



BUSH HERITAGE AUSTRALIA

Conservation fund for Tassie farmers nearly doubles significant areas under protection

Midlands Conservation Fund grows from 2,600ha to 4,500ha

An innovative funding model that encourages farmers in the Tasmanian Midlands to protect their land for conservation, in partnership with conservation organisations Bush Heritage Australia and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, has nearly doubled its reach since launching in 2013.

The Midlands Conservation Fund (MCF), which provides stewardship payments to farmers to manage their land's conservation values, now funds 13 landholders across 4,500 hectares. This is an increase from 2,600 hectares five years ago.

"This is a fantastic initiative that puts conservation on a farmer's balance sheet. Bush Heritage recognises that to achieve the best conservation outcomes, we must work in partnership with landholders and pastoralists on their lands as well as land we own," explains Dr Jody Gunn, South East Region Executive Manager for Bush Heritage

"These landholders in Tassie are protecting the critically endangered grassland plains and woodlands of the Midlands, home to at least 30 species on the national threatened species list and more than 100 species listed on Tasmania's threatened species list."

These include magnificent native species like the Spotted-tail Quoll, Tasmanian Devil and Eastern barred Bandicoot and plant species like the Black-tipped Spider Orchid, Pungent and Golfers Leek Orchids, Silky Bush Pea and the Tunbridge Buttercup.

Bush Heritage senior ecologist Dr Matt Appleby said he was heartened to see a shift in the way farmers manage their land under the agreements.

"With less than 5% of the original native grasslands and 30% of all native vegetation remaining in the Midlands, it's critical that we protect as much as we can for future generations," he said.

"The certainty offered by the fund really makes a big difference to farmers looking to manage their land for conservation. Ideally, we would like to double again the area of land managed for conservation in order to reach our key target."

The MCF aims to protect more than 8,000 hectares of intact native grassland habitats in the Tasmanian Midlands.

TLC's MCF Coordinator Andrew Cameron who has lived and farmed in the Midlands for most of his life sees great potential for the MCF to make an important contribution to the Midlands cultural future.

"Like heritage houses or Aboriginal middens, these wild areas of the Midlands that have remained largely unchanged since early settlement are an important link to the lived experience of our past forebears and most importantly the Tasmanian Aboriginals, the Traditional Owners of the land," he said.

"The dual realities of global population growth and economic development in our region will continue



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to drive agricultural intensification in the Midlands for some time to come and the MCF brings a new value to these special places that otherwise may be seen as a management liability or a development opportunity.”

The Tasmanian Midlands region, at the heart of Tasmania, is the state’s only Biodiversity Hotspot. The area is Australia’s last great refuge for Lowland Grasslands, which are among the most endangered ecosystems in the world.

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Bush Heritage Australia and Greening Australia are working together in the Midlands to protect and enhance this internationally significant landscape.

About the Tasmanian Midlands

- The Traditional Owners are the Tasmanian Aboriginal people
- One of Australia’s 15 national biodiversity hotspots
- Surrounded by mountains, the Midlands has lower rainfall and is ecologically distinct from the wetter regions of the west, south and north of Tasmania
- Located between Tasmania’s Eastern and Great Western Tiers

About Bush Heritage Australia

- An independent not-for-profit that buys and manages land, and partners with Aboriginal people, so we can protect our irreplaceable landscapes and magnificent native species forever.



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