

# Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • June 2013

## President's Message

**Michelle Hanrahan**

This edition showcases some of the many events and services supported by FRCC over recent months. The focus on pest animal and weed information sessions and field days proved of interest to many landholders with over 200 people attending events coordinated by FRCC staff to bring numerous presenters with technical and scientific expertise to a range of local locations.

I also wish to draw your attention to the exceptional efforts of our Management Committee and the staff as we dealt with the complexities of managing the final stages of the 5 year Reef Rescue Program. We also recognise the considerable efforts of many landholders in completing incentive projects in grazing, grains and horticulture aimed at reducing sediment and run-off to the waterways and reef; with construction being even more difficult given the consistent wet weather during the first half of this year.

The uncertainty of funding available for new programs has also created further challenges for management and staff with the reality that our increased staff resources required to deliver the increased numbers of projects this year will have to reduce based on the likelihood of reduced funding levels in the early years of the next Federal Government Reef Rescue 2 program.

The Service Delivery Review conducted by FBA and the sub-regional groups has brought further changes as FRCC is to deliver management services for staff in the Boyne Calliope and Three Rivers sub-regions from July this year. This will allow FBA to focus on regional policy and program management, with the sub-regions having responsibility for all on-ground NRM service delivery to landholders, local groups and communities. Clearer lines of responsibility across the region is aimed at delivering more consistent service levels to our clients.

This is a time of considerable change for FRCC and with the support of our 560 members, the management committee and staff, look forward to continuing to provide quality services, events and advice in the new financial year.

With management services extending to Boyne Calliope and Three Rivers sub-region, our Management Committee has invited the Chair of Boyne Calliope, Dan Carney to fill the special member vacancy on the FRCC committee. Don Black, Chair of the Three Rivers committee is already a member of the FRCC committee.

We welcome Dan to the FRCC Management Committee for 2013.

## Executive Officer's Report

**Jeff Krause**

As the FRCC President has indicated further changes for FRCC are under way. The end of the current Reef Rescue Program has required all projects to be fully completed or closed prior to the end of June to allow reporting by our staff and FBA for the Australian Government. The efforts of landholders in finalising these projects given the prolonged wet season along the coastal areas is appreciated and we hope to be able to work on similar initiatives once details of Reef Rescue 2 are released.

The 2010/11 Flood Recovery initiative funded by the State Government is also in its final stage with over 50 landholders and 20,000 hectares of parkinsonia and prickly acacia treated along the flood zone of the Fitzroy and lower Mackenzie rivers. Great credit goes to the energy and enthusiasm of Kelly Smith for working closely with the many landholders to deliver these excellent outcomes. The additional weed awareness field days and events and the focus on bio-control work being undertaken by Associate Professor Victor Galea for the University of Queensland on control sites in our area are of continuing interest in the development of integrated weed management strategies.

A new flood recovery funding initiative is likely to be rolled out in areas impacted by the January 2013 floods, with further details expected over coming weeks.

The partnership between FBA, Agforce and DAFF to deliver the Grazing Best Management Practice program continues to develop with many of the landholders involved in the earlier stage of the program completing the Grazing Land Management module over recent weeks which allows them to move on to the remaining Animal Health modules. FRCC staff, Anne Alison and John Rodgers have been engaged in the development and are being trained in the delivery of Grazing BMP to better support the rollout of the program across the region.

FRCCs support for the coastal and urban engagement in natural resource management initiatives and events, led by Shelly McArdle, has continued with groups along the Capricorn Coast being supported with revegetation and rehabilitation

projects also coming to a close. We are very fortunate to continue to work closely with Capricorn Coast Landcare to deliver programs to schools to increase awareness of how natural systems work and our impacts on them. The recent Schools NRM Expo was an excellent example to the wide ranging partnerships FRCC is fortunate to have with 11 other groups including: Capricorn Coast Landcare, FBA, Rockhampton Regional Council, Frog Society, Society for Growing Australian Plants, Agforce, Capricorn Conservation Council, Bunnings, Greening Australia and GBRMPA all providing an outstanding range of activities for over 170 students and staff from local primary schools made possible through the valued assistance of the RRC flood recovery funds aimed at building more resilient communities.

