



CRC for
Water Sensitive Cities



MONASH University
Water for Liveability Centre

Governance initiatives for mainstreaming integrated stormwater management: a social science perspective

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9 May 2013

Introduction

- Stormwater challenges resulting in ...
- Limited diffusion of technical innovation
- Need for socio-political capital to drive change towards integrated stormwater management
 - Little is known how to create such capital
- Cooks River Sustainability Initiative (CRSI) as an effective socio-political change initiative
 - Alternative ways of governance and building relationships

This presentation ...

- Outlines problems in Cooks River Catchment
- Presents Cooks River Sustainability Initiative
- Shows how project design brought about learning and changes in practice
- Provides recommendations on how to create socio-political capital for change in stormwater practice

The Cooks River Catchment

Catchment Boundary

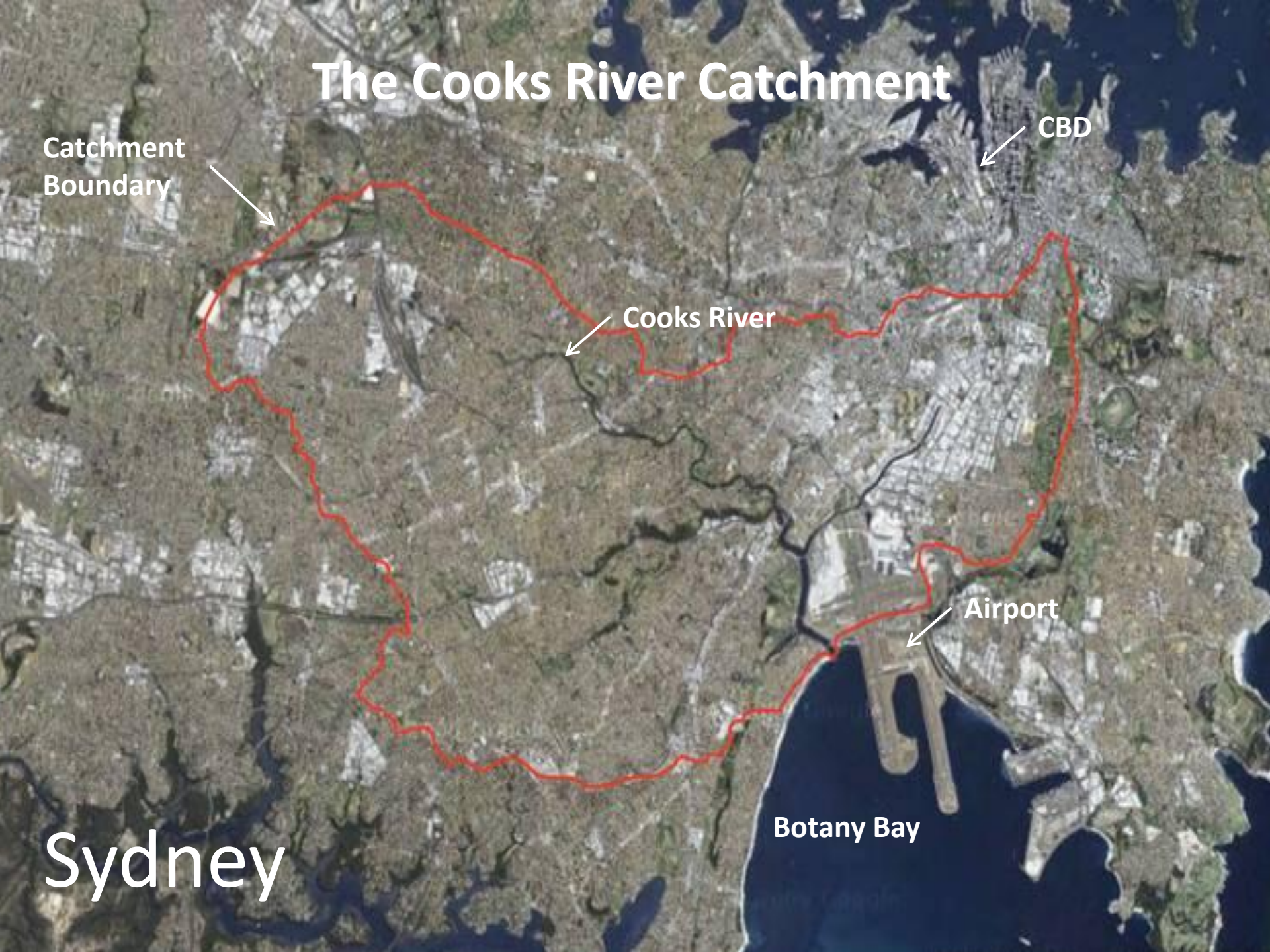
CBD

Cooks River

Airport

Botany Bay

Sydney





Dumping



Sewage overflows



Stormwater pollution



Artificial banks



Poor water quality



Bank erosion



Litter

A case of too many cooks for an urban river

May 8, 2010

Josephine Tovey URBAN AFFAIRS

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WHEN Hans Beck first moved to Ashbury in 1971 the only time he saw abundant fish in the Cooks River was when they were floating dead in a sea of industrial chemicals.

"There would be hundreds and hundreds of them lying belly up," the 75-year-old resident and volunteer recalls. "You couldn't go near the river sometimes because of the smell."

The industrial pollution has subsided and the fish have returned but there is still a long way to go before the Cooks River can shake off its reputation as one of the country's filthiest urban waterways.

Overflows of raw sewage, litter from stormwater drains and degraded structures along the river contribute to the the poor water quality. Signs warn fishers not to eat what they catch, though many are not deterred.

River is disgusting

Who will clean up the mess?

RUBBISH and toxins strewn along the Cooks River have transformed it a death zone, poisoning fish, birds, and the environment, and many say this is because there is no single governing body responsible for the river.

Several councils as well as Sydney Water and the Department of Environment and Climate Change are all responsible for sections of the river, but with empty bottles, cans, shoes, plastic bags, electronics and trolleys litter the length of the river; the question is whose responsibility is it to clean the mess?

The Cooks River Foreshore Working Group and members of the Cooks River Valley Association (CRVA) regularly meet to clean the dumped rubbish.

In March last year, CRVA president Peter Munro says they pulled out 28 trolleys from the river.

He said now when residents ring Canterbury Council to report dumped rubbish, council passes them on to the CRVA.

Mr Munro says they have been pushing for a regional council that takes in the whole of the Cooks River.

Ashbury-based architect Tony Rodi, who has researched the effects of waste and pollution for almost 37 years, said he was disgusted by the state of the river.

"It's pretty disgusting to have a natural resource full of junk," he said.

"All that junk, plastic and appliances - when I went down there last week there were thousands of fish in the river, the fish varied in size, edible fish that come in and out - some of them will be fished and sold for consumption. The river must have a lot of impurities, they're getting into the food chain - they're getting into us."



It is disgusting to see the Cooks River littered with empty bottles, cans, shoes, plastic bags, electronics and trolleys.

"There's got to be an ongoing commitment to keep it clean," he said. "This is unacceptable."

Canterbury Greens councillor Linda Eisler said it's difficult for each council to admit total responsibility of the river and surrounds.

"It's appalling that our native wildlife has to put up with so much rubbish, it's appalling that people spend hours of their free time cleaning up the river," she said.

