

5.3. COCONUT ACTION PLAN 2018/19

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DEPARTMENT	Infrastructure Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolves to adopt the Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council adopted the Coconut Management Plan (Plan) in 2015. In adopting the Plan, Council resolved that an annual action plan would be developed to detail the individual actions to be taken over each successive 12-month period. The Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019 provides open and transparent information to all stakeholders regarding operational actions and maintenance over the 2018/2019 financial year. The action plan details the projects to be completed, and documents the actions to be taken to progress the outcomes outlined in the Coconut Management Plan 2015.

BACKGROUND

The Plan provides Council officers with the necessary tools to classify coconut palms against a risk based approach, including criteria specific to their location, the risk they pose and their overall condition. The assessment tool is necessary for ensuring effective and efficient operational and maintenance based activities.

The document includes provisions for stakeholders to appeal against the removal of coconut palms and to enter into maintenance agreements with Council to take over the maintenance (de-nutting) of certain palms. To date, Council has entered into eleven (11) separate agreements with landholders for numerous coconut palms located throughout the shire.

The plan provides all stakeholders; including Councilors, Council staff and the general public with a clear policy and understanding of the processes to be followed in order to make informed decisions regarding coconut management.

COMMENT

The actions proposed in the Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019 are summarised into four categories:

1. **Coconut de-nutting program** – A total of 1,386 coconut palms have been identified for maintenance with 5 additional palms added and 24 palms removed from the de- nutting program over 2017/2018;
2. **Removal of high risk specimens for public safety** - Table 1 below details the coconuts scheduled to be removed for public safety and environmental outcomes over the 2018/2019 financial year.

Table 1.

Area	Location	Reason	Palms
Port Douglas	27-31 Davidson St	High Risk to Public Safety	1
	63-65 Davidson St	High Risk to Public Safety	1
	77 Davidson St	Resident request & High Risk to Public Safety	4
	Cnr Garrick St & The Esplanade	Resident request & High Risk to Public Safety	7
	18 Sorrento Cres	High Risk to Public Safety	3
	137 Davidson St	High Risk to Public Safety	1
	348 Port Douglas Rd	Inappropriate location	1
	28 Ulysses Street	High Risk to Public Safety	4
	Barrier St/Little Reef St walkway	High Risk to Public Safety	1
Wonga Beach	Cnr Marlin Dr & Janbal Cl	High Risk to Public Safety	2
	The Esplanade (Wonga Caravan Park)	High Risk to Public Safety	6
Mossman	Park St (Mossman Caravan Park)	High Risk to Public Safety	2
	Coral Sea Dr	High Risk to Public Safety	3
Cow Bay	219 Buchanan Creek Rd	High Risk to Public Safety	9
	Opposite 227 Buchanan Creek Rd	High Risk to Public Safety	3
	407 Buchanan Creek Rd	High Risk to Public Safety	2
	24 Quandong Rd	High Risk to Public Safety	1
	102 Spurwood Rd	High Risk to Public Safety	1
	118 Spurwood Rd	High Risk to Public Safety	1
Total			53

3. **Environmental control and restoration projects** – Two restoration projects are to be commenced in 2018/2019:

- i. **Oak Beach Foreshore Restoration Project;** and
- ii. **Commercial Coconut Harvesting Trial.**

Council Officers will investigate the requirements of calling for expression of interest for a trial of commercial harvesting of mature coconuts on Council controlled lands. This will include the locating of a suitable site that will not interfere with residents/visitors leisure activities, best practice extraction methods, occupational health and safety requirements, public liability requirements and inspection and verification methods. Results of the investigation will be discussed with Councillors prior to any commercial arrangement being implemented.

4. **Landholder maintenance agreements** - provisions for stakeholders to appeal against the removal of coconut palms and to enter into maintenance agreements to take over the maintenance (de-nutting) of certain palms. Council has identified the southern Oak Beach precinct as a priority area.

PROPOSAL

It is recommended that Council adopt the Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The operational costs of de-nutting and removal has been allocated in the 2018/2019 Council operational budget. Over the past 12 months, Council has benefitted from a reduction in the contract rate for de-nutting due to Council undertaking a public tender process and entering into a new service contract.

