g. NSW Farmers Association, NSW Department of Primary Industries, private forestry groups, Department of Environment and Climate Change).
Annual community and stakeholder forum	Conducting an annual meeting so Alps to Atherton Initiative agencies, partners, working groups, the community and stakeholders can exchange information and share knowledge.

Annual NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative project team and science forum.	Conducting an annual meeting to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. achieve the exchange of information and knowledge 2. build links between practitioners and researchers 3. explore and create an Alps to Atherton Initiative institute of studies 4. report on progress in research, identify new questions and determine funding priorities 5. obtain social learning and develop advice for land managers and the community on requirements for adaptive conservation management 6. discuss adaptive conservation management.
Cooperative regional programs	Integration of programs driven by local partners at the local scale, which align and coordinate goals and activities across priority connectivity areas, e.g., the Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program.
Goal 4: Effective administration	
Financial management	Establishment of effective budget management and reporting systems.
NSW project team	Establishment of a small NSW group of staff who coordinate and provide administrative support for Alps to Atherton Initiative activities, advise on conservation priorities, build community awareness and capacity, ensure progress and foster ongoing public support.
NSW project team operations plan	Preparation of a 12-month operations plan (developed annually) to integrate NSW objectives, budgets and actions, and to establish a basis for project evaluation. The project team will review other land use management arrangements when developing an operations plan.
NSW Business Plan	Involvement of key stakeholders in revising the NSW Business Plan within 10 months (the revised Business Plan has been approved by the NSW Environmental Trust).
NSW evaluation management plan	Development of a NSW evaluation management plan to coordinate all evaluation required for the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative, including evaluation methods used, data storage, data exchange protocols and priority information for reporting.
The range of connectivity conservation and natural resource management mechanisms	Assessment of the range of connectivity conservation management measures and other natural resource management measures in place for the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative, as a basis for determining priority investment actions.
Threat management	Institution of a threat management group.
Goal 5: Applying knowledge and skills	
Research capacity	Achievement of valuable research.

Conservation assessment system	Development of a Geographic Information Systems-based conservation assessment to identify and prioritise areas for investment and to assist with monitoring and reporting on progress towards collaboratively-developed goals.
NSW monitoring and evaluation program	Implementation of a NSW evaluation program based on the evaluation management plan.

4.2 NSW outcomes

The NSW project team aims to achieve the following short- and medium-term outcomes for the Alps to Atherton Initiative (see Table 3).

Table 3: Short- and medium-term outcomes for the NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative

Goal 1. Connectivity conservation
The key natural values of the Alps to Atherton Initiative have been determined (Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research).
The key social and cultural values have been determined (NSW project team research).
Priority conservation areas have been determined (Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research).
Key threats to connectivity conservation have been identified (Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research).
Key management responses to threats have been identified (Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research).
Kosciuszko to Coast and Slopes to Summit partnership pilot programs have been implemented and evaluated.
Goal 2. Communicating with the community
The community and governments understand and are working to support the Alps to Atherton Initiative’s vision.
Goal 3. People working together
Land managers understand that their activities are contributing to achieving the Alps to Atherton Initiative’s vision.
An integrated land management approach has been achieved and contributes to connecting habitats across all land tenures in the corridor.

Goal 4. Effective administration
The community understands how they can help ameliorate impacts of climate change on biodiversity, cultural heritage, and the ecosystems that provide services such as clean water, and are taking steps to achieve connectivity conservation.
Partners are marketing and promoting each other's programs and mechanisms in a way that complements and integrates connectivity conservation, to achieve the most efficient mix and use of resources.
Partnership programs have been established in priority areas in the NSW Upper Hunter and Border Ranges regions and their effectiveness has been evaluated.
Governance arrangements have been established and are working effectively.
Goal 5. Applying knowledge and skills
The communication and capacity building strategy has been developed and implemented.

Staff of DECC's Conservation Partners Program will implement a targeted program to negotiate in-perpetuity voluntary Conservation Agreements in key priority partnership areas with funding allocated for southern, central and northern NSW project areas, using additional external funding to complement investment by CMAs and other organisations.

Table 4: Long-term outcomes for the Alps to Atherton Initiative

Goal 1: Connectivity conservation
Connectivity conservation is achieved nationally.
Threats to connectivity conservation are minimised and connectivity conservation resilience is maximised.
The change in condition of connectivity conservation along the Alps to Atherton Initiative corridor is monitored and adaptive management is used to respond to threats and facilitate rehabilitation.
Goal 2: Communicating with the community
The Alps to Atherton Initiative is nationally and internationally recognised as a world-class continental-scale conservation program.
The Alps to Atherton Initiative is widely known about and supported by Australian governments and the community. This can be demonstrated through significantly increased investment and effective conservation action on the ground.

Goal 3. People working together
A national community and stakeholder forum, supported by a permanent secretariat, facilitates the Alps to Atherton Initiative nationally.
Goal 4. Effective administration
The Alps to Atherton Initiative is considered so important that it is supported by external funding sources.
The Alps to Atherton Initiative's connectivity conservation approach is used as a model approach to achieve continental scale connectivity conservation elsewhere in Australia and overseas.
Goal 5. Applying knowledge and skills
A monitoring and reporting system is demonstrating that land management activities are aligned with the goals and are achieving an annual percentage increase in conservation in the area covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative.
Researchers are permanently employed to maintain evaluation as a basis for implementing connectivity conservation adaptive management.

5. Funding and programmed expenditure

Funding for the Alps to Atherton Initiative will be divided between:

1. the operating budget for the NSW project team for facilitation activities
2. funds dispersed to partners for implementation activities.

5.1 The operating budget

The Environmental Trust has allocated \$7 million for a three-year program to commence on 1 July 2007, with \$1 million allocated for 2007–08 and \$3 million allocated for 2008–09 and 2009–10. A summary of income and proposed expenditure is presented in Table 5.

Income for the program is provided from various sources including:

1. the NSW Environmental Trust
2. commitments from partner organisations
3. potential contributions from the Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities Fund
4. a NSW Government climate change fund allocation for enhancement of the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW (DECC's) Conservation Partners Program in years 1 and 2
5. significant in-kind contributions from DECC.