"Imagine people coming in to your home and dumping their garbage into your own home. The river is an extension of all our homes, a place we can enjoy and take our children, and pollution spoils everything for everyone."



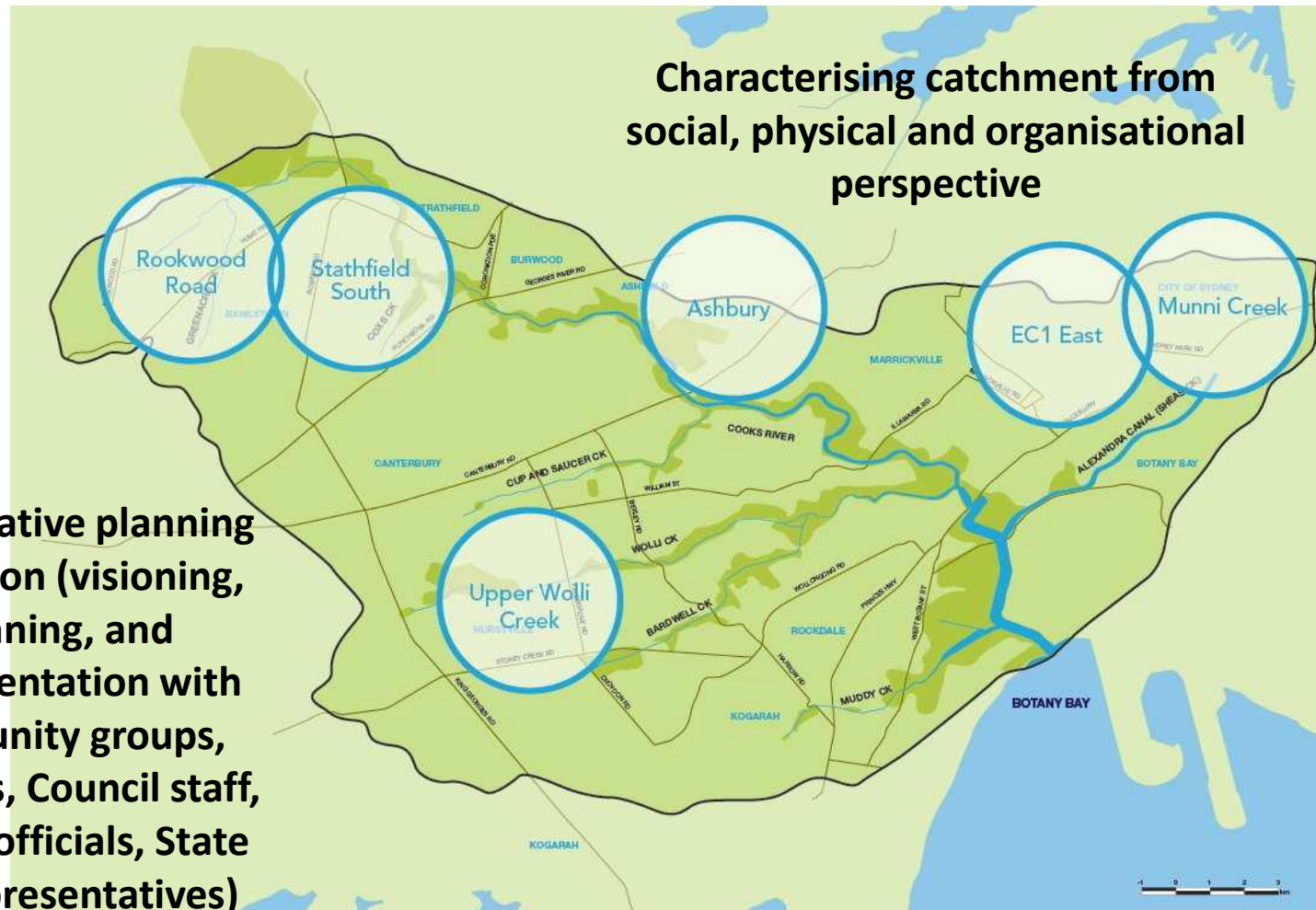
In: Pincus and Wisniewski-Jakuba (2010)



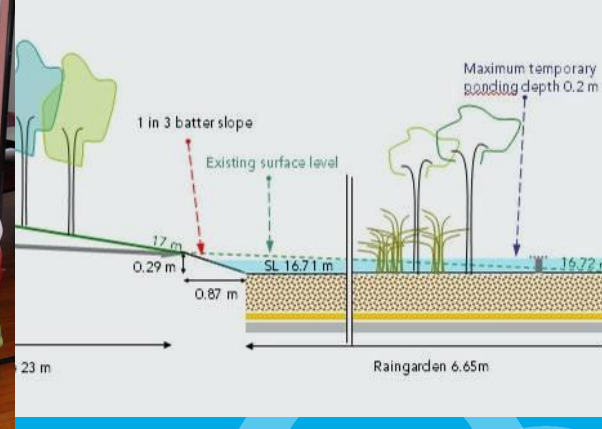
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What is the Cooks River Sustainability Initiative?

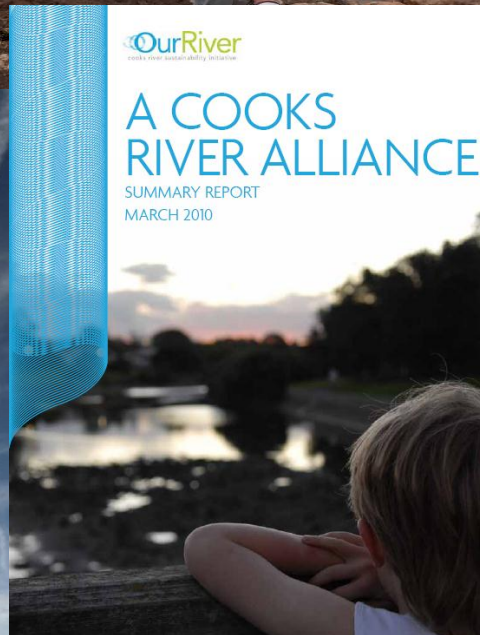
New multi-disciplinary planning model for sustainable SW management in six sub-catchments across eight councils



Collaborative planning and action (visioning, planning, and implementation with community groups, residents, Council staff, Elected officials, State Gov representatives)