While there are funding uncertainties in the immediate future, the Service Delivery Review across the region offers great opportunities for our staff to grow and develop quality services to a wider range of clients and communities. We especially look forward to working with staff from Three Rivers and Boyne Calliope to share expertise and develop new levels of services. These are challenging but exciting times as we continue to engage with our members to deliver services that are relevant to your needs.

## **Fitzroy Basin Report Card**

### **Jeff Krause**

The Fitzroy Partnership for River Health released their first report card on Tuesday 28 May on the bank of Fitzroy River in Rockhampton, providing a more complete picture of river health for the entire Fitzroy Basin from July 2010 to June 2011.

Fitzroy Partnership for River Health Executive Officer, Nathan Johnston said summary grades are presented for 11 freshwater catchments across the Fitzroy Basin, including the Nogoia, Isaac, Connors, Comet, Dawson and Mackenzie River systems as well as the Fitzroy River estuary.

Report Card grades are based on several classes of indicators, with the results for each made available for further exploration along with the underlying summary data used for assessment.

The science underpinning both the report card results and processes used to compile and assess data was recently endorsed by a science panel, paving the way for public release.

The panel was established to provide independent scientific feedback to the Partnership to ensure the credibility of the report card.

Results for near-shore coastal and marine waters are also be presented in the report card and draws from the Australian and Queensland Government's Reef Plan Report Card program which uses indicators specific to assessing marine health.

Fitzroy Partnership staff will run several rural barbecues to offer the opportunity to discuss report card results and local waterways in a relaxed atmosphere. If you would like to host a barbecue on your property please email [nathan.johnston@riverhealth.org.au](mailto:nathan.johnston@riverhealth.org.au) or contact us at FRCC for assistance.

## **FRCC Members Forum**

### **Shelly McArdle**

The Members Forum recently held by Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments attracted around 50 members who heard from a great line up of speakers including John Taylor, Chair of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Garden History Association. John spoke about his work helping to put together a register of heritage gardens of Queensland.

The surveys were made possible by the Jani Haenke Charitable Trust that seeks to encourage members of the community to identify and nominate gardens for possible inclusion so that these special places could be preserved.

"The task began firstly by collating all existing data into one list, the gaps were then filled in and public submissions were called for to create the 'long list'. Gardens are then judged on their aesthetic, historic, scientific and social values and will be eventually short listed," John said.

The work is continuing and the results should be announced in the not too distant future.

Gardens of note in the local area include the Gracemere Homestead Gardens, The Rockhampton Botanic Gardens and Bell Park in Emu Park.

Other speakers included Kelly Smith, Project Officer (AgPathways) from FRCC and Bronwyn Roberts, Young Farming Champion (Art4Agriculture) who both spoke on engaging with young people to encourage uptake of careers in agriculture.

During previous forums local landholders have raised their concerns about the decline in the numbers of young people opting to take up a career in agriculture, a concern that has been echoed by the industry body. The AgPathways initiative aims to provide support for landholders who are looking at employing trainees and for young people who might be considering a career in agriculture and related service industries.

If you are interested in learning more about AgPathways please contact Kelly Smith at FRCC.

## Sandy Point Discovery Day

### Shelly McArdle

FRCC in partnership with Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) and numerous community groups including Captag, The Society for Growing Australian Plants, Capricorn Coast Landcare, The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld, Birdlife Capricornia and the Queensland Frog Society recently hosted a Community Discovery Day at Sandy Point, Yeppoon.

Sandy Point is a popular fishing and recreation spot on the Capricorn coast as well as a unique roosting spot for migratory shorebirds that travel over 25,000kms each year from the northern hemisphere.

Recently due to severe weather events such as Cyclone Yasi and king tides, the Sandy Point Spit suffered significant erosion and could no longer be accessed between mid and high tide from Farnborough beach.