DECC's in-kind contributions include:

1. the salary of the Alps to Atherton Initiative Program Manager
2. rental for office accommodation
3. advice and input from each division of DECC whose programs will contribute to achieving the Alps to Atherton Initiative's vision and goals. DECC manages most of the public protected areas in the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative corridor. These contributions are not indicated due to the difficulty in determining their value.

The contributions of Catchment Management Authorities and other organisations to the Alps to Atherton Initiative are substantial but are as yet undocumented. Project team staff will seek, evaluate and document the full extent of these contributions, and use the funding from the Environmental Trust fund as seed money for greater investment in future programs through co-funding arrangements. They will also seek additional funds from a wide range of sources.

Priority activities for funding are presented in table 5, and include:

- establishment of a management, administration and project team focused on three group programs
- a marketing, awareness and branding campaign to build support
- a conservation analysis, planning, information, research, monitoring and evaluation program to ensure that investment is efficient and outcomes are effective
- implementation and evaluation of the Kosciuszko to Coast and Slopes to Summit partnership pilot programs. Lessons learnt from these pilot programs will guide the establishment of conservation partnership programs in the Upper Hunter and Border Ranges regions in 2008–2010. These programs will assess the success

of outcomes of co-funded partnership arrangements that implement conservation on the ground. Bush Heritage Australia, Greening Australia and the Nature Conservation Trust have demonstrated leadership of such programs and have promised funding or in-kind contributions to match Environmental Trust funds for, and involvement in, these programs.

- a targeted program to establish voluntary conservation agreements with private landholders in the priority program areas. Additional climate change funding and staff from the Department of Environment and Climate Change Parks and Wildlife Group and Conservation Partners Program will deliver these activities.
- community meetings, workshops, an annual community forum and a science forum.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change will provide significant divisional support including:

- executive sponsorship
- scientific and cultural information, research, tools, models, data, knowledge and expert advice
- advice on and development of environmental policy
- advice on conservation assessment, priorities, monitoring and evaluation
- expertise in campaign management, media relations and publishing
- adaptive conservation management operations
- regulation implementation, biodiversity certification and BioBanking
- office accommodation.

5.2 Funds dispersed to partners

The intention is that some Alps to Atherton Initiative funds will be used as 'seed' funds to leverage further funding from other organisations for implementation activities, and gain organisational commitment from partners and stakeholders. For example, the Alps to Atherton Initiative could co-fund payment for a facilitator for the Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program. This position could be co-funded by Bush Heritage Australia, and accommodated by Greening Australia or another community organisation. Another example is co-funding of coordinators for activities in priority areas. The benefits of this approach are:

1. greater advantage is taken of the funding from the Environmental Trust
2. the Department of Environment and Climate Change is seen to be supporting partners without prescribing their activities
3. the commitment of a third partner is secured because they provide an important contribution which complements the funding from the Environmental Trust.

The NSW project team (see section 3.1.3) will coordinate and manage the funds, provide access to a wide range of expert technical and scientific data and information, and build and manage partnerships. Some members of the project team will be co-funded and located in partners' organisations. They will involve partners in coordinating the agreed programs and activities. These partners are likely to include the Catchment Management Authorities whose boundaries intersect along the great eastern ranges, as well as conservation groups, farming associations, land care and industry groups, philanthropic fund raising organisations, and academic and research institutions.

Table 5: Proposed annual income and budget expenditure for the three financial years from 2007–2010.

The income and budget for years 2008–09 and 2009–2010 will be revised following community consultation and submission of a revised business plan.

Income/funds	2007–08 (\$)	2008–09 (\$)	2009–2010 (\$)
Environmental Trust grant	1,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Other Commonwealth, state or local government support (approx)	879,032	890,000	798,048
Other income sources (sponsorship, sales, donations, fees, interest, etc)	TBA	TBA	TBA
Total	1,879,032	3,890,000	3,798,048
Expenditure	2007–08 (\$)	2008–09 (\$)	2009–2010 (\$)
Goal 4			
Salaries, including 26% on-costs	86,907	100,702	104,730
Operating expenses (travel, training phones)	80,806	82,950	84,750
Programs (incl wages/contracts & activities)		See note: 1	See note: 1
Goals 2 and 3			
Communication, consultation, marketing, awareness and support	398,000	287,668	80,365
Goal 5			
Conservation analysis, planning, information, monitoring and evaluation	309,288	287,668	287,668
Goals 1, 3 and 5			
Conservation partnerships	125,000	1,823,171	2,525,600
Total	1,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000

Note 1: Indicative only

TBA: to be advised in quarterly and annual reports

6. NSW milestones

Important milestones for the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative have been identified for 2007–08 and 2008–2010. They have been organised under the five strategic goals of the project (see Table 6).

Table 6: Milestones for 2007–2010 for the NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative

No.	NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative milestones 2007–08	Target date
	Goal 1: Connectivity conservation	
1	Two pilot partnership programs (Kosciuszko to Coast and Slopes to Summit) initiated	October 2007
2	Priority NSW investment areas identified	December 2007
	Goal 2: Communicating with the community	
3	Alps to Atherton Initiative launched	October 2007
4	Community consultation program commenced	December 2007
5	Alps to Atherton vision, brand and name agreed to and launched/marked	May 2008
	Goal 3: People working together	
6	National working group established and operating	December 2007
7	Environmental Trust subcommittee established and operating	December 2007
8	Stakeholder working group established and operating	December 2007
9	Two technical working groups established and operating	December 2007
10	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities NSW research team established and operating	December 2007
	Goal 4: Effective administration	
11	Business Plan approved by the NSW Environmental Trust	July 2007
12	NSW project team established	August 2007
13	Draft NSW operations plan for 2007–08 completed	August 2007

