

Tension between ecological and funding realities in restoration

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The likelihood that an ecosystem restoration project will ultimately be successful can be heavily influenced by both the level and duration of investment. Nevertheless, the true costs and time commitments required to halt or reverse trends in quality are not always appreciated or considered when choosing among potential interventions (projects). We use a case study of forest restoration in eastern Australia to show how the choice and timing of restoration interventions can be critically influenced by how individual restoration projects are costed. Specifically, partial costing leads to more rapid initiation (expansion) of restoration projects but generates a shortfall in maintenance effort, opening the possibility that previously funded projects will regress in quality over time. Navigating this dilemma will require a more complete consideration of costs and risks but also novel strategies to better align operational constraints (e.g. budgets) with the timeframes required to actually achieve desired outcomes.