No additional staff or resources will be required in the implementation of the Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019. All inspections and assessments will remain the responsibility of the Open Spaces Team Leaders.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

By utilising the tools now approved in the Coconut Management Plan 2015, Council Officers are able to undertake condition and risk assessments which will help to reduce council's exposure to hazards posed by coconut palms. This documentation is vital in ensuring council's compliance and fulfilling our responsibilities to public health and safety, meeting auditing requirements and ultimately reducing council's exposure to public liability claims.

Council must be able to demonstrate that we have inspection processes and procedures in place to reduce hazards across the Shire. The Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019 details the actions required to implement the appropriate remedial works to fulfil council's responsibilities

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: The total current cost of coconut management is \$180,000. The breakdown of expenditure consists of \$120,000 for de nutting and an additional \$60,000 to remove coconut debris such as fallen trees, leaves, fruit and nuts from lawns, paths, roads, beaches and storm water drains.

Since implementing the Coconut Management Plan 2015 substantial savings have been made. The savings were achieved through the reduction in the contract rate for de-nutting services. The cost of effective coconut management is expected to rise into the future if the Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019 is not adopted.

Environmental: The adopted Coconut Management Plan 2015 highlighted the impacts Coconut Palms are having on Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) listed littoral rainforest. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and Terrain Natural Resources and Mines (NRM) 2014 *Mapping Littoral Rainforest & Coastal Vine Thickets of Eastern Australia*

in the Wet Tropics: Mission Beach Pilot Study identified coconut trees (*Cocos nucifera*) as transformer weeds in littoral rainforest in the pilot area, and recommended that transformer species in littoral rainforests in the Wet Tropics be given appropriate weight by government in considering funding applications for control.

The Douglas region contains many examples of Littoral Rainforest, an EPBC listed coastal vegetation community shared along the eastern Australian coast but with specific character and significance in the Wet Tropics and Douglas area. It provides much of the essential 'where the rainforest meets the reef' character for which the region is famous.

The failure of the management of coconut palms in these ecosystems is advocating the demise of a critically endangered ecosystem.

Social:

Our improved systems now allow Council to track progress, have measurable outcomes on clear and specific goals. The risk and condition assessment tools for making decisions will provide Council staff the ability to deliver services efficiently, provide accountability and engage with the community.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 3 - Improve Environmental Performance

3.1.3 - *Develop management plans for Council's parks and reserves including coastal reserves and foreshore areas.*

Operational Plan 2017-2018 Actions:

3.1.5 - Develop a Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019, report to Council and implement actions.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Asset-Owner Meeting the responsibilities associated with owning or being the custodian of assets such as infrastructure.

Fully-Responsible Funding the full cost of a program or activity

CONSULTATION

Internal: Consultation was undertaken with internal Council Officers who reviewed customer requests and used their knowledge to determine the priorities. A workshop with councilors was conducted on 24 July 2018 to discuss the draft plan.

External: The Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019 will be made available on Council's webpage (when approved) to provide information and awareness to the community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A community consultation process will be undertaken with the key stakeholders to obtain a clear understanding of the opinions of the landholders / land managers affected by the coconuts proposed for removal. Written correspondence and onsite meetings will occur with adjacent landowners asking whether they agree or disagree with the proposal to remove and replace the coconuts in the streetscape. The landowners will be asked whether they would enter into an agreement with council to take over the maintenance, should they appeal the decision to remove the coconuts.

As a result of this consultation process and should the residents' decline of a management agreement, Council's intention is to proceed with the removal of fifty three (53) of the coconut palms as outlined in the Coconut Action Plan 2018/2019.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Coconut Management Action Plan 2018 2019 **[5.3.1]**

COCONUT MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN 2018 /2019



DOUGLAS SHIRE
COUNCIL

Engaging, Planning, Partnering
Muruku Kirraji - Eastern Kuku Yalanji
Nganyji pina ngunda-lum ... Ma:Inyjiirri-yngku - Yirrgandyji

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Coconut Management Action Plan 2018 – 2019

Purpose

The coconut management action plan provides open and transparent information to all stakeholders regarding operational actions for the maintenance over the 2018/2019 financial year. The action plan sets out the projects to be completed which will help to achieve the coconut management plan outcomes as outlined in the Coconut Management Plan.