14	Draft evaluation management plan completed	December 2007
	Goal 5: Applying knowledge and skills	
15	Rigorous best practice project monitoring and evaluation system established in cooperation with the Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research team	June 2008
	NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative milestones 2008–2010	Target date
	Goal 1: Connectivity conservation	
16	Implementation and investment strategies for identified priority project areas completed, and implementation commenced	July 2008
17	Fifty targeted voluntary conservation agreements or other in-perpetuity agreements on private land negotiated in priority project areas	October 2008
18	Fifty or more organisations and individuals signed on the website as supporting the Alps to Atherton Initiative's vision and principles	June 2009
19	One hundred targeted voluntary conservation agreements or other in-perpetuity agreements negotiated on private land	October 2009
20	One hundred or more organisations and individuals signed on the website as supporting the vision and objectives in their plans and activities	December 2009
	Goal 2: Communicating with the community	
21	Targeted strategies in priority project areas completed on time and within budget	July 2009
22	People who live and work in the Alps to Atherton Initiative corridor are aware of it and support it.	December 2009
	Goal 3: People working together	
23	Investment priorities and activities of key partners are aligned with Alps to Atherton Initiative goals and objectives	June 2009
	Goal 4: Effective administration	
24	The upgraded Business Plan is approved by the NSW Environmental Trust	2008
25	The Alps to Atherton Initiative is recognised locally and internationally as the world's leading and best practice connectivity conservation initiative	June 2010

	Goal 5: Applying knowledge and skills	
26	The Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities fund or an alternative source of funding such as the Australian Research Council scheme funds the Alps to Atherton Initiative's partnership research program	2007–2010
27	The research program is successfully implemented and provides world-class scientific support by using the Alps to Atherton Initiative as an internationally significant case study to develop highly innovative approaches to connectivity conservation management	2007–2010

7. Evaluation and reporting

7.1 Evaluation

The Alps to Atherton Initiative functions at a national strategic level, at a state-wide tactical level, and at a local operational level such as on an individual property, in a protected area, or in a state forest. Evaluation is needed at all three levels, with effective evaluation being the result of accurate and up-to-date information. A project cycle framework, the World Commission on Protected Areas framework (Hockings et al 2006), has been selected for this project, given that the principal focus is on conservation outcomes. This framework is described in more detail in Appendix 1, along with details of NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative short-, medium- and long-term evaluation and how the evaluation information will be used. Integration of the objectives, actions and performance appraisal will be the subject of a project operations plan and a project evaluation management strategy.

7.2 Reporting

The evaluation management strategy will recognise seven methods of reporting the effectiveness of evaluation. All reporting on NSW actions will be coordinated by the NSW project team. The reporting methods are described here under the five strategic goals, relative to the evaluation subjects identified for the project (see Table 8). Appendix 1 contains more detailed information on the evaluations to be used and the information they need to provide.

Table 7: NSW evaluation reports

Goal	Reporting method(s)	Target(s)	Frequency
1. Connectivity conservation	NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative 'State of the environment report'	NSW Government's State of the environment report's stakeholders, and the community	3 years
		National State of the environment report stakeholders and the community	5 years
2. Communicating with the community	NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative annual report	NSW Environmental Trust and the community	Annual
3. People working together	NSW section of the Alps to Atherton Initiative annual report	NSW Environmental Trust and the community	Annual
4. Effective administration	Financial management report	NSW Environmental Trust	Annual
	Staff management report	NSW Environmental Trust	Annual
	Risk management reporting	NSW project team	Annual
	Occupational health and safety reporting	NSW project team	Annual

5. Applying knowledge and skills	NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative annual report	NSW Environmental Trust and the community	Annual
	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities project performance report	Commonwealth Government	Annual

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Evaluation

A project cycle framework, the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) framework (Hockings et al 2006), has been selected for this project, given that the principal focus is on conservation outcomes.

Evaluation timeline

Three levels of evaluation will be undertaken:

1. Short-term (and regular) evaluation will provide information needed for tasks such as budgeting, staffing, process management and planning needs.
2. Medium-term evaluation (conducted every year) will provide information such as baseline condition values, threat status, and adaptive management information for planning assessment, output assessment and outcome assessment.
3. Long-term evaluation (conducted every three years) will measure change in the condition and severity of threats.

Evaluation structure

The evaluations needed for the Alps to Atherton Initiative have been presented relative to the WCPA framework (see Figure 5).

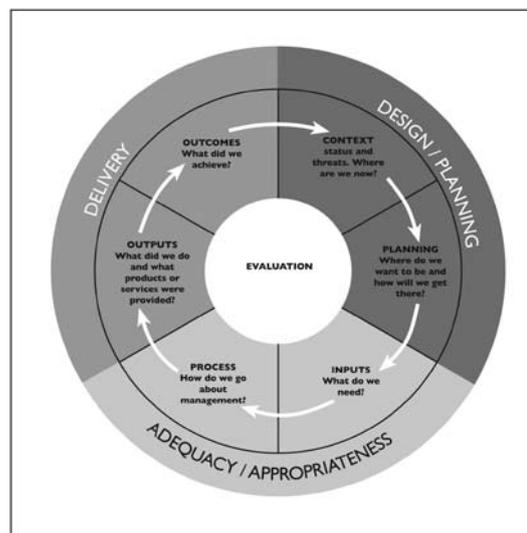


Figure 5: The World Commission on Protected Areas management effectiveness evaluation framework presented as a cycle of management (Hockings et al 2006)

This framework recognises six evaluation elements (context, planning, inputs, process, outputs and outcomes) which base the type of evaluation chosen on the cycle of management (see Figure 5). It is an intuitive framework well-suited to an operational project. The framework accommodates evaluations conducted at different levels which use different evaluation methods. It was developed for protected area management, but is suitable for use as an evaluation framework for complex conservation projects dealing with a range of different land types.

The framework has superior attributes for conservation work relative to other frameworks such as the context, input, process, product framework; logical framework (FOS 2004); and the results-based management framework (TBC

2007). It is especially suitable for formative and mathematical evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative methods, and for adaptive management. Its non-linear and iterative approach is also especially suitable for a multi-faceted and multi level project such as the Alps to Atherton Initiative. The WCPA framework has been adapted for use by the World Bank; UNESCO (Hockings et al 2004); and the World Wildlife Fund (Ervin 2003); and is recognised as a best practice evaluation framework by International Union for the Conservation of Nature (Lockwood et al 2006).

