

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • December 2012

President's Message

Michelle Hanrahan

This year has once again seen further development of initiatives and services provided by FRCC. The organisation has continued to deliver its core contracted functions as well as creating new activities and FRCC staff are commended for their enthusiasm and commitment towards providing quality services to our clients. I also acknowledge the highly valued contributions of our many partners including businesses, state and local government agencies, community organisations and landholder groups for their support and assistance with many awareness events and training activities.

I thank the members of the Management Committee for their insights and willingness to share their expertise and interests to further develop the direction of the organisation during 2012. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the valued contributions made by new committee member, Sarah Becker.

We wish everyone a happy and safe Christmas, a prosperous New Year, and invite you to continue to support FRCC in 2013.

Executive Officer's Report

Jeff Krause

The last quarter of the year has seen FRCC active in a range of local and catchment wide activities. The Fitzroy Basin Association Muster provided the opportunity to showcase some of the innovative projects in our area. Particular thanks to the Grove's family for allowing around 50 people to tour their fruit growing enterprise at Bungundarra in conjunction with the Muster.

This last five months has seen staff working with landholders to develop more than 50 projects to access incentive funding with the majority of these now in the delivery stages. I encourage you to call us if you require any further information regarding any of these projects.

Water quality and river health continues to be a hot topic with representations on issues including advice provided to the State Government raising areas of concern. The FRCC team continues to advocate for increased community information and education regarding water quality.

Over the past two months staff have planned and facilitated a range of workshops and events aimed at contributing to changed land management practices that limit sediment discharge into our waterways and ultimately to the reef.

Since July this year, FRCC individual membership has increased by another 80 individuals and two new groups have joined. We continue working with more community groups and schools to promote our objectives and develop new approaches to engaging with people to bring about change to support more sustainable natural resource management.

Unfortunately the proposed venture with North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre which involved students learning on the River while paddling and boating down the Fitzroy with specialist and scientific support being coordinated by FRCC staff had to be postponed to 2013 as the river was flowing too quickly at the time the activity was to occur. Enthusiasm for the activity remains, with staff looking forward to assisting with the paddle next year.

We look forward to working with you in 2013.

Morinish Landcare meets on North Keppel Island

Jeff Krause

On 12 November, Morinish Landcare held its meeting at Education Queensland's North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre (NKIEEC). President of Morinish Landcare, Jeff Mills initiated the activity as an opportunity to have landholders experience the impacts of land management practices in the Fitzroy Catchment on Keppel Bay islands and the reef.

The 18 people, mostly landholders from the Morinish and Ridgeland area around 100km upstream from Keppel Bay were treated to many of the wonders of being on an island, sea, sand and sunshine, even if it was a bit rough getting there. The trip also included hearing some memorable stories about the impacts of the river on the bay, the general resilience of the fringing reefs, scientific monitoring sites and the debris washed up on the beaches following the last flood.

The tour of the centre provided interesting insights into the complex infrastructure that aims to model best practice to support a community of up to 50 people with all power, water and sanitation managed on the island which is a National Park.

Roger Searle, Principal of NKIEEC, and his staff welcomed the Landcare group and provided a wonderful tour of the centre and points of interest about the natural and human impacts on the island. Roger invited other Landcare groups to visit the centre as many in this group commented that the visit showed them the links between the activities in the catchment and their impact on the bay and reef. FRCC is looking at arranging an opportunity for Landcare groups to visit NKIEEC in the new year.

Small Landholders Day

Shelly McArdle

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments recently hosted a day aimed at providing information and support to help small landholders better manage their blocks.

Presenters covered a wide range of subjects including information on dam infrastructure and maintenance provided by Mark Jeffery The Qld Dam Man, followed by Chris Small from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and Allan Briggs from Birdlife Capricornia who teamed up to present on biodiversity and attracting birds to your dam in addition to general dam health.

Demonstrations by Tony Townsend on feral dog control created a lot of interest from attendees along with John Reeve's presentation on how to better care for our horses in Central Queensland also producing a buzz.

Rockhampton Regional Council offered their support through Peter McCullen who shared knowledge on Council services and weed management.

One of the most popular attractions on the day was the demonstration by Farriers, Graeme Ward and Mick Ryan, who treated participants to a practical hot shoeing activity, keeping their audience of horse enthusiasts entertained with their stories and knowledge obtained during over 50 years in the business.

