



## Rescue mission to save critically endangered far south coast Eucalypt

A team from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Australian National Botanic Gardens and the Office of Environment and Heritage are about to mount a logistically difficult rescue mission to save one of the most endangered eucalypts in the country.

Located at the summit of a mountain on the far south coast of NSW, the critically endangered *Eucalyptus imlayensis* was first discovered in 1977 at the top of Mount Imlay, a landscape feature that dominates the coastline.

The Mount Imlay operation is being mounted later in September, to follow *Threatened Species Day* on September 7. It is supported by funds provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Service under the *Find It and Fix It* program.

Project coordinator and NPWS Nadgee Ranger Lyn Evans said staff and volunteers are making preparations to support the trees once they are planted.

"We've built foot cleaning stations and remote hygiene stations to protect all rare plants on Mt Imlay.

"Weather permitting, this week we will finish transporting water, digging tools and other resources by helicopter to help plant and nurture the young trees," Ms Evans said.

In 2007, staff from the Office of Environment and Heritage were concerned no new plants were growing in this small isolated mallee eucalypt population and were failing to set much seed.

"When the NSW team called for help, we knew that propagating seed at the Gardens might well help save the *Eucalyptus imlayensis* from extinction," Australian National Botanic Gardens horticulturalist Paul Carmen said.

"Getting the seed was a real challenge, In this steep remote area, it's very difficult to get to the trees, let alone collect seed from them. They are literally hanging off the top of the mountain and so we had to take specialised extendable seed collecting equipment, as well as climb as high as we could along the branches to reach the seeds.

"But the good news is, we've now successfully propagated 23 seedlings in our Canberra nursery and they're ready to be planted out in the wild," Mr Carmen said.

Office of Environment and Heritage scientist Keith McDougall said that the species is at high risk of extinction by disease.

"The population of the *Eucalyptus imlayensis* had shrunk by 10 per cent over 10 years. The decline may have been caused by the root rotting pathogen *Phytophthora*, which has killed plants of many other species at the summit.

"We will now plant the 23 seedlings as part of a trial to spread the extinction risk by establishing a larger stronger population.

"We will also trial the use of a chemical known as phosphite, which is effective at inoculating many species from the effects of *Phytophthora*," Dr McDougall said.

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