

SAVING OUR EUCALYPTS

Recovery effort for a threatened eucalypt gets a dramatic boost



2017

In September 2017, NRM South received funding from the Australian Government's Threatened Species Recovery Fund for a multi-partner project to save Tasmania's endemic, and endangered, Morrisby's gum (*Eucalyptus morrisbyi*). However, thanks to the dedication of one family and the power of social media, recovery efforts for this species took a sudden turn for the better.

Morrisby's gums have an extremely restricted distribution, and are only known in the wild from two locations in south-eastern Tasmania. The largest population at Calverts Hill Nature Reserve has seen a dramatic and rapid decline, with less than 99% of the 2,000 adult trees surviving and none producing seed. Project partners including the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, DPIPWE's Threatened Species Section and many other submitted a grant application to create safe havens for the species that would protect juveniles and adult trees at Calverts Hill from browsing pressure, wildfire and competition from weeds, along with re-vegetation works and increasing the genetic diversity of seed bank material.

Following the announcement of the successful funding application, NRM South was contacted by a landholder who was involved with recovery efforts for Morrisby's gum in the 1990s, and who had planted seed orchard on their property from the Calverts Hill site seed. The site selection for this planting was ideal – a marginal piece of land for agriculture, but perfect for growing eucalypts. The family have been looking after and enjoying the site ever since, and as a result it now holds hundreds of healthy adult trees, many of which are producing seed.

This is a game changer for the recovery project as, prior to this discovery, only a few stressed, un-reproductive trees and a small seed collection in the Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre (TSSC) remained of the Calverts Hill provenance. The health and maturity of the established seed orchard has put us at least 15 years ahead in our recovery plan for this species. The project plan has now been adapted to incorporate collection of this new seed stock for seed banking and restoration purposes.

The trees in this planting will also be analysed by research partners at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) so that an accurate estimate of genetic

In what was the first of three collections for this planting, a team including staff from NRM South, the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens and pakana Services spent a day in late November collecting seed, marking trees and collecting data at the new site. This seed has now been processed with the majority of it deposited in the TSSC and a selection sown in the Understorey Network nursery for revegetation in 2018.

diversity can be used to inform future seed banking and restoration plantings.

An additional 30 plantings of the species are known and UTAS researchers will be getting in touch with landholders over the next year to collect samples and undertake health assessment to further inform recovery efforts for the species.



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