Actions

Coconut maintenance will be split into four categories as outlined below:

1. Coconut de-nutting program;
2. Removal of high risk specimens for public safety;
3. Environmental control and restoration projects; and
4. Landholder maintenance agreements.

High risk coconut palms to be de-nutted throughout the Douglas Shire region are listed in Table 1 below. A total of 1,386 coconut palms have been identified for maintenance with an additional 5 palms located at the Little Cove access to the Flagstaff Hill Walking Trail added and 12 removed from the de-nutting program over the last period.

De-nutting occurs twice annually generally April/May and October/November and the estimated cost of de-nutting is \$120,000 for the 2018/2019 Financial year.

A Request for Quote for the bi-annual coconut de nutting will be issued for tender for the next 3 years on a 1 x 1 x 1 basis to assist reduce expenses and to provide surety of costs for budgetary requirements.

Table 1 - Coconut De Nutting Programme

Area	Address	Location	No. of Trees
Port Douglas			
	Nautilus St	Centre Island between Mitre and Reef Sts	33
	Cowrie/Helmet Sts	Foreshore area between Cowrie & Helmet Sts	76
	Barrier St	Cnr with Tropic Court.	1
	Barrier St	Four Mile Park including Outrigger access northern side	13
	Triton Cres	Footpath	1
	Little Reef St	East side	11
	Port Douglas Road	Outside Medical Centre on cnr with Barrier St	3
	Solander Blvd	Bruno Reidwig Park	54
	Davidson St Service Road	Port to Mahogany includes 2 south of Fire Station	15
	Ti Tree St	Cnr with Mahogany and in Ti tree St	5
	Grant St	Rotary Park	2
	Warner St	Between Grant & Wharf Sts	1
	Wharf St	Rex Smeal Park includes Little Cove	37
	Wharf St	Market Park	85
	Wharf St	Market Park Carpark	5
	Dixie St	Park next to Sugar Wharf	33
	Ashford Ave	Park next to Boatramp	3
	Ashford Ave	Boatramp next to Combines Club	5
	Macrossan St	Jalun Park	34
	Macrossan St	Davidson St to Jalun Park	18
	Port Douglas Esplanade	Macrossan to Mowbray Sts including near Toilets	75
	Garrick St	Macrossan to Sand St	27
	Garrick St	Jalunbu Park	6
	Garrick St	Southern end beach access	5
	Sand St	Tide to Beryl Sts	9
	Sand St	Southern Beach access	1
	Davidson St	Reynolds Park near CWA Hall	6
	Beryl St	Central Plaza	9

Area	Address	Location	No. of Trees
	Davidson St	Mowbray to Macrossan Sts	9
	Port Douglas Road	In front of QT	24
Oak Beach			
	Oak Beach Rd	Northern Car park beach access	10
	Oak Beach Rd	Pathway between Nos. 15 & 17	13
Mossman	Park St	Road verge of caravan park	5
Cooya Beach			
	Bouganvillea St	Foreshore area / Esplanade	305
	Albatross Cl	On corner in front of flats	3
Newell Beach			
	Esplanade	Mown area of foreshore	144
	Rankin St	Boat ramp car park	9
	Marine Pde	Outside number 9 Executive Retreat	1
Rocky Point			
	Daintree Rd	Park opposite Rocky Point School Road	8
	Daintree Rd	Boat ramp car park	1
Wonga Beach			
	New Wonga Esplanade	Foreshore area	170
	Old Wonga Esplanade	Foreshore area	87
	Oleander Drv	Opposite Yarun Cl	2
	Oleander Drv	Corner of Oleander Drv and Marlin Drv	2
Daintree Ferry			
	Southern ramp	Both sides of ramp	9
	Northern ramp	Near boat loading bay	3
Cape Tribulation			
	Cape Tribulation Rd	Beach access old Coconut Beach Resort	2
	Cape Tribulation Rd	Southern Bank of Thompson Creek causeway	3
	Cape Tribulation Rd	In front of Whet Restaurant	3
Total			1386

