

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • June 2012

President's Message

Michelle Hanrahan

Welcome to this edition of our newsletter which provides updates on FRCC activities, highlights coming events and information on current issues in our area.

The Management Committee and staff recently held our annual review of the FRCC strategic plan and identified priorities for the year ahead. The chance to review our achievements and set priorities again proved beneficial ensuring that FRCC remains a vibrant and relevant organization supporting sustainable NRM outcomes in our changing world.

FRCC is advancing its position in the community and is set to take advantage of the many opportunities and challenges as development continues across the region.

I invite you to contact members of the Management Committee or staff to raise ideas on how to tailor our services to better meet member's needs and contribute to the further development of our organization.

Executive Officer's Update

Jeff Krause

It is just over a year since the FRCC office moved to our new location at 14 Wandal Road. Since then the organization has attracted an additional \$350,000 in grant funds to deliver a diverse range of services to members, landholders and the wider community.

We have also seen staff changes, with Rhys Kellow moving on to expand his horizons to see how QGC delivers its environmental responsibilities in his role with the construction of the gas pipeline to Gladstone. Rhys was a vital member of the team responsible for moving the organization forward in the 15 months he was here. We are also fortunate to welcome John Rodgers back to work following major heart surgery and to see he is already out and about supporting landholders with the development of projects.

Ashleigh Johnson has recently joined our team as a trainee in business administration and she is providing valued support to Janeen and the rest of the team as our administration and business support needs increase.

The recent advertising campaign by the Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) encourages landholders to contact us for advice on incentives available for projects that reduce erosion and sediment to the reef. As a result enquiries are increasing and our staff, in particular John and Lisa, are very busy as we continue to support landholders with the development of projects that meet the funding criteria. Please bear with us, but don't hesitate to give us a call about your project ideas.

The Flood Recovery project is under way with Kirstie Roffey coordinating the four pilot projects developed to test the guidelines for Parkinsonia Management in the flood zone of the Fitzroy and lower MacKenzie Rivers.

With the extra projects underway we appreciate the very generous support being provided by the Rockhampton Regional Council with the development and assessment of grazing and weed control projects over the next few months.

We look forward to continuing to deliver our services to you and are interested in discussing ideas and issues at our next member's forum.

Aquatic Weeds

Stephen Donaldson

Anyone in Rockhampton during the flood event that occurred at the end of March would have probably noticed the stark contrast between turbid, brown flood waters and the bright green vegetation flowing down with it. Present among these colourful green highlights were a number of aquatic weeds. Aquatic plants play important roles in these aquatic systems by acting as primary producers, nutrient pumps taking nitrogen and phosphorous up from the sediment into the water column and helping prevent bank erosion. Plants become weeds generally when they're introduced into environments that lack their natural predators to keep populations in check.

One of the worst weeds in Australia, and the world, is the aquatic fern *Salvinia molesta*. This plant is a free floating species that reproduces vegetatively by breaking apart. It can be found in the river and streams systems throughout the area. The

impact this can have is often unsightly though it can also cause economic problems. Large blooms can blanket the surface preventing oxygen from diffusing down into the lower layers of the system, causing fish and animal kills. It can also block intake pumps used for stock watering, block irrigation channels, limit traffic through the waterway, may cause stock death by drowning and causes a reduction in the number of species able to survive in the system. Under ideal conditions *Salvinia* can double in size in just a couple of days. Management of this species is important to prevent outbreaks, causing problems for many people who rely on water systems. To deal with small outbreaks the best method is physical removal of the plants, similarly kerosene based herbicides can be used to reduce the buoyancy of the plant, causing it to sink to the bottom. For large infestations though, the cost of these two methods is quite expensive, so the biological control agent *Cyrtobagous salviniae*, a weevil, is used. The larva of this species tunnels through the plant while the adult eats new growing buds, slowing its growth.

If you see *Salvinia* growing in a waterway near you, contact your local Biosecurity Queensland office (call 13 25 23 or visit their website at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au).

Beef Australia 2012

Jeff Krause

With the memory of Beef Week fading a little we can all reflect on the great experiences and opportunities that the event offered.

We were very aware just around the corner at the office of the buzz that Beef creates with the whole of Wandal a hive of activity and it was hard not to be excited.

The event provided a wonderful forum to showcase some of the improved practices that local landholders are adopting to better manage our natural resources and how these practices are leading to better outcomes for the environment and the profitability of their businesses. We thank the FBA staff who assisted to with our stand as well as everyone who dropped in to see us at the event. Thanks also those who accepted the invitation to attend our function at the FLOW Centre.

Fencing Project Protects Kinka Wetlands

Shelly McArdle

Emu Park Community Bushcare were instrumental in initiating a fencing project that went ahead in the Kinka Wetland Reserve. The fence that excludes cattle from a neighbouring property and protects the Kinka Wetlands was a cooperative effort between Emu Park Community Bushcare, Rockhampton Regional Council, Fitzroy Basin Association and FRCC with funds provided by the Federal Government's Caring for our Country program. The project helps to protect the wetland from the impacts of grazing and is crucial to conserving the ecological value of the area.