The day was also supported by a number of community groups including The Society for Growing Australian Plants, Greening Australia, The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Capricornia Bee Keepers along with local business Centracks, Fitzroy Nurseries, Pfeiffer Alpacas, Landmark, Dowden's Pumping, Healthy Horses, Bunnings, Go Farm and Thinkwater also supporting the day. Representatives from QRAA, DNRM, DAFF, Agforce, and Tony Townsend Wild Dog Control also lent their expertise and shared information about resources and services available to participants. The Caves Lion's Club provided the catering on the day that proved to be almost as popular as the presentations.

Participants on the day had the opportunity not only to hear from industry experts but to share information and experiences with local businesses, community groups and each other. The event was a great example of how many organisations can collaborate to increase awareness for landholders of actions they can take to improve animal health, land management practices and reduce runoff to the reef. Planning will soon commence for the next Small Landholders Day to be held in August next year.

Best Projects 2011/12 Lisa Sutton

Each year FRCC celebrates the achievements of the graziers and horticulturalists who are the food producers and on ground natural resource managers of our region.

Thirty FRCC projects were developed in the 2011/2012 financial year. Nine of these were shortlisted for the award, under the three categories of Grazing, Horticulture and Coastal projects.

The nominees this year for best projects are:

Coastal: Roger Toole of "Mill Iron", Lachlan and Trudy Mace of "Toorilla Station" and Takeshi Mitani of "Iwasaki"

Grazing: Jeff and Karen Mills of "Melrose", Glenn and Nikki Kelly of "Edithvale" and Max Baldwin of "Marlborough Station"

Horticulture: Nathan Stevens of "Lake Mary Pines", Noel Brosnan of "What a Gem" and Ian and Sandi Groves of "Middle Ridge"

The winners are:

Best Coastal Project

"Toorilla" Coastal Fencing Project, Stange Bay

Lachlan and Trudy Mace are wonderful custodians of "Toorilla Station" which has been in Lachlan's family since 1929. Trudy's heritage is also in the beautiful Stange Bay area. Together they are committed to improving land condition for greater productivity now and for future generations, beginning with their sons Rohan (10) and Drew (8).

This project builds on the Natural Resource benefits of the previous FRCC project which improved grazing practices and protected 4 170Ha of marine plains using fencing and additional water points.

In this recently completed project, a 2.61 km fence along the northern project area and a 4.23 km fence to the south separates the marine plains from the Melaleuca and Eucalypt woodlands. The two fences will protect the 11 freshwater creeks that supply the 285 ha of estuarine wetland from grazing pressure during the wet season. Wadallah Creek flows through the property.

Previously, continuous grazing in the 2 796 ha paddock (larger prior to the previous FRCC project) was concentrated in the project area and caused degradation. By protecting this area water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon will be dramatically improved.

Budget: \$37,040 in kind; \$28,290 FBA funds

This project compliments the environmental benefits of Coastal Fencing projects undertaken on the neighbouring property "Fernleigh" which won the inaugural best coastal project award in 2009. Such cooperation between neighbours is a great example of the how the Neighbourhood Catchment program can achieve great collective environmental outcomes.

Best Fitzroy Basin Project

"Melrose" Riparian Fencing Project, Jeff and Karen Mills

Jeff and his late father Neville Mills have long been champions of sustainable natural resource management in the grazing industry. "Melrose" is a shining example of how their innovative land management and many years of hard work can benefit both production and enhance the natural environment. Jeff is a member of the Australian Rangelands Society and is currently the president and has been a long term supporter of the Morinish landcare group. "Melrose" has hosted numerous property tours to demonstrate the benefits of well planned property infrastructure and rotational grazing. More recently Jeff and his wife Karen have joined the "Reef Guardian" program through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. This program promotes how sustainable land management practices benefit our iconic Great Barrier Reef.

This project involved construction of 3.34 km of riparian fencing along Ten Mile Creek. An existing dam in the adjacent paddock was fenced and equipped with a tank, water line and trough. An additional dam was constructed and fenced to serve as a water point. This dam was equipped with fencing to form a funnel which will prevent cattle camping around the water causing its contamination. This design has been effective elsewhere on the property.