Cooks River Sustainability Initiative
Ashbury Subcatchment Management Plan

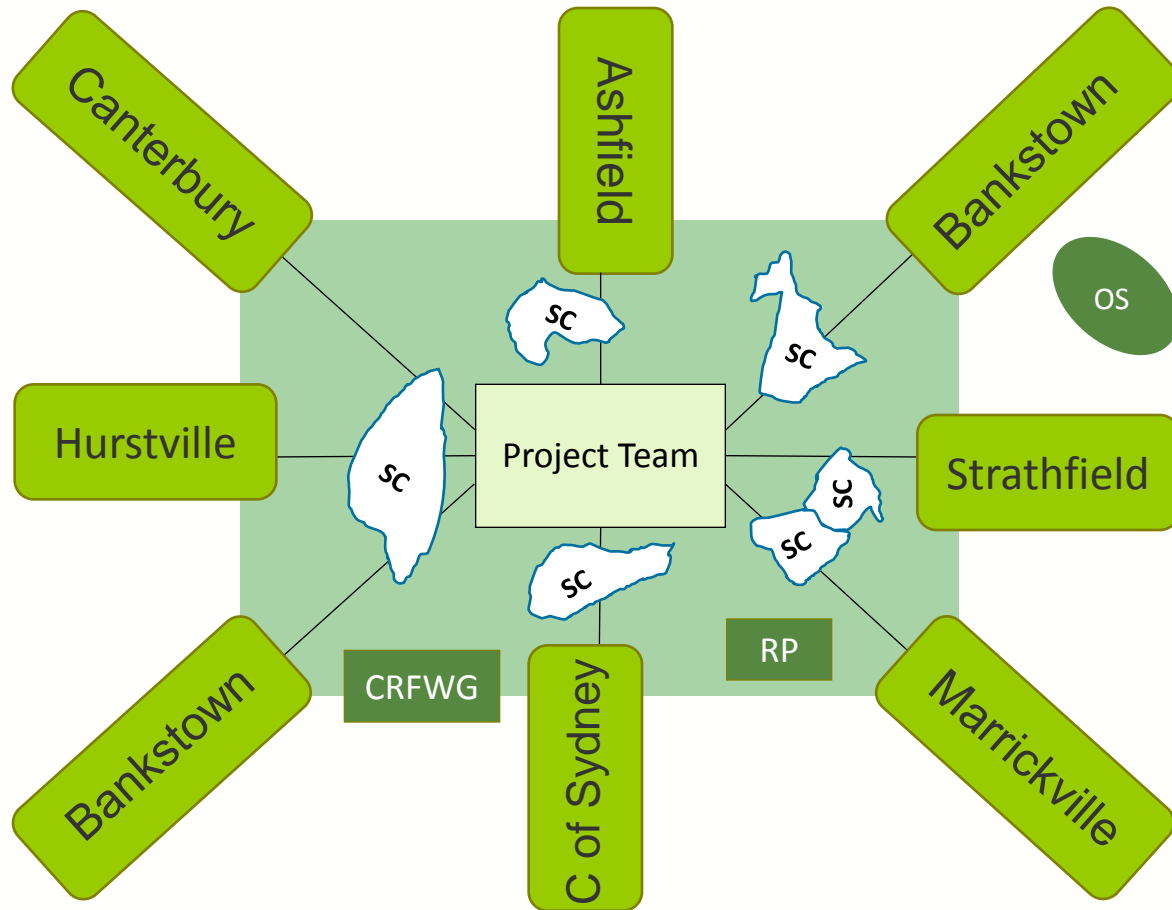


Underlying agenda

- To develop and improve coordination and cooperation within and between municipalities.
- By encouraging municipal staff and catchment stakeholders to explore and recognise their perspectives and interdependencies in managing urban storm water

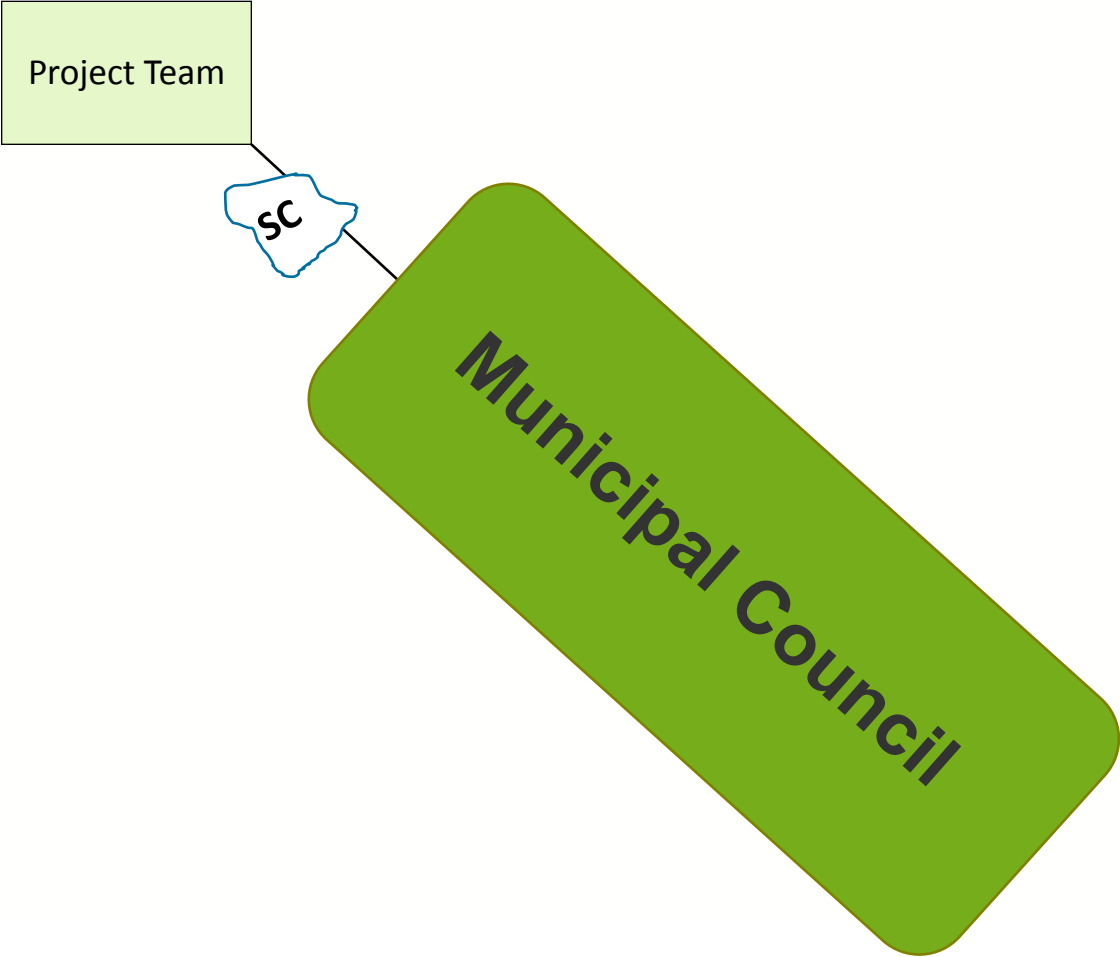
How was the project designed to achieve this agenda?

Basic project structure ...

