

Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement Case Study

Coffs Harbour Blueberry Farmer

Background:

NSW Blueberry Farmer Jinder Rai has been farming in NSW for 25 years. We met Jinder in 2018 when he came into our Coffs Harbor office upset that he could do nothing with a part of his property constrained by the threatened plant Moonee Quassia. Ultimately Jinder has wanted to expand his blueberry farm in this section of his property for a number of years but was being constrained by both Federal and State legislation recognising the plant to be endangered. We talked through another option for him that had recently been brought into effect by the NSW government for just this sort of issue. It is called the Biodiversity Offset Scheme and was released in 2017.

Testimonial:

I am one of the founding members of the blueberry industry in Coffs Harbour and a member of the Sikh community. I wanted to maximise the financial opportunities of my land. Constrained by known threatened plants associated with the forested areas of my property I felt there was not much of value I could do with the land until I had a conversation with the local Ecosure office. They showed me my options and found the best pathway for me was a biodiversity stewardship agreement where I could receive funds for managing the forested parts of my property while continuing to run my blueberry business. I was delighted to learn that I could also make money from the additional ecosystem and species credits verified by Ecosure and valued at \$5-6 million, and I can now easily cover the funding costs of a 20 year management plan. Who would have thought some native plants and animals could increase the value of my property? This scheme has allowed me to value add to this property by diversifying my income stream and potentially allowing me to use my credits as an offset to undertake works on other properties. - Jinder Rai, Coffs Harbour, NSW

Property Details:

Size of Property: **40 ha**

Size of Forested Property
Constrained by Biodiversity
Values: **26.5 ha**

Estimated Total Biodiversity
Credits: **\$7,616,944.56**

Estimated Total Fund
Deposit (20 years):
\$2,997,555.56

Potential Profit:
\$4,619,439.00

Investment with Ecosure:
\$62,716.50



How Does It Work?:

- 1) Firstly we determine whether your property is eligible - see [here](#).
At this early stage we will also do a quick assessment of your property to see what types of biodiversity credits are likely to be generated by your site before we keep going. To do this your initial investment will be \$49 (usually valued at \$750). This needs to be done by an accredited assessor. We have three of these in our offices in NSW – Nigel Cotsell, Jen Young and Anthony Jarvis.
- 2) From Stage 1 you may decide you are interested to take this further. Now, depending on the size of your property and the number of potential threatened species will determine the amount of your investment with us. Once our services have been retained by you, we will apply, as accredited assessors, the full Biodiversity Assessment Method to your site and we will produce for you a Biodiversity Stewardship Site Assessment Report (BSSAR). This report will step out:
 - a. the type and number of credits generated by placing a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (BSA) on your site.
 - b. a proposed management plan for the site which will be included in the Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement.

- 3) Your BSSAR is submitted to the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) with a fee. They assess your application against legal and technical requirements and then agree on the terms of the Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (BSA) for your site.

The BSA will include the management plan set out in Stage 2 and proposed annual management actions and the cost of those actions over a 20 year period, and the ongoing maintenance costs. The total cost of the actions is called a Total Fund Deposit.

You can now start selling your credits either to the Biodiversity Conservation Trust or a private purchaser such as a developer.

- 4) When your Total Fund Deposit is fulfilled you will receive your first annual management payment and your property goes into 'active management'. This means you must actively manage your site as stepped out in your management plan (e.g. weed and feral animal management). You are obliged to transfer 100% of the Total Fund Deposit before this can happen.

Any additional money made from the sale of credits beyond this amount is your profit to hold onto. Annual management payments will continue to be made to you by the Trust for the next 20 years and you are required to do an annual report on progress on your property.

The Trust or Department of Planning, Industry and Environment may require you to undertake an audit of your property to ensure you are complying with your obligations.

Blueberry Progress:

Jinder is now at the end of Stage 3 where he has a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement in place with the Trust and is selling his Biodiversity credits.

More Info:

If you want to take an initial look whether your property might be eligible or of interest, have a look at the information on the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment webpage [here](#) which links you to a map.

If this is too much please call our offices on 1300 112 021 and ask for one of our accredited assessors Nigel Cotsell, Jen Young or Anthony Jarvis for assistance.