Evaluation requirements for the Alps to Atherton Initiative were assessed based on connectivity conservation objectives and project management requirements. The evaluation subjects have been described in Table 8. This table includes the purpose of the evaluation, whether it will take place at a national or project scale, who is responsible for it and what the information is to be used for. A separate, more detailed evaluation management plan will be prepared later and will describe ways in which evaluations are conducted, including the evaluation method, indicators and data storage and management.

Table 8: Evaluation subjects

Evaluation subject (organised by evaluation element)	Purpose of the evaluation	Project level at which the evaluation is to be conducted	Responsibility for the evaluation and its duration	Evaluation information use
Context				
Natural condition baseline evaluation	To identify the natural heritage baseline condition values of the Alps to Atherton Initiative	National scale	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research program (three years)	Alps to Atherton Initiative state of the environment reporting
Social condition baseline evaluation	To identify the social values of communities and stakeholders associated with the Alps to Atherton Initiative	National scale	NSW project team (one year)	Alps to Atherton Initiative state of the environment reporting
Threats	To identify the threats to natural heritage values	National scale	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research program (three years)	Alps to Atherton Initiative state of the environment reporting

Evaluation subject (organised by evaluation element)	Purpose of the evaluation	Project level at which the evaluation is to be conducted	Responsibility for the evaluation and its duration	Evaluation information use
Baseline condition values for pilot projects	To identify the baseline connectivity conservation values of two pilot projects	Pilot project scale	1. Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program Bush Heritage Australia 2. Slopes to Summit partnership pilot program Greening Australia (one year)	Pilot project cost-effectiveness reporting
Planning				
Planning status evaluation for lands covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative	To identify the status of planning for NSW lands, including regional environmental plans, regional strategies, property vegetation plans and Catchment Management Authority planning status	Individual properties; local government areas; Catchment Management Authority Areas and regional planning areas.	NSW project team (one year)	Investment planning prioritisation
Planning for financial return opportunities	To identify the range of financial incentives available to assist connectivity conservation through the Alps to Atherton Initiative	Individual properties; local government areas; Catchment Management Authority Areas and regional planning areas.	NSW project team (one year)	Investment planning prioritisation
Inputs				
Project budget management	To assess the status of programmed budget expenditure	By project allocation	NSW project team (monthly financial control meetings)	Annual project management report: financial management

Evaluation subject (organised by evaluation element)	Purpose of the evaluation	Project level at which the evaluation is to be conducted	Responsibility for the evaluation and its duration	Evaluation information use
Staff management	To assess staff performance against project accountability milestones and agreed personal development targets	By individual staff member	NSW project team (quarterly staff reviews)	Annual project management report: staff management
Process				
Reporting systems (intra-organisational)	Efficient and effective project performance briefing systems for the Environmental Trust subcommittee and Department of Environment and Climate Change executive	Project management level	Project manager (brief performance reviews completed regularly)	NSW project team use
Reporting systems (inter-organisation)	Efficient and effective project performance briefing systems for external organisations	Project management level	Project manager (brief performance reviews completed regularly)	NSW project team use
Community information delivery systems: effectiveness	Cost-benefit assessment of the different methods for delivering information	Project management level	Project manager (cost-benefit assessment for major information methods)	NSW project team use
NSW project team internal administration systems	Efficiency and effectiveness of systems; system compliance; asset audits	Project management level	Project manager (regular reviews completed)	Compliance reporting for OH&S; insurance; risk management; NSW project team use for efficiency assessments; asset inventories

Evaluation subject (organised by evaluation element)	Purpose of the evaluation	Project level at which the evaluation is to be conducted	Responsibility for the evaluation and its duration	Evaluation information use
Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research and NSW project team interaction and communication systems	Effectiveness of research and management liaison	Project management level	Project manager and Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities manager (regular reviews completed)	NSW project team and Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities management use
Outputs				
Pilot project status reporting	Effectiveness of the Kosciuszko to Coast and Slopes to Summit partnership pilot programs	Pilot project level	Bush Heritage Australia and Greening Australia (annual change in condition review against baseline)	Marketing: implementation of connectivity conservation
Community awareness reporting	Effectiveness of individual community awareness programs	Project team level	NSW project team (annual survey of programs)	Assessment of community awareness programs and adaptive improvement measures
Research project status reporting	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research assessment against milestones	Project team level	NSW project team and Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities management (annual review)	Adaptive improvement of the Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research program
Priority incentive program implementation progress	Implementation progress assessment	Project team level	NSW project team (annual review)	Adaptive improvement of the incentive program
Threat reduction programs implementation progress	Assessment of changes to the severity of threats for individual programs	Project team level	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research (annual review)	Adaptive improvement of individual threat reduction programs

Evaluation subject (organised by evaluation element)	Purpose of the evaluation	Project level at which the evaluation is to be conducted	Responsibility for the evaluation and its duration	Evaluation information use
Outcomes				
Connectivity conservation: change in natural condition	Assessment of change in condition of key natural measures relative to baseline	Project team level	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research (long-term research, reviewed annually)	Prioritising adaptive improvements to conservation management responses
Connectivity conservation: change in severity of threats	Assessment of change in severity of threats	Project team level	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research (long-term research, reviewed annually)	Prioritising adaptive improvements to threat management responses
Connectivity conservation: community awareness/ attitudes	Assessment of community awareness/ attitudes	Project team level	NSW project team	Adaptive responses to any community concerns identified, and to any community awareness issues
Connectivity conservation: research forecast of climate change influences	Strategic assessment of connectivity conservation responses	Project team level	Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities research (long-term research)	Strategic assessment of optimum connectivity conservation approaches
Mechanisms for resourcing connectivity conservation	Identify optimum methods for resourcing for the Alps to Atherton Initiative in the long term	Project team level	NSW project team research	Implementation of a post-Environmental Trust mechanism for resourcing connectivity conservation

Appendix 2: Terms of reference for the Environmental Trust subcommittee

The draft terms of reference for the Environmental Trust subcommittee are as follows:

- (a) to advise the Environmental Trust on the priorities for expenditure of Alps to Atherton Initiative funds in accordance with NSW Government priorities.
- (b) to provide input during the development of the Business Plan, including proposing appropriate revisions to the Environmental Trust, and endorsement, to achieve government and community objectives for the Alps to Atherton Initiative.
- (c) to consider and review progress reports and annual reports, and provide advice on such to the Environmental Trust.
- (d) to assess, and to advise the Environmental Trust on, whether each local- or regional-scale project initiated through the Alps to Atherton Initiative is consistent with:
 - (i) the requirements of existing State and Commonwealth legislation
 - (ii) the requirements of NSW Government policy
 - (iii) the interests of the diverse range of affected stakeholders
 - (iv) international best practice in conservation science and implementation.
- (e) to promote and, where appropriate, publicly support the philosophy, values and approaches of the Alps to Atherton Initiative, and foster relationships with key strategic partners.
- (f) to advise on any aspect of the operation of the Alps to Atherton Initiative, as requested by the Environmental Trust and the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW.