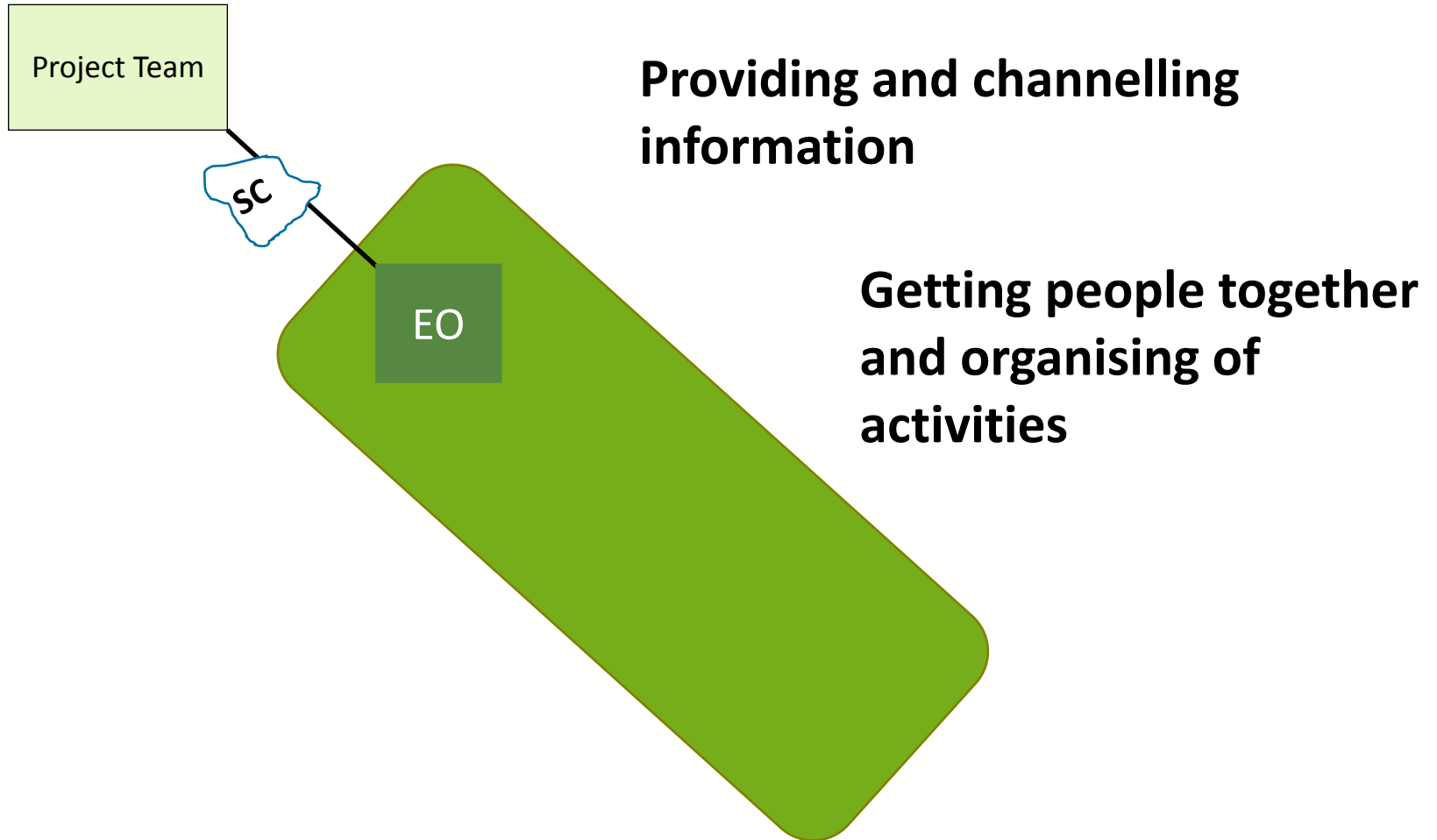


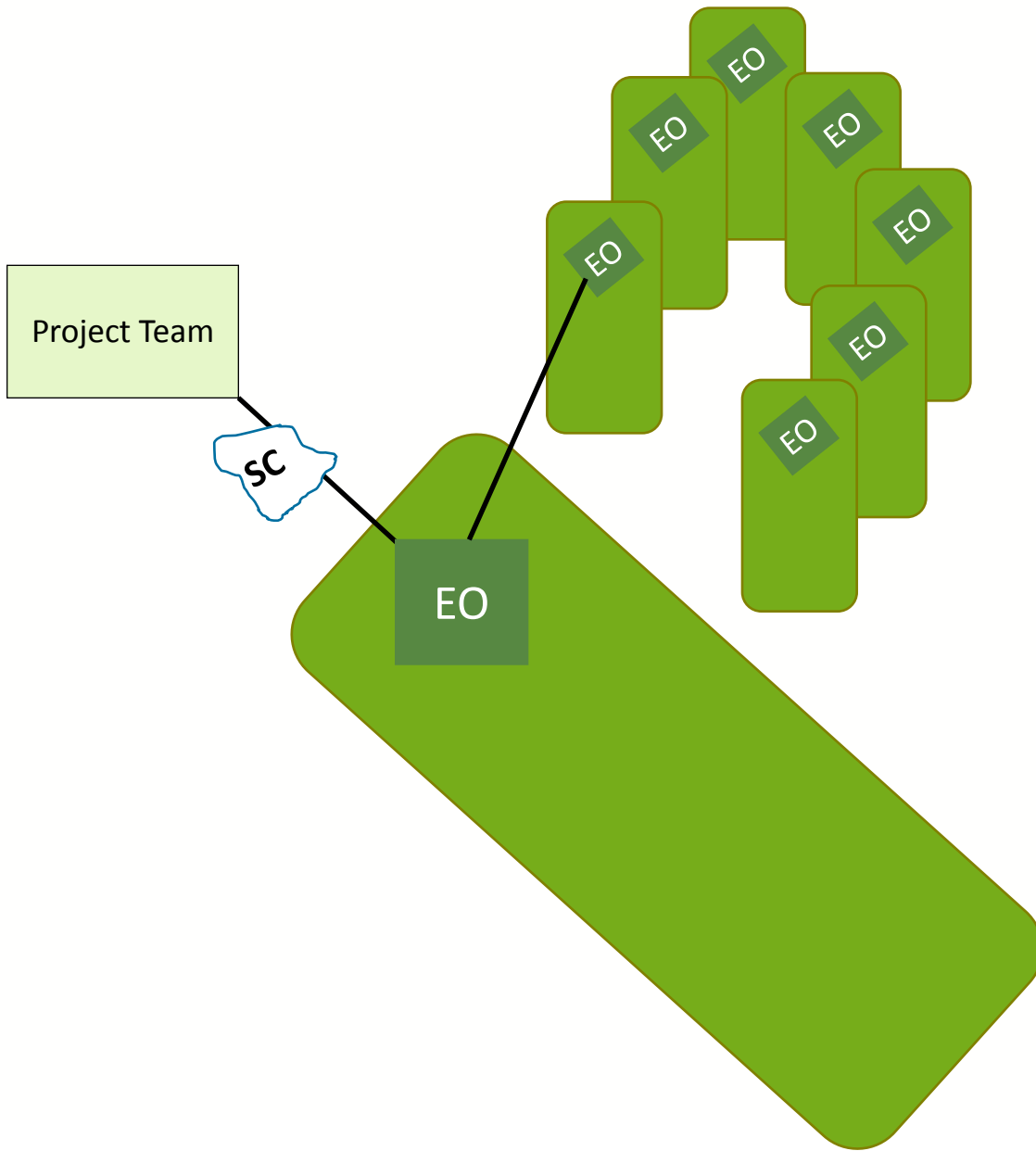
- RP** Research Partner
- CRFWG** Cooks River Foreshores Working Group
- OS** Other Stakeholders
- SC** Sub-Catchment