These natural changes pushed drivers, shorebirds and boaties into new areas so the days focus was about raising awareness of what people can do to minimise their impacts by driving and launching boats only on bare sand, sticking to the designated tracks and using the car parking area.

The good news is that recently the sand has started to redeposit, reforming the spit. It is hoped this will continue allowing the vegetation to grow and trap sand to reclaim the area that was previously washed into the sea but, for this to occur we need the community to be aware of the dynamic nature of Sandy Point and to work together to help protect the area help protect the area.

For more information or find out how you can be involved in this and other coastal projects contact Shelly McArdle at FRCC.

## Combating Lantana in the Region

### Anne Alison

Following a few good wet seasons, lantana (*Lantana camara*) is thriving in many localised areas. Landholders are keen to investigate all options to deal with this Declared Class 3 Pest Plant. Lantana is a problem not only for large rural land holdings in the FRCC area, but also for many hobby farms and acreage blocks.

FRCC, in partnership with Rockhampton Regional Council, have recently held two well attended lantana field days at Mt Chalmers and Mt Morgan. A range of excellent presenters spoke on topics which included integrated weed management, chemical and mechanical control options, treatment costs, pasture establishment, lantana poisoning, and at the Mt Chalmers event the topic of badhara bush, a Class 1 declared plant found in the Cawarral area.

The key to lantana control is committing to a long term plan and taking an integrated weed management approach, which may include mechanical, fire, herbicide and bio-control methods, along with plenty of dedication over the following years.

A lantana management plan will be determined by:

- extent and density of the infestation, and the size of plants
- the area that is infested - perhaps focus on one paddock area at a time
- landform (ridges, gullies, degree of slope, open vs timbered country)
- accessibility to problem areas for vehicles, quads or heavy machinery
- labour or time available each year - only take on what you can follow up on in subsequent years
- contract labour availability
- machinery at hand - dozer, bobcat, tractor and bucket, quadbike
- spray gear - slip on unit, quad spray tank, back packs, splatter guns
- budget

In dense infestations, initially it is best to focus on dealing with the bulk of the biomass. Mechanical treatments include pushing lantana with a dozer, bobcat or tractor and bucket. Peter Hinchliffe demonstrated his bobcat and specially designed cutterbar which does a particularly thorough job, with minimal follow-up required. Slashing and ploughing are other options, however like most mechanical methods they have limited results due to regrowth and require follow-up with herbicides. Grubbing of small infestations can be successful.

Another method is the strategic use of fire, however careful thought needs to be given to the particular conditions at the time of burning. Hot fires have limited success and can result in severe longer term damage to soil nutrients and microbial activity. A slower fire gives better results. Consult with your local Rural Fire Brigade, acquire a permit and comply with all legal requirements.

Both mechanical and fire methods need to be followed up by chemical control. Rockhampton Regional Council Pest Officers outlined how they treat lantana using herbicides. The preferred treatments were foliar spraying and using gas splatter guns. Although basal barking and cut stump methods can be used they are more difficult to apply to lantana.

Two local commercial sector agronomists discussed herbicide treatments with an accompanying document outlining the cost of different options. Pasture establishment following any treatment is critical in providing a competitive environment to minimise the opportunity for lantana seed to establish.

Lantana is toxic to stock, especially younger cattle that have not previously experienced it. Usually stock born in lantana infested country avoid it. Poisoning symptoms and treatments were explained at the field days.

Currently bio-control activity is underway in many areas, with *Calzycomya lantanae*, a leaf-mining fly being identified at the Mt Morgan site. There are a number of insect species which include sap-sucking bugs; leaf-mining beetles and flies; and seed feeding flies. They reduce the vigour of many plants and subsequently their ability to flower and drop seed. Bio-control agents will not eradicate lantana, however they do assist in control.

Practical demonstrations of spraying and the specialised bobcat with cutterbar were popular.