Area map locations of Coconuts to be de-nutted

Map 1 – Port Douglas CBD



Map 2 – Four Mile Area



Map 3 – Oak Beach



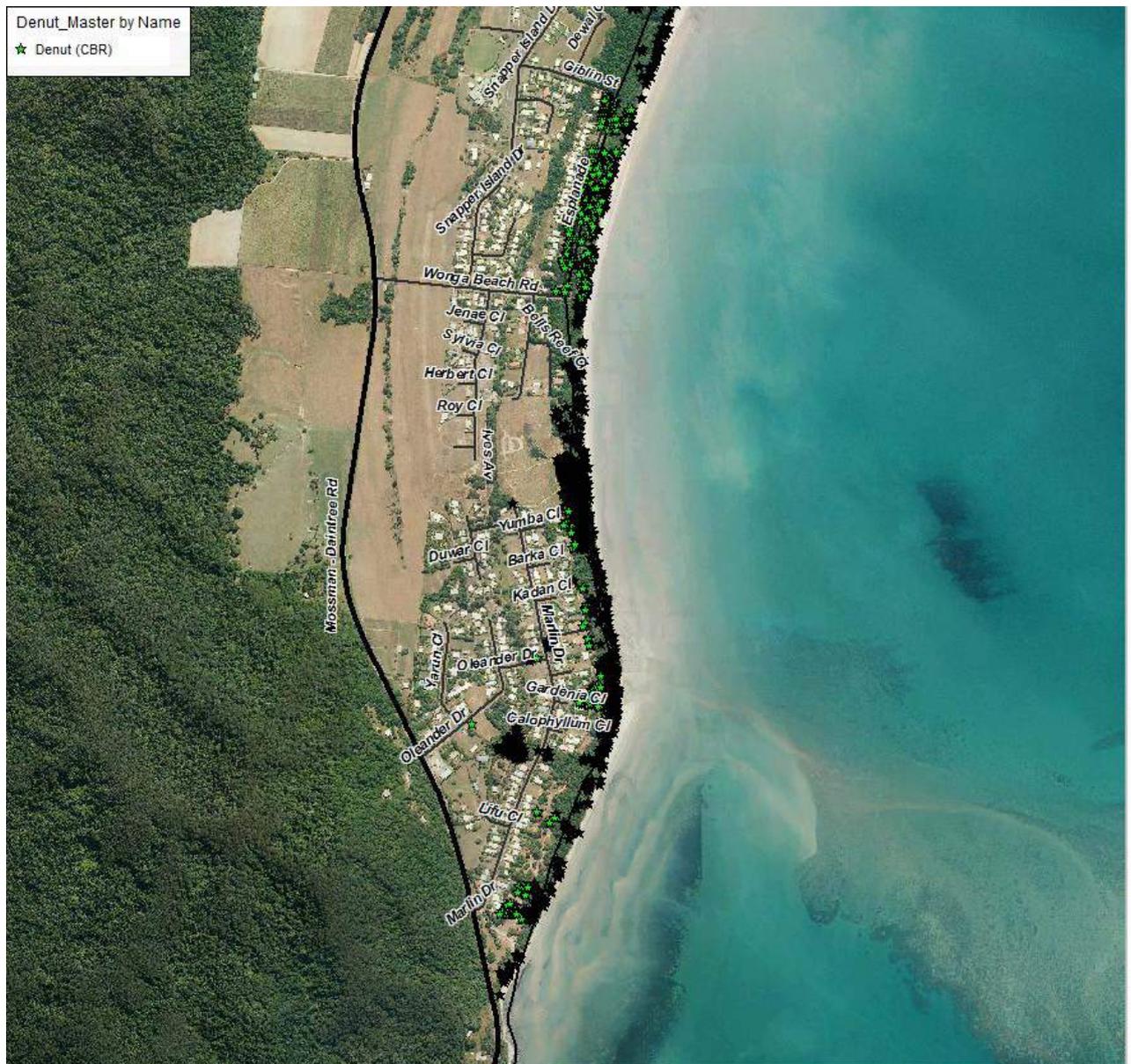
Map 4 – Cooya Beach



Map 5 – Newell Beach



Map 6 – Wonga Beach



Map 7 – Rocky Point



Map 8 – Daintree Ferry



Map 9 – Cape Tribulation



Removals

Table 2 below details coconuts scheduled to be removed for public safety and Figure 2 shows the relevant maps of coconuts to be removed.