Project structure



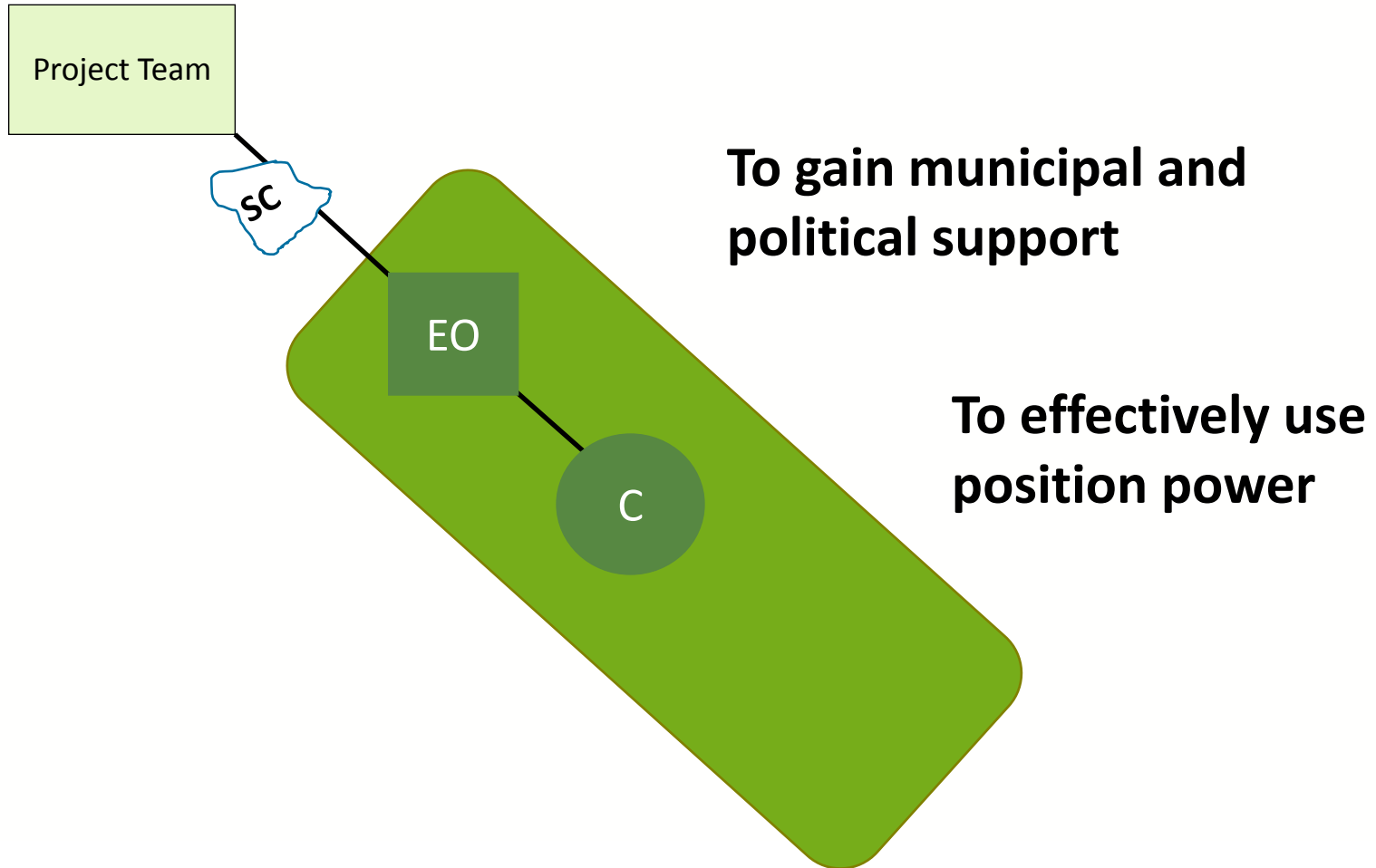
Environmental officers as leaders



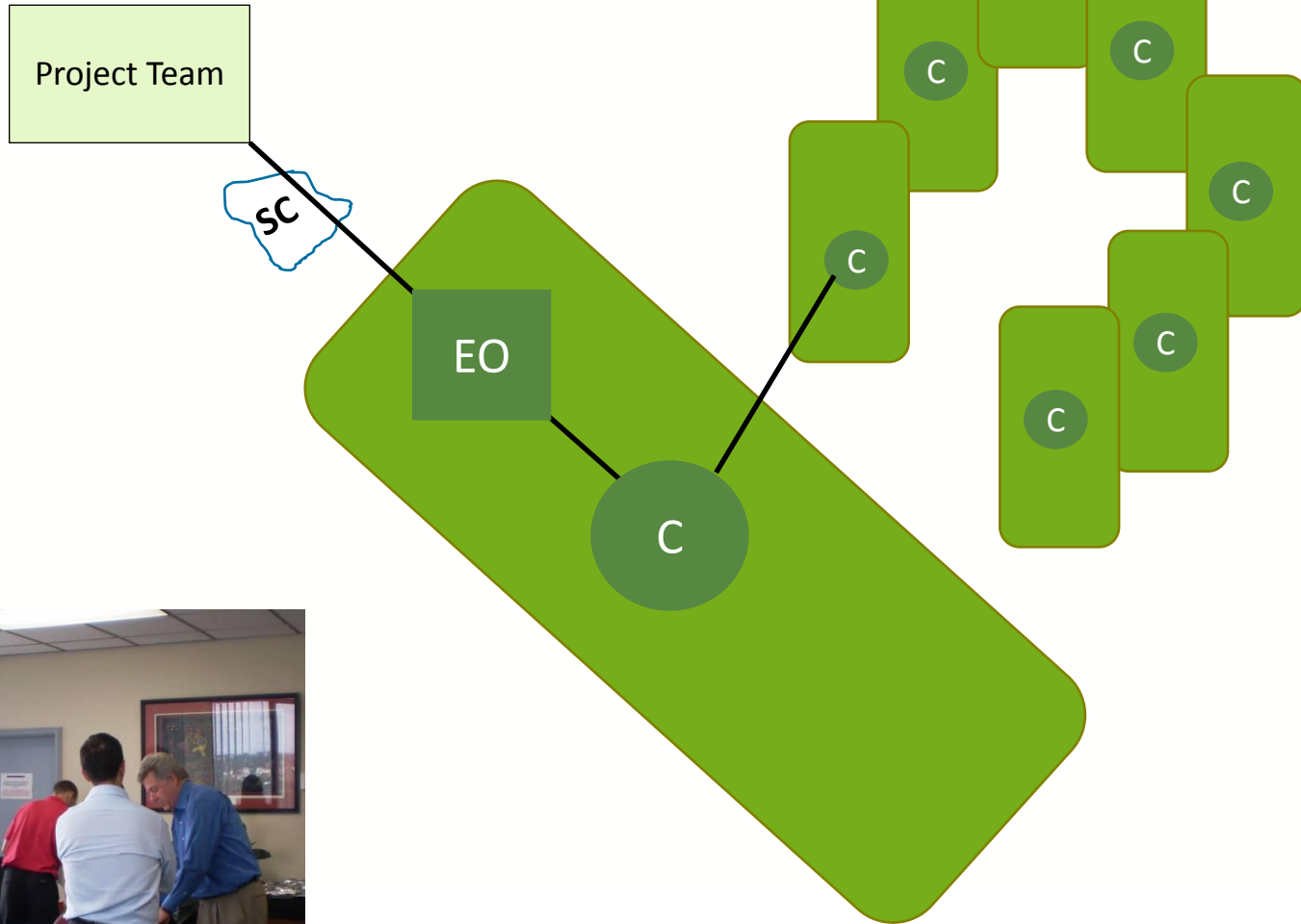