Appendix 3: *Environment Trust Act 1998* – Objects of Trust

The objects of the Trust are as follows:

- (a) to encourage and support restoration and rehabilitation projects in both the public and the private sectors that will or are likely to prevent or reduce pollution, the waste-stream or environmental degradation, of any kind, within any part of New South Wales.
- (b) to promote research in both the public and the private sectors into environmental problems of any kind and, in particular, to encourage and support:
 - (i) research into and development of local solutions to environmental problems, and
 - (ii) discovery of new methods of operation for New South Wales industries that are less harmful to the environment, and
 - (iii) research into general environmental problems, and
 - (iv) assessment of environmental degradation,
- (c) to promote environmental education and, in particular, to encourage the development of educational programs in both the public and the private sectors that will increase public awareness of environmental issues of any kind,
- (d) to fund the acquisition of land for national parks and other categories of dedicated and reserved land for the national parks estate,
- (e) to fund the declaration of areas for marine parks and for related purposes,
- (f) to promote waste avoidance, resource recovery and waste management (including funding enforcement and regulation and local government programs),
- (g) to fund environmental community groups,
- (h) to fund the purchase of water entitlements for the purposes of increasing environmental flows for the State's rivers and restoring or rehabilitating major wetlands.

Appendix 4: Partners and stakeholders

Partners and stakeholders fulfil a variety of roles and functions. Existing partners and stakeholders are identified in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Partners and stakeholders

Partner and stakeholder groups
<p>Landholders Throughout the area covered by the Alps to Atherton Initiative</p>
<p>Land use organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Farmers Association • NSW Minerals Council • Forests NSW
<p>Aboriginal interest groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Land Councils • Aboriginal Elders groups • Aboriginal traditional owners
<p>Conservation non-government organisations and semi-government organisations Organisations implementing conservation legislation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bush Heritage Australia • Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife • Greening Australia • NSW Heritage Council • NSW Nature Conservation Trust. <p>Non-government organisations campaigning for conservation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Conservation Foundation • The Colong Foundation for Wilderness • Humane Society International • Nature Conservation Council • National Parks Association • The Wilderness Society
<p>General community Communities along the east coast of Australia</p>
<p>NSW Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Environment and Climate Change (lead agency) • Catchment Management Authorities (Northern, Hunter/Central Rivers, Sydney Metro, Southern Rivers, Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, Central West, Namoi, Border Rivers/Gwydir) • Department of Primary Industries (Hardwood Division, State Forests) • Department of Aboriginal Affairs • Department of Lands • Natural Resources Commission • Natural Resources Advisory Council • Rural Lands Protection Boards (Armidale, Bombala, Casino, Cooma, Braidwood, Central Tablelands, Gloucester, Goulburn, Grafton, Hunter, Maitland, Merriwa, Moss Vale, Mudgee, Tamworth, Northern New England, south coast, Tweed Lismore, Yass) • Sydney Catchment Authority • Department of Premier and Cabinet

Government

- Led by Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW collaborating with other government departments:
- Australian Capital Territory government
- Queensland Government
- State Government of Victoria
- Australian Government (including the Indigenous Lands Corporation)
- Local Government & Shires Association
- Local government (many local councils)

Research organisations

- Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
- Ecological, social and economic research consultancies
- GeoScience Australia
- Universities (Australian National University, Canberra, Charles Sturt, Macquarie, New England, NSW, Newcastle, Southern Cross, Sydney, Western Sydney, Wollongong)

Tourism organisations

- Tourism NSW
- NSW Clubs Association

Business organisations

- Mining companies
- Pastoral companies

International organisations

- Nature Conservancy
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature – World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN WCPA)
- Humane Society International
- Organisations involved in conservation connectivity projects such as Yellowstone to Yukon

Appendix 5: Communication techniques

A range of techniques will be employed to facilitate collaboration with partners and stakeholders, and these are detailed below, in Table 10.

Table 10: Communication techniques

	Technique	Outline
1	Print media	Regular targeted articles in local, regional, state and national print media which inform the broader public of the achievements of the Alps to Atherton Initiative
2	Radio and television	Targeted stories for specialist outlets (e.g. Landline) to inform the broader public of the achievements of the Alps to Atherton Initiative
3	Website	Communication hub for the distribution of information (e.g. where the broader public can get general information on the Alps to Atherton Initiative and provide feedback)
4	Brochure	A double-sided A4 flyer which provides a concise summary of the goals, activities, and timeframes of the Alps to Atherton Initiative, and explains ways in which partners and stakeholders can get involved
5	Newsletter	Regular information bulletin (probably emailed) to partners, stakeholders, and interested members of the broader public twice a year to inform them of Alps to Atherton Initiative activities and achievements, and to seek their commitment and input
6	Targeted meetings – partners and key stakeholders	Strategic collaborations to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. secure commitment 2. plan involvement 3. report on activities and achievements 4. build strong working relationships
7	Workshops	Will be targeted to a range of specific needs, including developing the Alps to Atherton Initiative's vision, information sessions, and implementation strategy development. Will include presentations by the NSW project team, partners and stakeholders
8	Working groups	Provide opportunities for two-way communication between relevant experts and the NSW project team on specific ongoing issues
9	Aligning activities	Provide fora for partners and key stakeholders to identify ways in which their activities can support and align with the Alps to Atherton Initiative
10	Articles in national and international peer-reviewed (e.g. scientific) journals	Inform, and document for, the professional and scientific communities the activities of the Alps to Atherton Initiative and any technical advances in approaches to connectivity conservation
11	Presentations at national and international workshops and meetings	Inform the professional and scientific communities of the activities of the Alps to Atherton Initiative and any technical advances in approaches to connectivity conservation. Also provide opportunities for feedback and social learning with national and international colleagues