"Melrose" has an extensive network of reticulated water for cattle throughout the rest of the property. This 3.34 km of fencing will complete the protection of 14km of Ten Mile creek within "Melrose". Benefits of this project include increased groundcover in 95.5 ha of riparian area and rehabilitation and stabilisation of the creek banks of Ten Mile Creek.

Budget: \$26 950 in kind, \$12 750 FBA Funds.

Best Horticultural Project

Biological Pest Control in Fruit Orchards at "Middle Ridge", Ian and Sandi Groves

Ian and Sandi Groves are phenomenal horticultural and natural resource management achievers. Ian started farming pineapples with his father at Bungundarra in 1972. Ian and his wife Sandi started planting fruit trees on their block and harvested the last crop of pineapples in 1982. They have since developed a flourishing enterprise producing commercial quantities of quality mangoes, avocados, carambolas, longans, lynchies and loquats. The property has exclusion netting over vulnerable crops and 100% ground cover, water use has been reduced by 60% using drip irrigation and water sensor monitoring. The family is proactive in achieving best environmental practice, as demonstrated by their Rural Sustainability award in 2008 from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Robert Doyle from Growcom develops FRCC's horticultural projects and has provided the following summary of Ian and Sandi's award winning project.

Insect pests within the orchard are controlled using a variety of strategies under an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, including the use of netting and releasing predatory insects. However depending on seasonal pest pressure the different crops receive anywhere between about 8 and 20 insecticides.

After seeing Solar Insect Lights in operation in orchards in China the family wanted to adopt the technology in their Yeppoon orchard. The Solar Insect Lights consist of a light bulb sitting over a tub of water. The unit operates by attracting the insects to the light. Once they hit the bulb they simply drop down into the water below and cannot escape. The unit is mounted on a pole and is powered by a 12V battery, that is kept charged by a solar panel.

The success of the project can be demonstrated by existing farm records. These include a spray diary, kept for each block and crop production records, showing yield and quality.

The project will reduce the total number of pesticide applications. It will also preserve the number of introduced and native beneficial insects. It should also result in an improvement to the overall yield and quality of produce.

Budget: In kind: \$5 640 FBA: \$4 920.

Congratulations to all the nominees and winners of the FRCC best project awards for this year.

The award is recognition of your great achievements and encouragement of others in working towards achieving industry best practice with a strong emphasis on improving the natural resources of our region. Your ability to do this aligns with FRCC's mission "to facilitate and nurture the sustainable and productive use of the region's natural resources through a community partnership approach".

Turtle Tale Now on Sale

Julie Cook (FBA)

The plight of the Fitzroy Basin's own bum-breathing turtle will be told in a delightful new children's picture book being published by Fitzroy Basin Association Incorporated (FBA).

The Fitzroy River Turtle is a vulnerable species that is only found in the creeks and rivers of the Fitzroy Basin. Developed by local authors and artists, this illustrated picture book can be yours now.

"Oh Dear, That's My Rear" is the tale of Rheo the Fitzroy River Turtle. Rheo needs to make a splash as her species is in trouble! Maybe if Rheo can win the 'Central Queensland's Iconic Species Quest', her turtle friends will finally get the attention they deserve. A great Christmas gift idea to engage your children or grandchildren!

Grab a copy for only \$15.99 from FBA or FLOW (Old Post Office Building Corner East and Denham Streets or phone 4999 2800), FRCC, Another Story, Visitor Information Centres or email flow@fba.org.au

The Fitzroy River Turtle (*Rheodytes leukops*) is unique to our region. It was discovered in 1980 and is vulnerable due to factors including loss of habitat, poor water quality and destruction or predation of its nests.

This book was produced as part of Fitzroy Basin Association's community engagement efforts. We want to share our love and appreciation for the diversity and beauty of the Fitzroy Basin.

Learn more about the landscapes, industries and special plants and animals of the Fitzroy Basin at FLOW Visitors Centre: Ground Floor Old Post Office Building, Corner East and Denham Streets, Rockhampton.

By purchasing this book you are supporting the Fitzroy Basin Association Incorporated, a non-profit group that coordinates natural resource management in Central Queensland, including protection of threatened species like Rheo! FBA is funded by Queensland and Australian Governments to support improved land management and sustainable development in the Fitzroy Basin, adjacent coastal catchments, and the Gladstone region.