**Steering
committee of
environmental
officers**

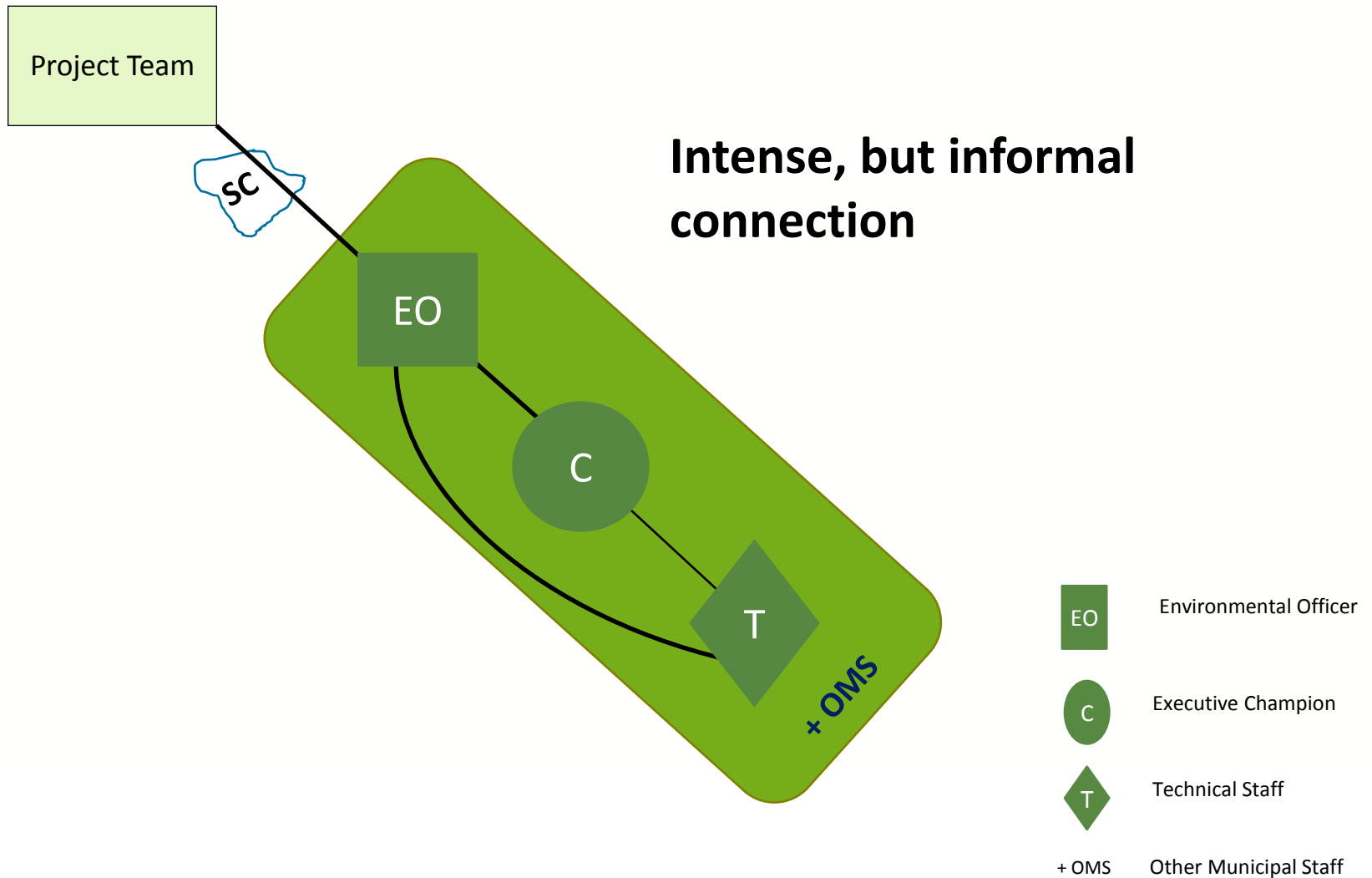
Environmental officers and executive champions working in tandem