FRCC is grateful to the diverse range of expert presenters who provided technical advice to the crowds that were keen to hear of any tips on dealing with the scourge of lantana. Thanks also to SBB who provided bottled water to the thirsty crowds.

If you require more information download the lantana fact sheet: [www.daff.qld.gov.au/documents/Biosecurity\\_EnvironmentalPests/IPA-Lantana-PP34.pdf](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/documents/Biosecurity_EnvironmentalPests/IPA-Lantana-PP34.pdf); or request one from the FRCC office.

## **Pasture Rundown Workshops - St Lawrence and Milman**

### **Anne Alison**

Pasture rundown and renovation were the topics at two workshops held at St Lawrence and Milman in late March. The workshops were presented by Stuart Buck and David Lawrence, Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (QDAFF), and funded by Meat and Livestock Australia, with a focus on pasture rundown and renovation options.

The theory component of the workshops focussed on how plant available soil-nitrogen in sown pastures gets tied up over time. The first step is to identify whether pasture rundown exists and what the symptoms are. Application of green urea was used in CQ trials, mainly in buffel country, to demonstrate the degree of rundown. However the most cost efficient method to renovate improved pastures is to sow legumes, rather than to apply fertiliser. Although much of the study was conducted on buffel country there is still some relevance to coastal areas.

The St Lawrence workshop, kindly hosted by Malcolm and Jenny McKenzie, Plain View, was well attended. People were keen to see the outcome of the McKenzie family's hardwork over many years of trialling different pasture species and various planting methods. Malcolm's enthusiasm for the property was evident as he proudly explained and later showed the many aspects of the property's development and operation over time. The abundant establishment of Pangola on Plain View is a credit to the family. A number of the participants were also keen to determine plant health using other factors, which resulted in in-depth discussion.

The second workshop was held at the Milman School. It was an ideal venue making it very convenient for locals, and travellers from further afield, to take a short trip to Graham and Carol Miller's property, Lillians, and then onto Barry and Bev Hannam's Batandra Park. It was interesting to compare the different establishment and renovation techniques in developing the various pastures.

Lillians has experienced traditional pasture establishment through cultivation, along with fertiliser application, which has produced vigorous pasture that turns off quality grassfed cattle each year.

When the Hannams purchased Batandra Park 14 years ago it was badly infested with lantana. It was pushed by a dozer, with pasture seed being thrown out by hand at the end of each day. As a result a good mix of pasture exists over the property. Since then the paddocks are deep-ripped with a Yeomans plough every few years and handsown with grasses and sometimes legumes. Pangola has been hand planted and is continuing its spread across the property.

Selected Seeds kindly sponsored the catering of the workshops and Rob Fry was able to provide pasture establishment advice to participants.

A couple of landholders are keen to conduct some simple trials in conjunction with QDAFF to determine the amount of rundown in coastal pastures. Different renovation techniques can be trialled to assess what is best suited to coastal landtypes. If the trials are developed, follow-up field days will provide graziers the opportunity to see the results.

## **Milman Pasture Rundown Case Study**

On a Milman property four small strip trials, each using 5kg of green urea at the equivalent rate of 100 kg N/ha, were applied at the end of the extremely heavy rain event on Friday 25 January. At only one of these sites (in different paddocks) could the strip where the fertiliser was applied be visually determined, although it was only slightly different. As the other strips did not produce visible differences it was felt that perhaps there was not enough follow up rain within the next few days to wash the urea into the soil.

This particular strip produced an extra 45% drymatter yield compared to the non fertilised area.

**Control strip**

0kg N/ha = 3417kg/ha drymatter

**Trial strip**

100 kg N/ha = 4960kg/ha drymatter

Urea is about \$600/t, so the nitrogen cost is \$130/ha. If an animal consumes 20kg of grass to gain 1kg live weight, then the extra 1543 kg/ha drymatter equates to an extra 77kg of beef. If beef is valued at \$1.50/kg liveweight, that's \$116 gained on the first cut of pasture in the first year for \$130 investment. While this very simple economic analysis indicates a negative return, remember the trial is to indicate whether nitrogen depletion is an issue, and then identify the best way to counteract it. Legumes are seen as the best long term way to improve nitrogen supply to grass pastures.