Table 2 – Proposed Coconuts to be removed

Area	Location	Reason	Palms
Port Douglas	27-31 Davidson St	High Risk to Public Safety	1
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	28 Ulysses Street	High Risk to Public Safety	4
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Total			53



Figure 1 – High risk coconuts over pathway 27-31 Davidson St Port Douglas(Nuts and Fronds)

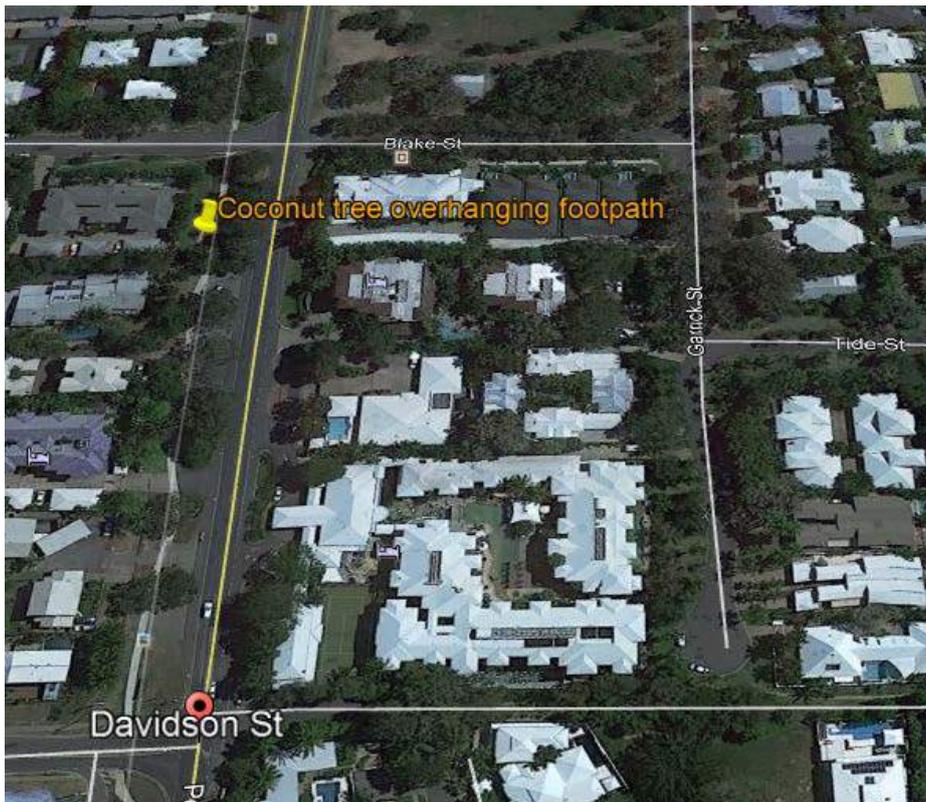


Figure 2 – High risk to public safety over pathway 63-65 Davidson St Port Douglas



Figure 3 – High risk to public safety 77 Davidson St Port Douglas



Figure 4 – High risk to public safety Cnr Garrick St and The Esplanade



Figure 5 – High risk to public safety 18 Sorrento Crescent Port Douglas



Figure 6 – High risk to public safety opposite 137 Davidson St Port Douglas



Figure 7 – Inappropriate location 348 Port Douglas Road Port Douglas



Figure 8 – High risk to public safety 28 Ulysses Street



Figure 9 – High risk to public safety opposite Barrier St Little Reef St Walkway Port Douglas



Figure 10 – High Risk to public safety corner Marlin Drive and Janbal Close Wonga



Figure 11 – High risk to public safety Wonga Caravan Park



Figure 12 - High risk to public safety Wonga Caravan Park



Figure 13 - High risk to public safety Wonga Caravan Park



Figure 14 – High risk to public safety Wonga Caravan Park



Figure 15 – High risk to public safety Mossman Caravan Park



Figure 16 – High risk to public safety Coral Sea Drive Mossman



Figure 17 – High risk to public safety 219 Buchanan Creek Road Cow Bay



Figure 18 – High risk to public safety Opposite 227 Buchanan Creek Road Cow Bay



Figure 19 – High risk to public safety 407 Buchanan Creek Road Cow Bay



Figure 20 – High risk to public safety 24 Quandong Road Cow Bay



Figure 21 – High risk to Public safety 102 Spurwood Road Cow Bay



Figure 22 – High risk to Public safety 118 Spurwood Road Cow Bay

Environmental Control and Restoration Projects

Two restoration projects are proposed to commence in 2018/2019:

Oak Beach Foreshore Restoration

Last years operational plan initiative was for Council officers to commence the planning phase of restoring the foreshore zone at Oak Beach. Officers have commenced consultation with adjacent landholders with the aim of addressing coconut management, ongoing encroachment and illegal clearing issues. Discussions regarding revegetation options/design are progressing with the landholders in an effort to be shovel ready for the next financial year.

Commercial Coconut Harvesting (Proposed trial / Expressions of Interest)

Officers will investigate the requirements and interest in trialling the commercial harvesting of mature coconuts on Council controlled lands in the Douglas Shire. Areas to be harvested will not include those areas currently subject to the de nutting programme or areas where performing such works would potentially cause damage the environment or interfere with community activities and leisure.

Key points for consideration include:

- Demand for Coconut products has increased by more than 500% in the past decade.
- Coconut water is now a \$300 million plus global industry.
- World prices for coconut oil have more than doubled in the past 5 years.
- 90% of global coconut supply comes from Asia.
- Australian imports of coconut oil increased by about 50% in the past 3 years.
- Australian coconut production is very small, mostly harvesting nuts from ornamental trees.
- There are more than 11,000 mature coconut palms in the Douglas Shire of which approximately 8,500 are on Council controlled land.
- Coconut products include coconut oil, flakes, sugar, milk, cream, water, flour, and shredded coconut

Recent media articles focussing on coconut harvesting in Douglas Shire can be viewed on the links below:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-30/should-we-be-doing-more-with-australian-coconuts/9000884> or

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2017-06-19/family-harvests-wild-coconuts-to-make-award-winning-business/8620708>

Sources: World Bank, World Atlas, ABS trade data, The University of Queensland, IBISWorld, ABC

Details of the trial specifics will be developed to address all issues and concerns such as;

- Location site
- Occupational health & safety requirements
- Public liability and insurance requirements
- Best practice methodology

Potential benefits of such a trail include:

- New potential revenue stream for Douglas Shire Council
- Reduction of coconut debris impacting on the natural vegetation
- Germination control thus reducing detrimental impacts of coconut invasion in littoral rainforest ecosystems
- Local economic development opportunities

Council officers will investigate possible trial sites in various locations including Wonga Beach, and Four Mile Beach. Both locations contain (<3000) high density monoculture. Infestations of mature coconuts as can be seen in examples below



Figure 23 – Example of coconuts in Wonga Beach area



Figure 24 – Example Coconut de nutting in Wonga Beach area

Control in the Daintree Lowlands

This project has been previously listed for implementation in the last two action plans, however it has not been completed due to external factors. A trial site of littoral rainforest was chosen north of the river based on environmental significance. A site inspection of Cowie Beach was conducted by Jabalbinna Rangers to assess the impacts of coconuts on littoral rainforest and cultural values. Further discussions were held with the elders to seek agreement on management options for this environmentally sensitive area. After several discussions with the Jabalbinna rangers and traditional elders they have advised that they do not support the project. This project will not proceed at this stage.

Landholder maintenance Agreements

During the original public consultation period numerous landholders indicated that they would be willing to enter into a formal maintenance agreement with council to de-nut coconut palms adjacent to their property. It was proposed that council trial this arrangement with willing landholders.

The priority location for this period continues to be the southern end of Oak Beach in conjunction with the abovementioned restoration project. Landowners have recently received a mail out from council with the aim of formalising coconut maintenance arrangements between the parties. Many landholders at this location currently already pay to maintain the coconut palms. Formalising this arrangement confirms the palms will be retained and registered in the database. At this early stage 3 agreements have been requested by Oak St residents

To date a total of 11 maintenance agreements (excluding the recent Oak Beach requests) have been implemented for numerous coconut palms throughout the shire in locations such as Killaloe, Newell Beach and Port Douglas.