Appendix 6: Risk management plan

Risk identification

The following risks to the successful implementation of the NSW Alps to Atherton Initiative have been preliminarily identified. They are grouped according to the degree in which they potentially impact on the achievement of Alps to Atherton Initiative goals:

Table 12: The Alps to Atherton Initiative's risk register

Risk	Probability of risk occurring	Potential risk impact	Mitigation strategy
Goal 1 – Connectivity conservation: An interconnected great eastern ranges of NSW for healthy environments and healthy people			
1 Delays in securing individual landholders' commitment to private land conservation mechanisms (e.g. voluntary conservation agreements, wildlife refuges etc)	HIGH	HIGH	Prevention – i) ensure effective liaison with landholders; ii) provide landholders with incentives; iii) adopt recommendations of the yet-to-be-completed review of the voluntary conservation agreement program for roll-out of private land conservation instruments; iv) appoint community conservation contractors to negotiate private land conservation instruments; v) ensure voluntary conservation agreements are high priority with the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Contingency – i) regular one-on-one meetings with landholders; ii) strategic media ; iii) shift resourcing.
2 Failure to secure the conservation corridor as the priority for implementation of BioBanking credits; and recognition under regional strategies and planning processes, and biodiversity certification processes for local environmental plans under the <i>Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995</i>	MODERATE	MODERATE	Prevention – i) encourage important groups such as NSW Farmers Association and the NSW Nature Conservation Council to lobby government to deploy BioBanking credits in the conservation corridor; ii) ensure that the NSW project team and other partners lobby the Director General of the Department of Environment and Climate Change to have the conservation corridor listed for deployment of BioBanking credits; iii) demonstrate the benefits of deploying BioBanking credits within the conservation corridor. Contingency – encourage those with BioBanking credits to voluntarily deploy their credits in the conservation corridor if possible.

3	Delays in private philanthropic donors, conservation management organisations, and the Commonwealth National Reserve System Program in purchasing land for conservation management	HIGH	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) conduct the continental-scale priority partnership areas assessment collaboratively with non-government organisations and the Commonwealth Government which purchase land for conservation; ii) conduct the regional-scale connectivity assessments collaboratively with non-government organisations which purchase land for conservation; iii) provide non-government organisations which purchase land for conservation with conservation planning products, such as maps, free of charge.</p> <p>Contingency – optimise the mix of private land conservation instruments.</p>
4	Poor success of restoration and rehabilitation activities	HIGH	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) target areas of highest ecological resilience; ii) access existing experience and research; iii) conduct appropriate supporting research; iv) ensure strong community and organisational support.</p> <p>Contingency – i) encourage landholders who have signed voluntary conservation agreements to restore their land; ii) better coordinate restoration and rehabilitation efforts.</p>
5	Failure to integrate an optimal mix of conservation mechanisms during deployment	MODERATE	MODERATE	<p>Prevention – i) invest heavily in partnerships; ii) ensure the optimal instrument mix is identified in the investment strategy and the regional-scale implementation plans; iii) ensure that the continental scale and local-scale systematic assessments link areas to instruments.</p> <p>Contingency – target instruments as accurately as possible.</p>
Goal 2 – Communication: An aware, supportive and active NSW community				
6	Confusion of marketing messages to the broader public	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) scope and analyse 'the community' effectively; ii) meet regularly with partners and stakeholders; iii) develop an explicit, informed communications strategy.</p> <p>Contingency – i) strategic media; ii) strategic meetings with partners and stakeholders.</p>
7	Apathetic or negative media reaction to the proposed Alps to Atherton Initiative	LOW	MODERATE	<p>Prevention – i) prepare excellent Business Plan and marketing campaign, which are ambitious, world-leading, and include direct benefits to partners and stakeholders; ii) strategic media.</p> <p>Contingency – i) increase focus on strategic media; ii) increase focus on relationship-building.</p>
8	Partners and stakeholders feel their activities have been usurped by the Alps to Atherton Initiative	HIGH	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) develop an effective communications strategy; ii) invest heavily in liaison activities that acknowledge existing activities and allow partners and stakeholders to retain ownership of these; iii) ensure the investment strategy is developed in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, and provides them with tangible benefits; iv) structure deployment of activities through implementers rather than the Department of Environment and Climate Change; v) ensure the marketing of achievements highlights the inputs and achievements of implementers rather than the Department of Environment and Climate Change.</p> <p>Contingency – i) increase focus upon strategic media; ii) increase focus upon relationship-building.</p>

9	Partners and stakeholders misunderstand the objectives and activities of the Alps to Atherton Initiative	LOW	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) develop an effective communications strategy; ii) invest heavily in liaison activities; iii) ensure the investment strategy is developed in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, and provides them with tangible benefits.</p> <p>Contingency – i) increase focus on strategic media; ii) increase focus on relationship-building.</p>
10	Failure to publish papers in international peer-reviewed journals	HIGH	MODERATE	<p>Prevention – i) ensure Alps to Atherton Initiative staff have a requirement to produce papers for international peer-reviewed journals listed in their position descriptions; ii) ensure the Program Manager encourages staff to produce papers for international peer-reviewed journals; iii) ensure strong relationships are developed with academics; iv) ensure that papers for international peer-reviewed journals are explicitly listed as a component of the communications strategy; v) ensure that staff encourage partners to document their experiences in papers for international peer-reviewed journals.</p> <p>Contingency – present Alps to Atherton Initiative activities at conferences.</p>
11	Failure to harness partnerships with partners and key stakeholders	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) Invest heavily in partner liaison activities; ii) strategic media; iii) develop an effective optimal instrument mix (notably incentives to landholders); iv) engage in joint funding of local initiatives.</p> <p>Contingency – i) no contingencies can really avert this risk, as the Alps to Atherton Initiative hinges on relationships between partners and stakeholders; ii) scale-back implementation.</p>
Goal 3 – Working together: People working effectively together for healthy NSW environments				
11	Failure to harness partnerships with partners and key stakeholders	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) Invest heavily in partner liaison activities; ii) strategic media; iii) develop an effective optimal instrument mix (notably incentives to landholders); iv) engage in joint funding of local initiatives.</p> <p>Contingency – i) no contingencies can really avert this risk, as the Alps to Atherton Initiative hinges on relationships between partners and stakeholders; ii) scale-back implementation.</p>
12	Failure to secure in-kind funds from partners and key stakeholders for implementation activities	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) Invest heavily in partner liaison activities; ii) demonstrate benefits of joint funding; iii) negotiate reciprocal funding agreements.</p> <p>Contingency – i) apply for funding from alternative sources; ii) focus efforts on Department of Environment and Climate Change activities.</p>