Similar trials can be set up on your own property to indicate where nitrogen rundown is occurring and which areas will give the biggest return on your investment. For example one pasture or soil type may demonstrate a better response than another, and you can then determine the best legumes to suit that particular area, or if the response is significantly high enough, it may warrant the application of fertiliser.

## **“The Uniqueness of Managing Horses in Central Queensland”, Capricornia Equine Landcare’s first event, 22 May 2013**

**Lisa Sutton**

Feedback from the two previous “Equiculture” seminars in Rockhampton was overwhelmingly positive with a strong need identified for information about local conditions and weed control. This was delivered brilliantly by John Reeve, Senior Biosecurity Officer, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in his presentation to horse owners from peri urban areas around Rockhampton and Yeppoon. The Capricornia Equine Landcare Association could not have had a better presentation to embark on their mission of improving land management by horse owners in this region and encouraging networking for the exchange of local information.

John supplied the following information (posted on the Capricornia Equine Landcare facebook page) as a prelude to the event.

“Central Qld is special for the horse lovers because we are close enough to Southern Qld to be serious competitors in any field, yet we are rural enough to be able to enjoy our horses in a very relaxed way. So we can go to a lot of trouble and cost and travel and be very successful, or not. If we do want to be that serious we have to feed, train, groom and travel. In the past the sort of feeds that were deemed to be the best for horses were not the feeds we have easy access to. To meet the energy and protein requirements, not to mention mineral and electrolytes, feeds such as lucerne, oats, premixes, additives and others would be the first choice. There would be the tendency to stable for long parts of the year. This may be the least enjoyable way for you, your family or your horses.

But we do have sources of energy, protein and we have room to graze, so what do we know about where we live. If we just think about Rocky/ Yeppoon/Alton Downs / Mt Morgan/Milman area there are some major differences in the geology / farming history, and water quality in those areas. The more we know the more enjoyment we get out of our horses and where we live. The grasses we have vary with the geology and the farming history. When someone says the grass is sweet or sour, what does that mean and how can we fix it?

The digestion of a horse is really unusual compared to other domestic animals. We keep horses for much longer than cows, for example, and there is a lot of confusion about basic things like how much does a horse weigh. The aim of an Equine Landcare Group is optimize our enjoyment of our land, our hobby and our family interaction.

The most damaging thing we can do is to hand feed a lot of horses when we may have other options.

We will end up with bare dirt, weeds, erosion, and no money!!!”

Not only was the event extremely informative and a great networking opportunity, but we were entertained by John’s banjo prowess at the conclusion. It was very short, but with the right kind of encouragement he may do it again on special occasions.

On behalf of the Capricornia Equine Landcare Association and FRCC I would like to sincerely thank John for his support of the group by providing the first in a series of educational opportunities to improve management of small horse properties in our region. Thank you also to The Australian Governments Caring for Our Country incentives which funded the evening at the Frenchville Sports Club.

The Capricornia Equine Landcare Association welcomes new members. If you are interested please visit facebook <http://www.facebook.com/CapricorniaEquineLandcareAssociation>

# Moores Creek Community Project

## Shelly McArdle

Urban living is not for everyone and if you come from the land it can be even harder to adjust to living in a city. A fact that makes places like Moores Creek all the more important. Beginning on the eastern side of Mount Archer, Moores Creek snakes its way through the suburbs, meeting up with the Fitzroy between the two traffic bridges and eventually flows into Keppel Bay and out to our wonderful Great Barrier Reef.

It provides an oasis where families and many community groups like native plant enthusiasts and bird watchers can meet. It also acts as an outdoor classroom for school students and groups such as the Girl Guides. It has always been important to Darumbal people as well as the South Sea Islander families that have lived in the area since the early 20th century.