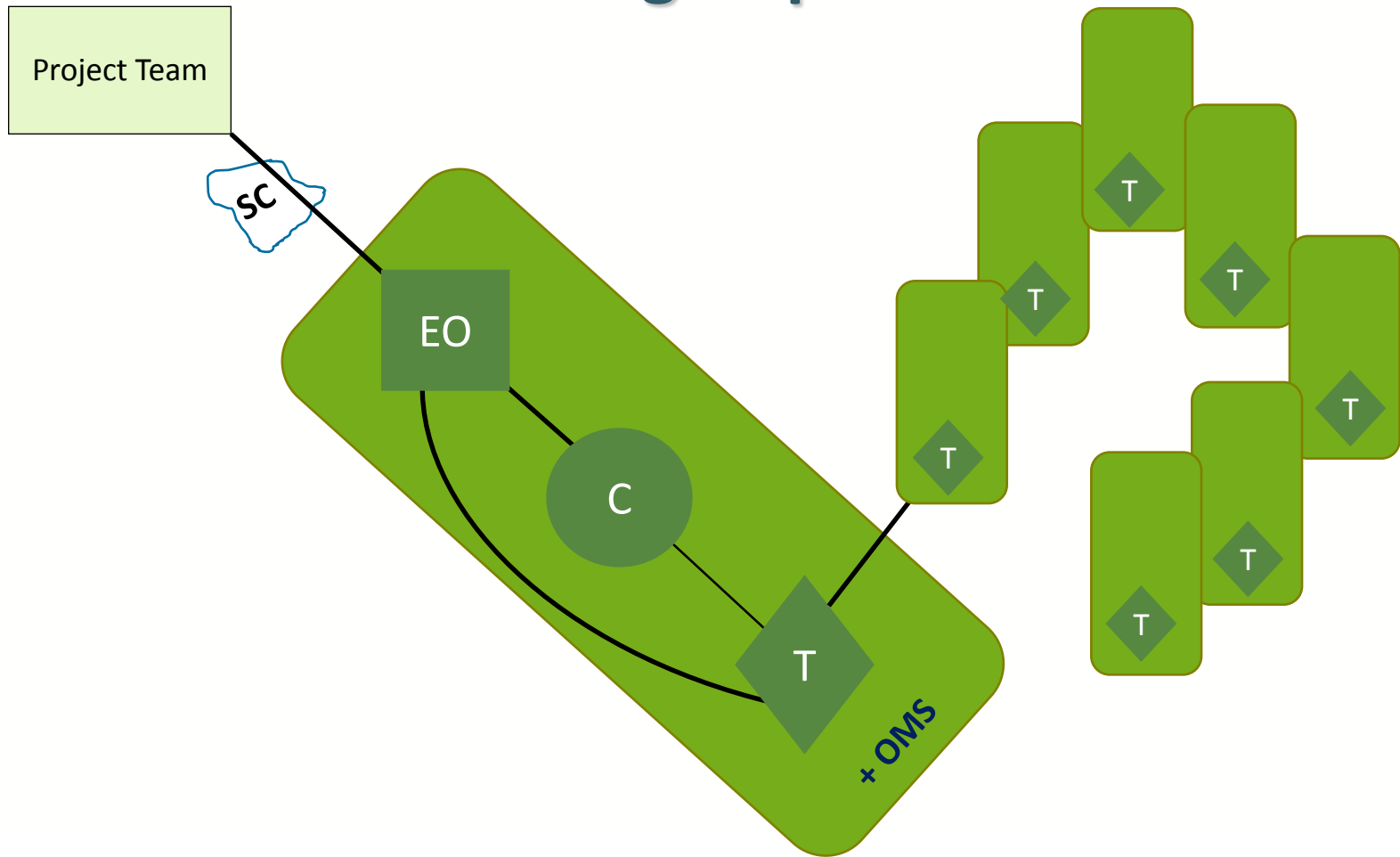
Executive champions committee



Cooperation between environmental officers and technical staff

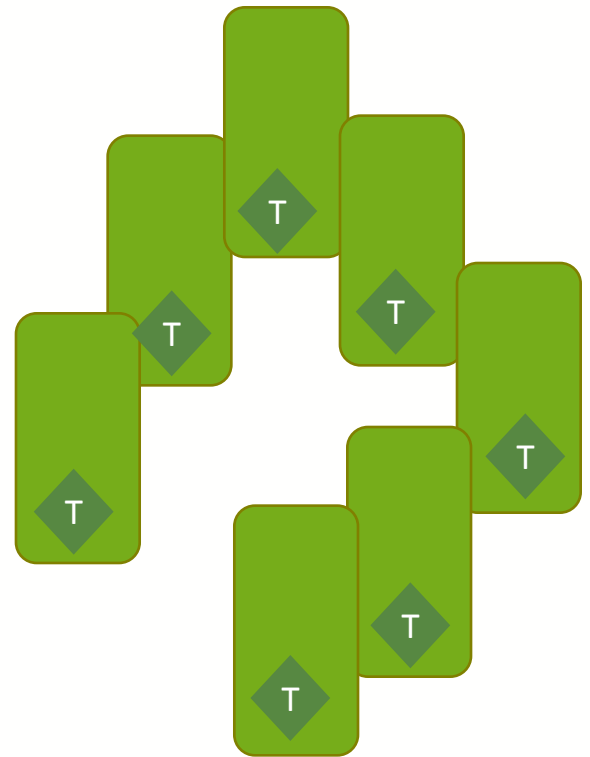


Technical working group

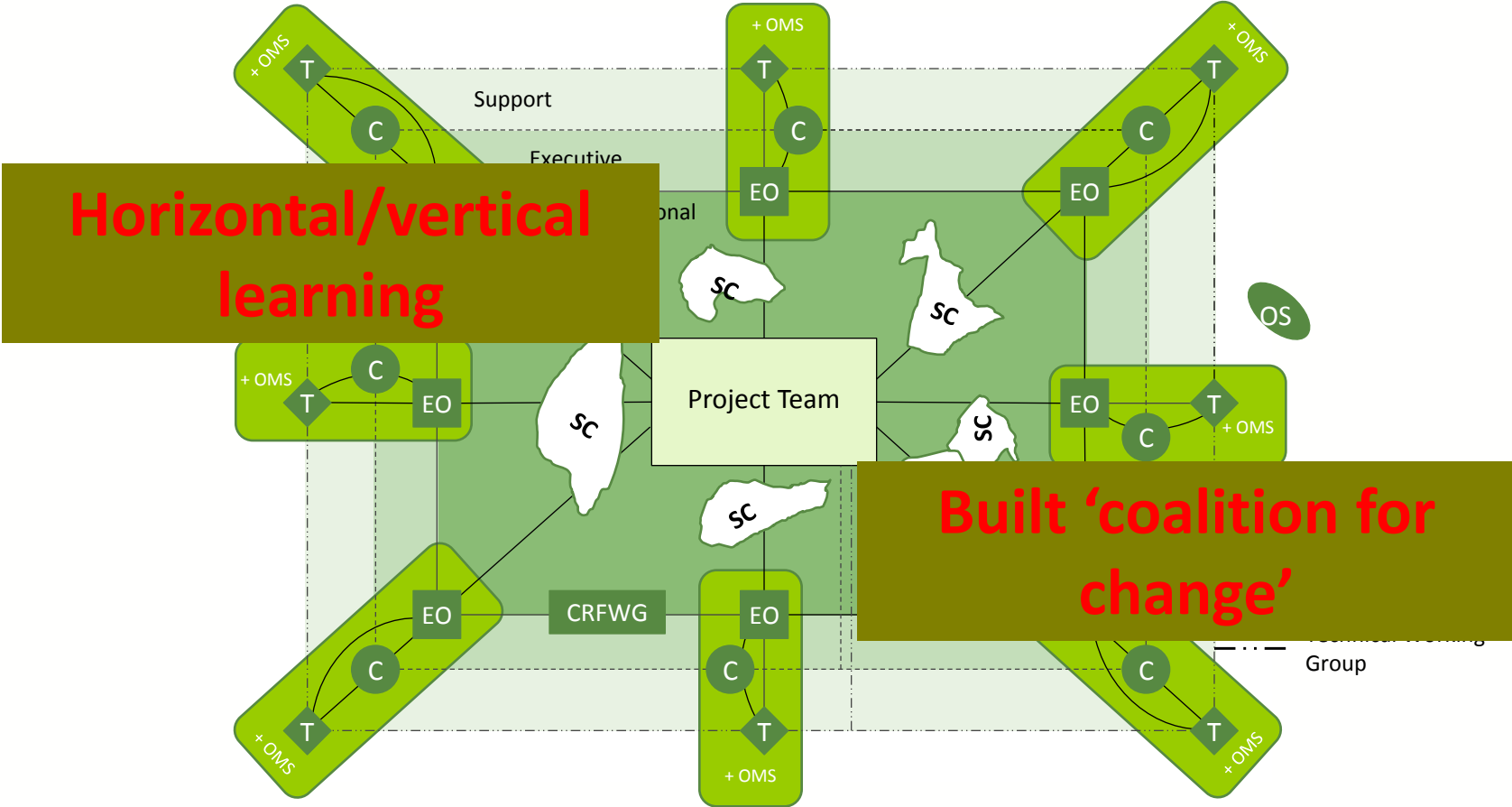


Multi-peer groups

- Multi-functional learning platforms
 - Perspectives
 - Experience
- Develops networks
 - If strong enough, challenges existing paradigm