13	Funds displace or replace funds already invested so there is duplication of effort. For the Alps to Atherton Initiative to make a difference, it must target and fill gaps and integrate new activities with existing activities.	MODERATE to HIGH	MODERATE	<p>Prevention – i) Invest heavily in partner liaison activities; ii) demonstrate benefits of joint funding; iii) negotiate reciprocal funding agreements.</p> <p>Contingency – i) strategic media; ii) apply for supplementary funding from alternative sources; iii) attempt to re-negotiate arrangements.</p>
14	Backlash against a perceived redirection of funds from conservation activities in western NSW to the great eastern ranges following the NSW Government's pledge to focus conservation priorities on western NSW	HIGH	MODERATE	<p>Prevention – i) Invest heavily in partner and stakeholder liaison activities; ii) ensure regional conservation initiatives are implemented as a demonstration of tangible conservation action in western NSW.</p> <p>Contingency – i) strategic media; ii) the Director General of the Department of Environment and Climate Change to meet NSWFA President to quell controversy.</p>
15	Failure to link Alps to Atherton Initiative activities to university teaching and research activities	HIGH	LOW	<p>Prevention – i) invest heavily in partnerships with universities; ii) demonstrate benefits of cooperative approach.</p> <p>Contingency – none – these activities are ideal but not essential.</p>
16	Failure to secure partner and stakeholder agreement on the optimal mechanism mix	LOW	MODERATE	<p>Prevention – i) invest heavily in partnerships with partners and stakeholders; ii) demonstrate the value of an optimal instrument mix to partners and stakeholders.</p> <p>Contingency – proceed without the agreement.</p>
17	Failure to secure partner and stakeholder support for the systematic techniques for i) identifying priority partnership areas; and ii) prioritising investments in priority partnership areas	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) invest heavily in partnerships with partners and stakeholders; ii) demonstrate the value of systematic techniques to partners and stakeholders; iii) apply the best available techniques which link area selection and instrument identification.</p> <p>Contingency – adopt an expert-based method endorsed by partners (e.g., the 5-S Method employed by the Kosciuszko to Coast partnership pilot program).</p>
18	Failure to harness partner and key stakeholder approval of the Alps to Atherton Initiative's investment strategy	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) invest heavily in partner liaison activities; ii) ensure partners and stakeholders positively benefit from activities listed in the Alps to Atherton Initiative's investment strategy; iii) strategic media.</p> <p>Contingency – i) no contingencies can really avert this risk, as the Alps to Atherton Initiative hinges on relationships between partners and stakeholders; ii) scale-back implementation.</p>

19	Failure to harness partner and key stakeholder approval of strategic connectivity plans in priority partnership areas	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) Invest heavily in partner liaison activities; ii) demonstrate benefits of joint funding; iii) negotiate reciprocal funding agreements.</p> <p>Contingency – i) no contingencies can really avert this risk, as the Alps to Atherton Initiative hinges on relationships between partners and stakeholders; ii) scale-back implementation; iii) apply for funding from alternative sources; iv) focus efforts on Department of Environment and Climate Change activities.</p>
20	Failure to attract significant numbers of landholders, partners and key stakeholders to join the Alps to Atherton Initiative Proud Partners Program	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) Invest heavily in partner liaison activities; ii) demonstrate benefits of joint funding; iii) negotiate reciprocal funding agreements.</p> <p>Contingency – i) strategic media; ii) divert resources to strategic private land conservation instrument programs such as voluntary conservation agreements; iii) meetings with partners and stakeholders.</p>
21	Failure to align internal Department of Environment and Climate Change priorities and activities with Alps to Atherton Initiative objectives	LOW	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) ensure executive are fully informed and provided with timely and accurate advice; ii) ensure Directors honour implementation agreements; iii) directive from the Department of Environment and Climate Change executive; iv) invest heavily in internal Department of Environment and Climate Change liaison activities; v) demonstrate benefits of joint activities; vi) negotiate reciprocal funding agreements.</p> <p>Contingency – no contingencies can really avert this risk, as the Alps to Atherton Initiative hinges on relationships between sections of the Department of Environment and Climate Change. It would be highly embarrassing for the Department of Environment and Climate Change to secure partnerships with outside groups (which has already been achieved) but to have implementation hindered by internal politics.</p>
Goal 4 – Administration: An effectively administered program that is self-sustaining in the long term				
22	Failure to receive funding from the NSW Environmental Trust	LOW	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) prepare a Business Plan with the Environmental Trust subcommittee that meets their requirements and that they are willing to recommend to the Environmental Trust; ii) prepare high quality documents and timely advice.</p> <p>Contingency – none.</p>
23	Failure to receive pledged in-kind and cash funds	LOW	HIGH	<p>Prevention – invest heavily in partner liaison activities.</p> <p>Contingency – scale-back implementation.</p>
24	Failure to leverage additional funds so the Alps to Atherton Initiative simply 'topsup' existing activities	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) invest heavily in partner liaison activities; ii) demonstrate benefits of joint funding; iii) negotiate reciprocal funding agreements.</p> <p>Contingency – i) apply for funding from alternative sources; ii) focus efforts on Department of Environment and Climate Change activities.</p>

