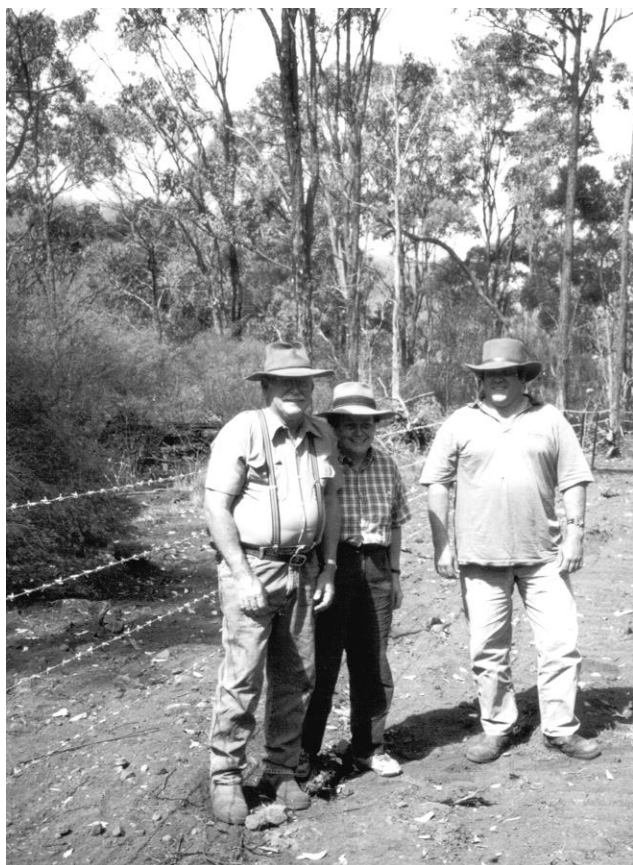


Looking after the native vegetation of the Mt. Whitestone and Fordsdale areas

Are we good managers?

Yes, the vast majority of landholders in the Mt. Whitestone and Fordsdale areas are doing their best to manage their native vegetation. This can be seen from the land clearing rate, which is one of the lowest in the entire State, and other outstanding initiatives such as the making of the Dwyer's Scrub Conservation Park and the fencing of large areas of significant species habitat.

However, this good management is being made increasingly difficult by issues such as ever-increasing weed invasion and feral animals and legislative requirements that are imposing costs on landholders.



The Turkington family has fenced off a large area of significant native vegetation on their Silky Oak Creek, Fordsdale property

Recognising these issues, the Lockyer Catchment Association (LCA) has launched a number of initiatives to help rural landholders manage native vegetation. For example, LCA held discussions with Gatton Shire Council that have led to Council's new environment program that includes a herbicide assistance scheme and other landholder assistance initiatives currently being developed. LCA has also assisted landholders in this area with grant funding for weed control and the fencing of important areas.

LCA and Gatton Shire Council are keen to further assist landholders in the Mt. Whitestone and Fordsdale areas to carry out conservation activities.

Is our vegetation important?

Yes, the Mt. Whitestone and Fordsdale areas have a variety of important native vegetation communities, including:

- Dry rainforest (vine scrub) on sandstone and basalt.
- Shrubby-understorey woodlands on sandstone.
- Grassy-understorey woodlands on basalt.

A brief description of these vegetation communities is given over the page.

Where can I get more information?

For more information please contact the Lockyer Catchment Centre on 5465 4400.

The Lockyer Catchment Centre is located on the corner of Hunt and Railway Streets, Forest Hill and is open to the public Monday to Wednesday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm (phone ahead to make sure) and on Thursday and Friday by appointment.

The Centre has a large stock of free information brochures, an extensive reference library, and a range of useful publications on sale.

What are our important native vegetation communities?

For full details of all of the vegetation communities in the Mt. Whitestone and Fordsdale areas, please refer to the Queensland Government Regional Ecosystem maps and Appendix A and Appendix B of the *Biodiversity Recovery Plan for Gatton and Laidley Shires* (available at the Lockyer Catchment Centre).

Vegetation	Description and values	Threats and management
Dry rainforest (vine scrub) on sandstone and basalt.	Scrubs are found on both the sandstones and basalts, typically in the deeper and steeper-sided valleys. They are a type of rainforest that is found in drier areas. Several very significant plant and animal species are found in the scrubs, for example the Black-breasted button-quail.	The scrubs were extensively cleared in the past to access the fertile scrub soils. Less than 10% of the original extent of scrub now remains, meaning that the scrub vegetation communities are classified as endangered by the Queensland Government. The biggest threat to the scrub remnants is currently weed invasion. Major problem weeds include lantana, madeira vine, cat's claw creeper, asparagus fern and the exotic pasture grass green panic. Scrubs are naturally reasonably fire proof, however weed and grass invasion means that fire is an increasing threat. Because of the dense understorey, grazing also seriously damages scrub.
Shrubby-understorey woodlands on sandstone.	The infertile sandstone plateaus, ridges and scarps in this area often support woodlands that are dominated by eucalypt tree species and have a very thick and dense shrub understorey. More than 10 of the shrub species are very significant, for example the Splendid boronia, Grove's paperbark and Blake's wattle. Several very significant trees and animals are also found in these shrubby woodlands, for example the Yarraman ironbark, Glossy black-cockatoo and Powerful owl.	The biggest threat to these shrubby woodlands is inappropriate fire regimes. Aboriginals did not regularly burn these shrubby woodlands because of the infertile soils. Rather, the natural fire regime was occasional random wildfire approximately every 7 to 25 years. If fire is any more frequent than at least every 7 or so years, then the significant shrub species in the understorey do not have enough time to set enough seed for future generations. If the shrubby woodlands go for more than about 25 years without being burnt, then the short-living understorey shrubs die out and the seed that has been dropped into the soil loses viability, meaning that the significant shrubs also die out. Many of the plant species in these shrubby woodlands need a hot, intense fire for regeneration. For more information see <i>Fire in Bushland Conservation</i> . Because of the fragile soils and dense understorey, grazing also seriously damages these shrubby woodlands.
Grassy-understorey woodlands on basalt.	The fertile basalt caps and ridgelines in this area typically support open woodlands with a grassy understorey. Some significant plant and animal species are found in these grassy woodlands, for example Hawk weed, Austral cornflower, Hasting's River mouse and the Masked Owl.	These grassy woodlands suffer from fewer threats than the vegetation communities described above. There is some weed invasion, particularly from lantana. The grazing of these grassy woodlands can be successfully balanced with conservation, and the CSIRO publication <i>Balancing Conservation with Production</i> gives good advice on how to do this. Aboriginals regularly burnt these grassy woodlands to promote grass growth on the fertile soils, which meant increased numbers of kangaroos and wallabies. If these areas are left unburnt for more than about 6 years then the trees will thicken up resulting in a loss of pasture grass and also the loss of some of significant species. For more information see <i>Fire in Bushland Conservation</i> . If regular burning is not possible, then selective thinning and increased grazing intensities for short periods can help to reduce this thickening.