In recent weeks the Moores Creek area has been the focus of two community days firstly with the launch of the Indigenous Junior Rangers program that attracted around 80 participants and followed soon after by a group of 160 primary school students who celebrated World Environment Day thanks to a grant from the State Government's flood recovery fund through Rockhampton Regional Council. Between them the groups planted over 200 trees revegetating a section of river bank in Yewdale Park that had been degraded by flooding.

With urban development on the increase it is vital that these areas are looked after as they provide important corridors that are safe havens for our wildlife. Healthy riparian vegetation also helps to stabilise the banks of the creek, particularly protecting against erosion in situations such as the Australia Day flood event.

Many graziers and horticulturists who manage vast areas of land alongside the Fitzroy and its tributaries are doing their bit to improve management of their land improve the quality of water flowing out to Keppel Bay but city-folk can also make a significant difference collectively by being aware of the effect of our backyard and city land-use practices on our local waterways.

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments, in partnership with the Fitzroy Basin Association, works with Rockhampton Regional Council and with groups along Moores Creek to improve the biodiversity of the riparian zone by managing weeds and planting natives. The project is aimed at raising awareness of the areas ecological values with the hope of encouraging community ownership of this important urban waterway.

For more information about how you can be involved contact Shelly at FRCC.

## Grazing BMP

Watch for Grazing Best Management Practices workshop opportunities in your area over coming weeks and months.

Group workshops as well as individual support for the completion of the modules will be available through FRCC. Detailed information will be posted on our website as well as being available through Agforce.

Please contact Anne or John at FRCC for further information.

## Landcare Safe Work

### Katrina Conway

The Australian and Queensland Government have been working towards developing a uniform Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Act. Groups such as Landcare under the WHS Act are required to ensure, where reasonably practical, *the health and safety of all its workers*. Under their definition the term 'workers' includes volunteers, participants and persons who have been contracted to do a job through the group.

The WHS Act does not prescribe how to take reasonable action to reduce risk because every situation is different. For those who missed the In Safe Hands Training on 15 May 2013 below are 4 examples raised at the training you need to consider to manage risks:

**Registration/ attendance sheets** should include an acknowledgement of pre-existing injuries to demonstrate you are aware of any injuries which may limit a person's participation in activities.

**Risk assessments** should be conducted and used before and during an event as evidence that you are taking appropriate steps to reduce risks.

**First aid kit and trained person** should be available at each event

At meetings make **safety an agenda item** to discuss for each upcoming event to ensure you are taking reasonable steps to reduce risks.

Visit the Conservation Volunteers Australia website and register to **download a free in safe hands toolkit**. [www.conservationvolunteers.com.au](http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au)

For full details on the Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Act visit [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au)

## **UPDATE, UPDATE!!**

Have your details changed from when you first became a member of FRCC?

Do you have a new email address since then?

We don't want you to miss out on news from the FRCC office.

Forward your new details to Janeen at [admin@frcc.org.au](mailto:admin@frcc.org.au) or call 4921 0573.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Saturday 17 August**

Rocky Showgrounds

FRCC's Small Landholder's Day is on again for the third year. Thanks to Lisa Sutton for developing a successful application for a Community Landcare grant from the Australian Government. This year the event is planned to be bigger and better, with more displays, businesses, specialist presenters, practical demonstrations and activities. There will be opportunities for people to drop in for a specific session or event or stay for the full day. The day is free courtesy of an Australian Government Community Landcare grant, Stanwell Power Station and our many partner groups and businesses.

### **28-30 August**

Rockhampton State High School

Moo Baa Munch is coming to Central Queensland courtesy of Agforce and FRCC. Hear about where our food and fibre comes from and experience the diverse range of jobs and careers in and associated with the Agricultural Industry.

### **Fitzroy River & Coastal Catchments**

14 Wandal Road Rockhampton Q 4700

T: 07 4921 0573

F: 07 4921 0528

E: [info@frcc.org.au](mailto:info@frcc.org.au)

[www.frcc.org.au](http://www.frcc.org.au)