25	Delays in recruiting Alps to Atherton Initiative project staff	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) position descriptions to be prepared and completed by mid-June 2007; ii) Deputy Director General to approve fasttracking of recruitment to the Human Resources Division.</p> <p>Contingency – i) disperse work to various appropriate staff in the Department of Environment and Climate Change until Alps to Atherton Initiative staff are employed; ii) employ an additional temporary Project Officer for a short period using unspent salary funds.</p>
26	Failure to effectively establish a monitoring and evaluation program	HIGH	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) ensure that a strong monitoring and evaluation program is built into the Alps to Atherton Initiative; ii) invest heavily in partnerships in priority partnership areas; iii) demonstrate the necessity of monitoring to partners and stakeholders; iv) develop the monitoring and evaluation system collaboratively with partners and stakeholders; v) ensure the monitoring and evaluation system is simple to apply; vi) ensure the monitoring system does not duplicate existing systems (the Alps to Atherton Initiative should adopt an existing system, if appropriate); vii) ensure the monitoring system is linked to an education and training program.</p> <p>Contingency – resort to remote sensing or simple program evaluation if necessary and appropriate (though this is likely to be highly unsatisfactory).</p>
27	Failure to secure funding beyond the life of this three-year Business Plan	MODERATE	HIGH	<p>Prevention – i) invest significant resources in securing future funding; ii) ensure the Alps to Atherton Initiative is demonstrably effective; iii) establish an effective monitoring system; iii) build strong relationships with partners and stakeholders who can cooperatively lobby for future funding.</p> <p>Contingency – rely on partners and stakeholders to implement future action unfunded.</p>
Goal 5 – Applying knowledge: Applying wisely the knowledge and skills of people for the benefit of NSW				
28	Failure to secure an alternative option in the event that the Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities bid fails to secure funding.	HIGH	HIGH	<p>Prevention – setup negotiations with Commonwealth DENR for inclusion of funding in NHT3 or alternative source.</p> <p>Contingency – none.</p>
29	Duplication of existing research	MODERATE	MODERATE	<p>Prevention – i) invest in partner liaison activities; ii) undertake an effective research audit and gap analysis.</p> <p>Contingency – media which demonstrates new outcomes from research.</p>
30	Delays in recruiting a Project Officer for a Department of Environment and Climate Change project group	HIGH	HIGH	<p>Prevention – have position description prepared before the Environmental Trust approve Alps to Atherton Initiative funding.</p> <p>Contingency – negotiate with the Department of Environment and Climate Change to have tasks assigned to existing staff.</p>

31	Delays in securing available spatial data	HIGH	HIGH	Prevention – i) begin discussions with potential data providers before securing funding; ii) conduct an effective data audit and gap analysis; iii) demonstrate benefits to data providers of joint activities. Contingency – simplify analyses for the investment strategy and priority partnership area connectivity assessments.
32	Delays in completing i) the identification of priority partnership areas, and ii) connectivity assessments for priority partnership areas	HIGH	HIGH	Prevention – i) secure essential data as early as possible; ii) build good relationships between analysts, and between analysts and partners; iii) ensure hardware and software requirements are met in advance; iv) plan effectively to ensure realistic timelines are provided to partners and stakeholders. Contingency – i) simplify analyses for the investment strategy and priority partnership area connectivity assessments; ii) re-assess priority activities.
33	Delays in completing planning products for partners, such as maps and reports	HIGH	MODERATE	Prevention – i) secure essential data as early as possible; ii) build good relationships between analysts, and between analysts and partners; iii) ensure hardware and software requirements are met in advance; iv) plan effectively to ensure realistic timelines are provided to partners and stakeholders. Contingency – simplify analyses for the Alps to Atherton Initiative investment strategy and priority partnership area connectivity assessments; ii) re-assess priority activities.
34	Failure to effectively link the continental-scale priority partnership areas assessment to specific tasks for implementation	MOD	HIGH	Prevention – i) apply decision analysis tools which link explicit locations with specific instruments; ii) cooperatively develop protocols for allocating instruments to areas with partners; iii) ensure the priority partnership areas are identified before developing the operational plan; iv) hold a collaborative operational plan development workshop; v) build strong relationships with partners and stakeholders; vi) demonstrate the value of a continental-scale priority partnership area assessment linked to an operational plan. Contingency – none – this must be achieved.
35	Failure to effectively link the systematic assessment completed for each priority partnership area to specific tasks for implementation	HIGH	HIGH	Prevention – i) apply decision analysis tools which link explicit locations with specific instruments; ii) cooperatively develop protocols for allocating instruments to areas with partners; iii) ensure the priority partnership areas are identified before developing the implementation strategy; iv) hold a collaborative implementation strategy development workshop; v) build strong relationships with partners and stakeholders; vi) demonstrate the value of a priority partnership area-scale assessment linked to an implementation strategy. Contingency – none – this must be achieved.

Review Process

The risk register will be reviewed at six-monthly intervals. The review will be conducted by the Program Manager (or their delegate), simultaneously with other reporting requirements, such as the biannual reporting to the Environmental Trust. Outcomes will be included with reports to the Environmental Trust.

Appendix 7: Supporting statements – Senate Committee For Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

Connectivity conservation – supporting statements made by the Commonwealth of Australia Senate Committee for environment, communications, information technology and the arts report

Conserving Australia. Australia's National Parks, Conservation Reserves and Marine Protected Areas. April 2007

1. Recommendations specifically supporting connectivity conservation

Recommendation 6 (Section 7.27)

The committee recommends that the Commonwealth, States and Territories boost the resilience of reserves against the effects of climate change by focusing on increasing their connectivity, so that they contain a continuum of different climatic zones, altitudes and ecosystem types.

Recommendation: Minority report of Labor Senators

That the Commonwealth take the lead in establishing wildlife corridors through both reserve and off-reserve measures to assist migrating species, including funding for detailed studies into the most appropriate strategies for the proposed Eastern Australia Great Escarpment Corridor.

2. Recommendations that support concepts important to connectivity conservation

Recommendation 12

The committee recommends that every jurisdiction implements, where appropriate, legislative or administrative reforms that ensure that conservation covenants are registered on the title of their land.

Recommendation 13

The committee recommends that all governments, in consultation with the Australian Tax Office and private conservation organisations, examine improved tax treatment for private initiatives that provide long-term, secure conservation benefits.