



From the President

December 2011

VALLEY WATCH INC

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Creating a sustainable future

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS!

What happened in 2011?

Valley Watch has had another busy year keeping watch on the valley and working to create a sustainable future. Some of the highlights for the year include:

1. The Yamba Market

Wet weather and members away meant we only got to nine out of 12 markets this year, but it was sufficient to maintain our profile and keep issues before the community. We finalised our petition for the coastal Emu and in November commenced a new petition requesting the NSW parliament to

- call a Royal Commission into all impacts of coal seam gas (CSG) mining;
- implement a moratorium on CSG mining until the outcome of the Royal Commission; and
- ban the extraction technique known as hydraulic fracturing or "fracking".

Our new gazebo has given us more display space and room for people to drop in and sit down for a chat. Our displays are always colourful and attractive (thanks to Ros Woodward in particular) and we have often been told ours is the most interesting stall at the market. Our raffle orchid (thanks to Frogs Hollow Nursery) further brightens our stall, to say nothing of the smiles of our faithful committee members and friends who staff it.



Your Committee

President:	Gary Whale
Vice-President:	Athena Batcheldor
Secretary:	Ronwyn Lopez
Treasurer:	David Lopez
Committee:	Gary Brisbane Imelda Jennings Carolyn Jeckeln Ros Woodward Barbara Whale

Our books and magazines bring us in a little extra income, so if you have any that you've finished with, please bring them along. Novels, cookery and environmental magazines are particularly welcome.

The main thing is for you just to drop by for a chat (and a raffle ticket!). It would surprise you how much of an encouragement that is for us.

2. Membership

At our AGM in December we took the bold step of reducing our membership fee to \$5 in the belief that it was members rather than dollars we were after and that such a low fee was something that people - new members as well as current ones - could pay at the market.

So far we have had quite a few renewals and new members, so if you're not yet financial for 2011-2012, come along with your \$5 and we can fix your membership on the spot.

We're on the Web! Visit us at clarencevalleywatch.com

3. 20th Anniversary Dinner

On April 9 we celebrated twenty years of activism with a dinner at the Yamba Bowling Club with Ian Cohen as our guest speaker. A comprehensive report was given in the April newsletter - if you didn't receive it do let me know and I'll send you another. It's worth keeping for the photographs alone - 14 candid photos of members enjoying each other's company.



In his address, Ian paid tribute to Valley Watch for all it had achieved and stressed the importance of local groups such as ours in keeping a watchful eye on development in the valley and on the operations of Council.

4. World Forests Day Protest

The North Coast Environment Council together with the North East Forest Alliance held a protest rally outside the Grafton Offices of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) on Monday March 21 to highlight the lack of progress in the resolution of problems with forestry regulation on both public and private land.

Six of our Valley Watch members went along and at the conclusion of the protest a list of demands was handed to Greg Lollback, head of DECCW's Private Native Forestry Unit, by Valley Watch's Ros Woodward and Mark Selmes of Crookwell wearing koala costumes, to be forwarded to Lisa Corbyn, Director General of DECCW

5. Flying foxes

Valley Watch members Linda Wright, Imelda Jennings and Billie Roberts have been dedicated members of the working group to devise a management strategy for the Maclean flying-fox camp. They have persevered despite some substantial political opposition and scare-mongering.

As part of a long-term strategy, Billie Roberts was successful in applying for four tracking devices to enhance understanding of the roosting and foraging behaviours of flying-foxes. A positive outcome is that it will involve students in collecting the data and, we believe, make a positive contribution to conserving and co-existing with the flying-fox population in Maclean in the longer term.

6. Submissions

One of Valley Watch's strengths is the quality of the submissions it makes to Council. Of particular significance this year have been submissions on the Fire Protection Strategy for Wooloweyah, amendments to Council's DCP on Native Vegetation and on West Yamba. On the first two we were able to make major changes.

Development applications for two West Yamba subdivisions have been lodged with Council and Valley Watch has made submissions on each pointing out deficiencies, particularly with regard to habitat and floodway/drainage corridors, the impact on flora and fauna and sewage problems.



We have also drawn Council's attention to several instances of unauthorised clearing both at Gulmarrad and in Carrs Drive (West Yamba) and on each occasion we have been successful in either having the clearing stopped or having remediation carried out.

Valley Watch has also made submissions to the NSW government on both Coal Seam Gas mining and on the threat to the regional water supply posed by antimony mining on Dorrigo Plateau at the headwaters of the Nymboida River.

7. Council Watch

On most occasions when Council meetings are held in Maclean we have Valley Watch observers (usually Ronny Lopez and Athena Batcheldor) in attendance, continuing the tradition of two of our early stalwarts, the late Joyce Plater and the late Marie Kerr.

While our relations with the Councillors and Council staff are cordial, they are acutely aware that they are being observed and held accountable.

8. AGM - claiming the date

Our Annual General Meeting in September was an enjoyable occasion although there weren't many members present. Following a short meeting (President's Report, Treasurer's Report and election of Office Bearers) we had a great dinner of curries and sambals etc., and we were all done by 7.00 pm.

We plan to do the same in 2012 on Saturday September 1. Write it on your 2012 calendar - **Curry in a Hurry.**

Don't forget to visit us at the January 28 Market.

Warm regards for Christmas and the New Year.

Gary