Presenting Kelly Smith

Stephen Donaldson

FRCC welcomes Kelly Smith as a field services project officer to co-ordinate our state government funded Flood Recovery Weed Abatement Program targeting Parkinsonia and Prickly Acacia declared weeds of national significance.

Taking the tree change from Byfield National Park as a Public Contact Ranger for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Kelly now spends her days in the countryside, visiting landholders along the lower Mackenzie and Fitzroy rivers. Her most memorable moment with FRCC so far has been driving around a field of wheat and encountering a daddy Emu with chicks – apparently he was not so happy to see her.

As a Girl Guide from way back, Kelly continues to work with community groups and children in her professional life through her environmental education skill set. She is enthusiastic about supporting FRCC community engagement activities and looking forward to touring more of the countryside.

FRCC Workshops and Field Days Anne Alison

A range of workshops and field days was offered by FRCC in conjunction with a number of our government and corporate partners, before the usual end of year functions and Christmas festivities begin.

Earlier in the year at Grazing Best Management Practice (BMP) workshops it was identified that there was a need to conduct practical soils sessions, to assist graziers with their understanding of soils and its impact on their grazing businesses. As a result Bruce Alchin and Stewart Cannon, Soils Specialists attended three soils days. Now the practical soil session is included as a standard component of the Grazing BMP Soil Health module.

Two of the soils events also featured a presentation on dung beetles by John Feehan, who is an expert in that field. Landcare kindly provided funding to bring John Feehan to CQ.

Computer mapping was also identified as a need by participants at the previous Marlborough workshop. The mapping workshop was conducted by AgForce prior to the practical soils session at Marlborough.

The Giant Rats Tail (GRT) information day at St Lawrence had an excellent range of presenters (from both government and corporate fields) to cover all aspects of dealing with this ever-threatening weed.

The Wild Dog Control workshops were presented by the popular dog trapper, Tony Townsend (also sponsored by Landcare). Other attending stakeholders, depending on the location, were Rockhampton Regional Council, the Defence Department, and Gladstone Regional Council. They discussed the strategies they use in dealing with these pests.

Prickly Weed Demonstration Morning Shelly McArdle and Kelly Smith

A Parkinsonia and Prickly Acacia management field day, hosted by Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments, was recently held at Trevor Dunne's property at Pink Lily, west of Rockhampton. With landholders along the Fitzroy River experiencing increased outbreaks of these particularly invasive weeds as a result of the 2010-11 floods the day was held to provide information and support for landholders on the most suitable treatment methods for their situations.

Participants were able to discuss their plans for weed management with industry experts including Property Pest Management Officer Brian Gall from the Rockhampton Regional Council, Beef Extension Officer Ken Murphy from DAFF, Richard Meacle from Landmark, Senior Sales Agronomist Graham Fossett from Dow Agrosiences, Agronomist Scott Jardine from Savage Barker and Backhouse and Suzie and Richard McDonald from RMACH Aviation.

Peter Hinchliffe of Alternate Woody Weed Control demonstrated mechanical removal of Prickly Acacia using a skid steer with a front mounted Ellrott Blade Plough, while Brian Gall showed participants the most effective method of applying Access and diesel herbicide using a knapsack spray gun.

Local landholder Paul Kowalski said "I've been battling Parkinsonia for the last 15 years but after the 2010-11 floods it returned with a vengeance. In the past the Parky seemed to be confined to the wetter areas but now it seems to have spread all over the block. Areas of surface water have also made accessing some areas difficult, adding to the problem."

The field day was held as a part of FRCC's State Government Flood Recovery Weed Abatement Project that provides financial incentives for landholders with infestations of these weeds due to inundation during the 2010-11 flood. Eligible landholders can receive 50% rebate on the cost of weed control, capped at \$8000 per property. Since July, over 40 landholders have taken up the offer to access this funding.

Backyard Frog Habitat Workshop

Shelly McArdle

On October 10, 2012 FRCC partnered with Bethlea Bell of the Queensland Frog Society to host a Backyard Frog Habitat Workshop at Bunnings Rockhampton. Around 250 participants learnt how to attract frogs to their gardens using various methods that ranged from installing a courtyard wall fountain and surrounding it with potted plants, creating a microclimate in a shady corner of the garden to the more adventurous excavation of an inground pond complete with landscaping.