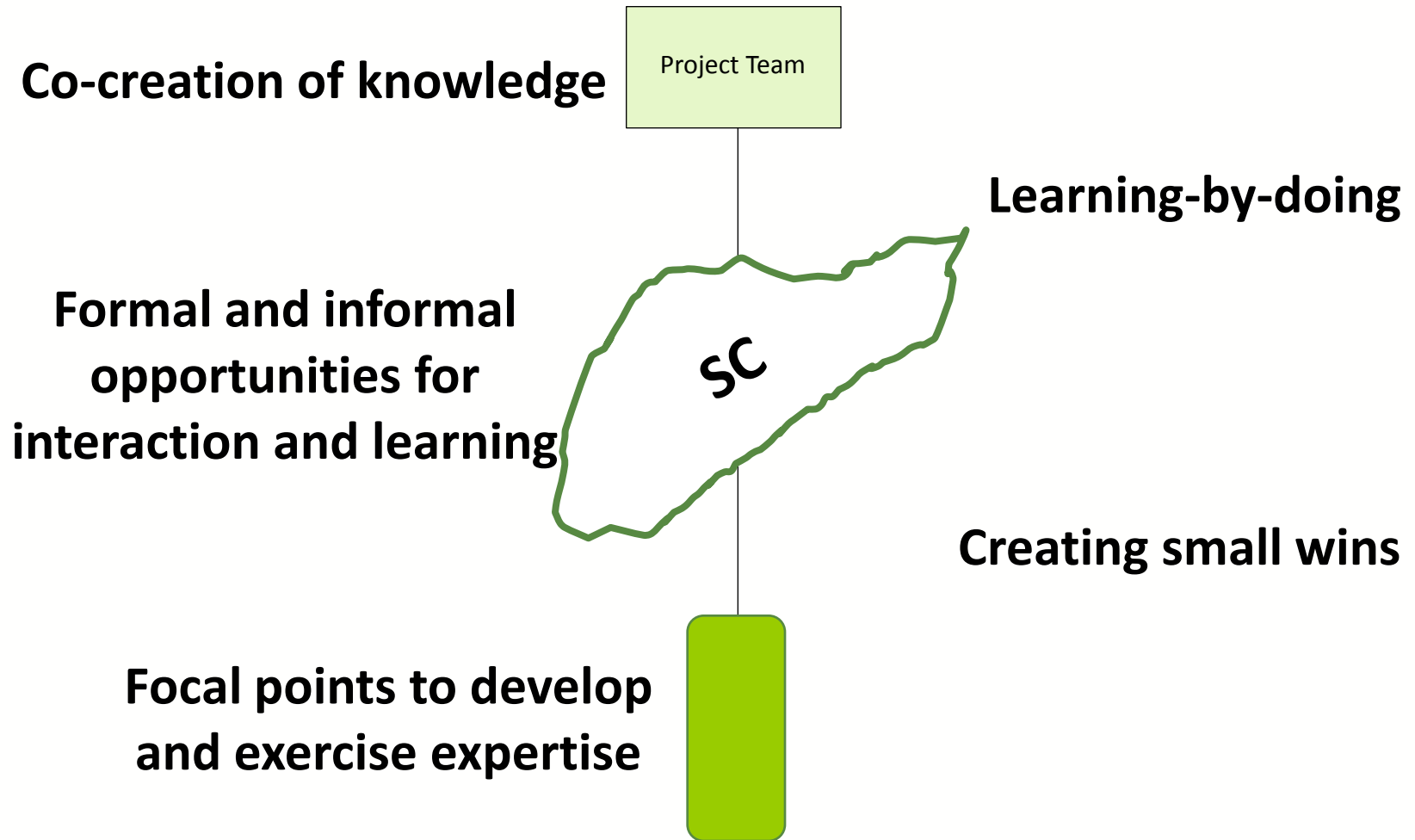


Overall project structure



- Municipal Council x 8
 - EO Environmental Officer
 - RP Research Partner
- CRFWG Cooks River Foreshores Working Group
 - OS Other Stakeholders
 - SC Sub-Catchment
- C Executive Champion
 - T Technical Staff
 - + OMS Other Municipal Staff

Sub-catchment projects as focus projects



Multi-peer groups

(with executives and officers working in tandem)

and

focus projects

created

socio-political capital at three
levels

Socio-political capital built at three levels

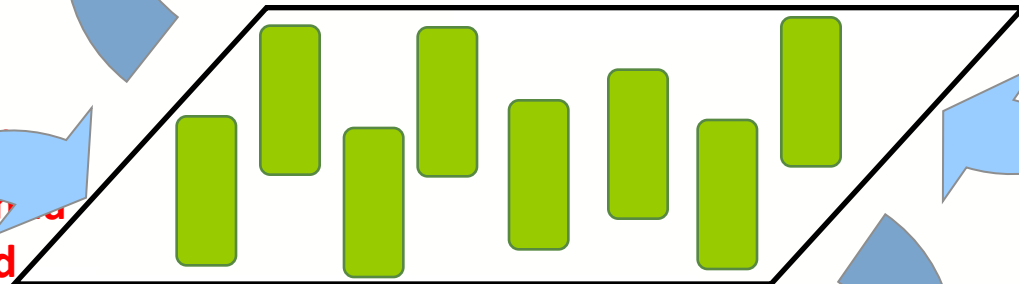
Catchment level

Accumulative effect visible
Intra-organisational learning
Shared meaning negotiated
Interest politicians created
MOA signed



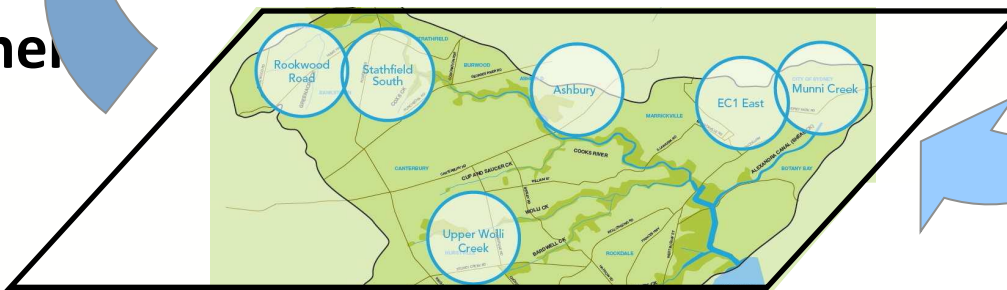
Municipal level

Inter-disciplinary learning
Sense of urgency, agency
Commitment created



Sub-catchment level

Communal learning
Common interest groups



Enabling conditions

- Focused and strong facilitation with understanding of process approaches
- Research partnership – reflecting evidence of the process and bring in state of the art science.
- Resources to create space in which could be innovated
- Project reputation & winning awards

OUR PLANET IS UP TO EVERY ONE OF US

Tide turns: Award for Cooks River project

The hard work of eight councils working toward improving the health of the Cooks River was rewarded late last month.

The OurRiver project won the Green Globe Local Government Sustainability Award at Parliament House. The project was also highly commended in the Grundfos Water Conservation Award category of the Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Sustainable Cities Awards.

OurRiver project manager Rachel Wisniewski-Jakuba said it was an honour to receive the awards, which recognise the achievements of the \$2 million initiative.

"These awards are a credit to the enthusiasm and hard work of all those involved community members, councillors, council staff and state agency representatives," she said.

"This recognition of the innovative steps partner councils are taking to improve water management is much appreciated. The word is getting out about how we are

putting research into practice with new technologies and ways of working together."

OurRiver is a partnership of eight local councils including Ashfield, Bankstown, Canterbury, Sydney, Hurstville, Marrickville, Rockdale, and Strathfield, and the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group and Monash University.

The project has enhanced the council and community's ability to manage water and water systems sustainably for increased quality of life and ecological health of the Cooks River.

The initiative also involves the construction across the catchment of 11 water sensitive urban design elements including rain gardens,



Canterbury South Public School students at the Cup and Saucer Creek wetlands, Earlwood, part of the Cooks River revamp. Picture: Supplied

swales and stormwater harvesting. The OurRiver initiative grew from the process developed by Marrickville Council and Monash University in 2006.

To find out more about how you, your family, school, business or community can help, visit www.innerwestcourier.com.au

Other contexts?

- Invest in social change processes beyond technology
- Identify focus projects that can create common interest groups and coalitions for change
- Build 'officer and executive' relationships
- Involve research partners
- Single and multiple organisational situations
- Stamina is needed

Social and political change
deserves
as much attention as
technical innovation
to mainstream integrated
stormwater management!

Thank you!

For further reference:

- Bos, J.J., Brown, R.R. and Farrelly, M.A. (2013) **Governance experimentation for enabling social learning situations**. *Global Environmental Change*, 23, 328-412.
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- Bos, J.J. and Brown, R.R, (in review) **Assessing organisational capacity for transition policy programs**. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*

