

Kiama Council and Councillors
Manning St Kiama

Gerroa Environmental Protection Society
PO Box 71 Jamberoo 2533
11/05/2023

Dear Councillors and Council

Our members are concerned about a Councillor request for a report regarding possible sale of Jerrara Dam Arboretum.

We would like to provide the following information to ensure Councillors and Council are fully informed about the important values of Jerrara Dam and also request Council classify the Jerrara Dam wetland as a wetland in its LEP.

1. Jerrara dam provides important public open space that is protected from winter winds for the community to use.
2. A portion of the site is set aside for Riding for the Disabled who provide important services for the disability community in the region.
3. It provides a niche tourist destination because it is a favoured location for birdwatchers who return regularly to this location. This value needs to be promoted by Destination Kiama.
4. Its environmental values are exceptional and it could be described as a biodiversity hot spot for the following reasons:
 - It contains one of only two small publically owned coastal freshwater wetlands in the municipality. The man-made Spring Creek wetland and Jerrara Dam are now the only functioning freshwater wetlands remaining in the Municipality and they provide important compensatory habitat for amphibians and birds.

100% of Kiama's original freshwater wetlands have been historically cleared and drained. Kiama had 428 hectares of freshwater wetlands, including the 308-hectare Terragong Swamp at Jamberoo, and the 120-hectares Foys Swamp at Seven Mile Beach. The combined area of Spring Creek and Jerrara dam wetlands would be no more than about 8 hectares, so they provide compensatory wetland habitat equivalent to about 2% of these original wetlands.
 - It preserves a small area of rare lowland subtropical rainforest. This is an Endangered Ecological Community that has been enhanced over the last three decades through community volunteer land care and Council plantings.
 - It contains two rare endangered rainforest species and is cited in the Zieria Granulata Recovery Plan¹ as one of only three locations in public ownership where the endemic endangered plant species Zieria granulata occurs and is protected. This plant is found over a range of 22 kilometres between Shellharbour and Foxground and is estimated that as little as 8000 plants exist over this range². The species is under serious threat of extinction due to its limited range and

¹ Zieria Granulata Recovery Plan, Department of Environment and Conservation. January 2005

² Zieria Granulata Profile <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profile.aspx?id=10856>

ongoing clearing on privately owned land, particularly in association with hard rock quarrying at Dunmore.

- It is a significant habitat for birds due to its diverse rainforest, grassland, wetland habitat and is considered to be one of the most important bird observation sites in the region (google Jerrara Dam birdwatching to ascertain the level of interest).
- Many of these environmental values are identified and elaborated on in the Council Jerrara Dam Management Plan 1996 (attached)

Since the dam wall was lowered a few years ago the wetland area has become less of an open water body and now functions as a shallow wetland. This provides an enhanced habitat for many waterbirds, particularly waders. We believe it would now meet the criteria for a coastal freshwater wetland and request council consider protecting it in the Kiama LEP.

Howard H Jones

Secretary Gerroa Environmental Protection Society