They also learnt about projects in the community and what landholders and community groups are doing in the catchment to help improve water quality in the catchment, improving the chances of these and many other species that inhabit the Fitzroy Basin.

The Things You See

Shelly McArdle

This snap taken by local landholder is one of our catchments' more interesting residents. It might serve as a timely reminder that crocs are indeed around and we need to respectfully coexist with these and other creatures that share our environment.

Successful Grains BMP Projects

Anne Alison

Five Grains Best Management Practice (BMP) Projects have received funding totalling \$99,659 within the FRCC region this financial year. The projects will enable these grain producers to upgrade their farming operations from traditional farming systems to more sustainable farming practices. Two projects reached the FBA cap of \$30,000 which was put in place due to the high demand for Grains BMP funding.

Participants in the Grains BMP program undertook two days of workshops where they assessed their grain enterprises and developed plans to improve their practices to meet at least minimum Best Management Practice standards. Once specific strategies were developed five participants applied for funding to assist them achieve their goals.

The projects cover a range of improvements to enhance the producers' farming systems, although not all components of

each project were funded. Three participants are investing in either second hand zero-till planters or modifying an existing machine by mounting zero till seed row units. Two projects will include the purchase of airseeders, while another includes an airseeder modification. Two successful applicants will set up GPS guidance systems. The five grain producers were keen to convert to a tram track system.

Other activities included in the projects are: boomspray purchases or modifications; other machinery modifications (e.g. fertiliser applicator); cropping software; chemical storage and fill station; and the purchase of weather meters and spray calibrators.

Outcomes from the reduced tillage and the adoption of tram track systems will lead to less sediment loss and better soil structure. More targeted seed, fertiliser and chemical application will result in reduced quantities required due to their more effective application. There will be less chemical and fertiliser lost to the environment. Direct benefits will be better returns flowing to these grain producers with savings in fuel, seed, chemical and fertiliser.

Capricorn Coast Landcare hold an AGM with a Difference

Shelly McArdle

The venue for the Capricorn Coast Landcare's AGM, held on the 21 October 2012, was a little unconventional when compared to your average AGM as it was held at Yeppoon's Fig Tree Creek rehabilitation site, under the shade of a large Fig tree.

During the meeting there was a review of projects and events conducted over the last 12 months, with some of the highlights including bus tours to the Iwasaki Wetlands for students from each primary school on the Capricorn Coast, participation in Emu Park Community Bushcare's Wetlands Day community event and Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments World Environment Day celebrations at Yewdale Park, Rockhampton. Weedbuster Week celebrations also saw around 380 community members gaining advice on the identification and strategies for management of environmental weeds.

Never missing an opportunity to see more plants going into the ground, the meeting concluded with a tree planting that included a large Hoop Pine planted to signify 25 years of Capricorn Coast Landcare and a special tree planted by Fran and John Rivory in celebration of their 55th wedding anniversary. When asked about the secret to a happy marriage they concluded that it was their active lifestyle as members of Landcare and good food. So we should all get out there and pull some weeds and plant some trees!

Plant of the Month

Stephen Donaldson

Phaleria clerodendron

Common Names: scented daphne, scented phaleria, rosy apple

Habitat: A rainforest tree, native to Queensland, occurring in the NEQ region.

Habit: Small tree, growing to an average height of 6m, strong fibrous bark, emitting unpleasant odour when removed. Leaves are large and glossy green with a pendulous habit.

Flowers: Small, white, fragrant, tubular flowers are clustered in inflorescences occurring directly from the trunk and branches of the tree. Fruit are brightly coloured red, fleshy and ovoid in shape. Flowers a number of times each year.

Propagation: Commonly grown from fresh seed.

Maintenance: Little maintenance required once established, high production of fruit may litter the ground. May survive in medium saline soils.

Waterwise: Needs little water once established- only in extreme conditions it will need to have additional watering. Will thrive in a sheltered position with protection from hot, direct sun.

The Scented Daphne is a great choice of a native, beautiful ornamental species. The fragrant flowers and brightly coloured fruit increase the ornamental value of this species, and it's easy to maintain. The brightly coloured fruit is poisonous to humans though attracts a wide range of birdlife.

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