

Cooks River Catchment

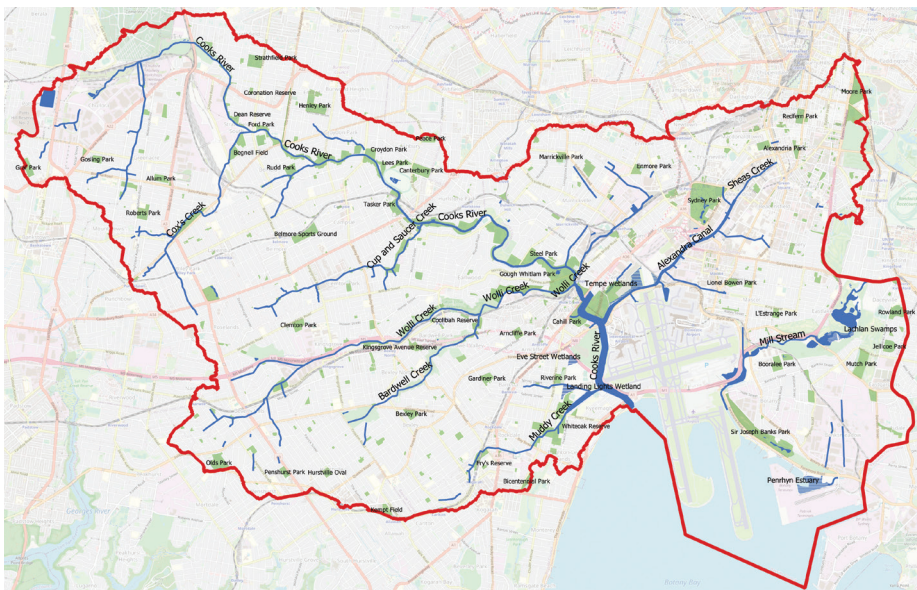
Our River and Catchment



JULY 2021 FACT SHEET • 2

About the Cooks River Catchment

The Cooks River begins as a series of small waterways near Graf Park in Yagoona and flows easterly for 23km towards Botany Bay (Gamay). The river flows through a mix of highly urbanised landscapes within the 100km² catchment.



Cooks River history

During the last ice age 40,000 years ago, Botany Bay did not exist. Cooks River ran south, meeting the Hacking River before flowing to the sea. The Bay had shifting sands, with large wetland systems reaching inland. 4,000 years ago, the River's entrance was in the northern part of the bay. As wetlands and sands have moved over thousands of years, saltwater and freshwater boundaries have changed.

The River and surrounding environments used to support a range of native animals, including migratory

birds. Today, the Towra Point wetlands in Botany Bay are critical habitat for migratory birds and hints at what these places were once like.

The wildlife found in the wetlands, mudflats, mangroves and salt marshes provided an abundant source of food for the Bidjigal, Gadigal, Wangal, and Dharug people. They lived in this changing landscape for over 20,000 years through trapping, gardening and other practices along the Cooks River and its surrounding lands.

Since European colonisation, significant changes to the River have occurred, with large-scale

engineering works carried out to support urban development and industry. The infrastructure and development works cleared much of the original environment and affected the Cooks River's health. However, this waterway is still valuable to the people, plants and animals that call the area home.

Why is the River important?


Environment

The waterways in the catchment support a large number of native species across a variety of habitats. This includes endangered plant and animal species such as the Green and Golden Bell Frog and Downy Wattle.

Social

The Cooks River Catchment provides vital green places for recreation and supports a number of commercial activities. People across the catchment have a growing expectation for a clean and healthy river that they can one day swim in, just as people did up until the 1930s.

Culture

The river continues to hold spiritual significance for Aboriginal people who now live in the catchment and maintain strong land and water custodianship. Connecting with the river takes various forms and several community members have generously shared their own unique experiences. To listen to their stories visit: cooksriver.org.au/oral-history 



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Parts of the River

Upper River

Includes: Coxs Creek

The upper freshwater reaches of the River span from Chullora to Strathfield. This section is largely channelised concrete drain with limited habitat for plants and animals. It is surrounded by industry and significant transport infrastructure, including Enfield Intermodal. Lack of public access, litter and flooding are common issues in this part of the river.

Yanu Badu Wetlands, Chullora



Mid River

Includes: Cup and Saucer Creek, Bardwell Creek, Wolli Creek

The tidally influenced mid-reaches of the River are home to an active multicultural community with significant European heritage. Endangered species, including the Green and Golden Bell Frog, Grey-headed Flying Foxes and migratory birds are found here. Stormwater runoff and wastewater negatively impact environments in this section.

Cooks River mid-reaches, Marrickville



Lower River

Includes: Muddy Creek, Millstream, Botany wetlands, Botany Bay

The national trade gateways of Kingsford Smith Airport and Port Botany dominate the lower part of the River. The mouth of the river was engineered and moved to its current location in the 1940's for the airport. This is a popular place for fishing and boating despite tidal flooding and contamination from former industry.

Cooks River mouth, Botany Bay



Find out more

The Cooks River Alliance is a partnership between Bayside Council, City of Canterbury Bankstown, Inner West Council, Strathfield Council and Sydney Water. The Alliance uses the combined resources, experience, knowledge and skills within our partner organisations and the community to improve the health of the Cooks River.

Visit www.cooksriver.org.au or social media channels to find out more.



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