Split the Bill to Improve Your Property!

John Rodgers

If you've been thinking of improving your property, now is the time to do it!

Central Queensland's leading natural resource management group, Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) has \$5 million in funding to be allocated prior to September 2012 to assist landholders to reduce grazing pressure, protect river banks and waterways, restore paddocks and run a better business.

Why foot the entire bill yourself when you could access 50% of the funding through FBA to complete the work? Land managers must provide an equal contribution, but this could include in-kind labour.

Funding of up to 50% of project costs is available to help landholders to:

- do property planning;
- control erosion and reduce grazing pressure with new fences and water points;
- improve degraded paddocks;
- upgrade machinery to improve fertiliser, seeding and spraying applications;
- install GPS and guidance systems.

Eligible projects will reduce the amount of sediments, chemicals and nutrients that reach local waterways, as well as providing landholders with many production benefits.

Best of all, FBA and the five partner groups, located within each major sub-catchment area will make it easy and hassle free for you by helping with the paperwork, and guiding you every step of the way!

Call FRCC today to have a chat about your property and discuss your funding options, we will then arrange to visit your property to assess your eligibility.

Projects need to be completed by 31 March 2013 with funding provided by FBA through Australian Government Caring for Our Country funding.

Flood Recovery, Parkinsonia Project

Kirstie Roffey

The project, which is funded by the Qld Government, is about to be made available to those landholders who experienced inundation from the Fitzroy and lower Mackenzie Rivers during the 2010/11 floods, and as a result, have been severely impacted by Parkinsonia.

FRCC has tested the guidelines for access to the funding with a small number of pilot projects over recent weeks in preparation for the release of the guidelines. Project guidelines are expected to be provided to Landholders in the flood zone by late June. If you are interested in accessing the incentive funds please give Kirstie a call at our office.

Green Footprint Project Opening

Shelly McArdle

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments (FRCC) recently launched a new showcase garden to encourage energy efficiency throughout the Rockhampton community thanks to an Ergon Energy Envirofund grant.

The FRCC Green Footprint Project demonstrates simple ways for people grow their own produce at home and the effective use of compost bins, worm farms, native beehives and water tanks.

The team hope the garden will provide the community with a working example of how to design and manage a sustainable garden on a normal-sized house block.

With the help of Ergon Energy we have been able to show how everyone can minimise their impact on the environment while saving money in the process. With a little bit of effort it is possible to save waste and do something to help the community.

FRCC hopes the garden will provide lasting benefit to local school students and many community members. The event was attended by students from Hall State School who had a great time participating in the craft workshop.

The showcase garden was made possible as part of Ergon Energy's 2011 Envirofund initiative, which provided \$150,000 in funding to help support energy conservation and environmental initiatives across regional Queensland.

Out and About

Shelly McArdle

To be involved and engaged with our local community is one of the key aims of FRCC with many events being attended.

Invitations to be guest speakers at meetings hosted by groups such as The Society for Growing Australian Plants, Rockhampton Historical Society and various Landcare groups provide wonderful opportunities for us to fly our flag and increase awareness of the opportunities, incentives and support offered by our organisation. You may even see us from time to time at your local markets or at school events. Please give us a call if you have an idea about how we can work with or assist your group.

June Seminar - Sustainable Management of Horse Properties

Lisa Sutton

Jane and Stuart Myers have been busy in the US studying equine management. It will be very interesting to hear what was learned during their time in the US where the peri urban equine population is much more concentrated. The *Equiculture* team arrive back in Australia 1st June, the next day are off to Tasmania for a seminar and riding clinic, followed by another in Victoria before delivering their seminar in Rockhampton on the 16th. We were fortunate to be able to fit into their very busy schedule.

The nutritional need of horses is one of the topics covered by the upcoming *Equiculture* seminar. While here in the Beef capital, livestock nutrition is focused on cattle that are required to reproduce and gain weight rapidly, the nutritional needs of horses are vastly different. To put this in perspective and give a brief summary of why, I enlisted the help of John Reeve, an expert horseman, who most of you would probably know through his position as Senior Biosecurity Officer at DEEDI.

Cattle have a large fermenting vat in front of their stomach (rumen) while horses have a large sac behind their stomach (large intestine). Horses eat similar feed to cattle but their teeth are different, and they are more selective grazers. Cattle have no top front teeth, so they tear bits of grazing material as they go; this coarse material stays in the rumen until all particles are small enough to pass to stomach. Horses have top and bottom front teeth so they can eat low growing herbage and chew the material well, swallowing more crushed material than a cow. This goes to the stomach for digestion. After some digestion this material moves to the large intestine, where water and nutrients are extracted. The contrast of equine and bovine digestion is of course far more complex, that's a short summary.

The decision about pasture species - choosing native versus improved pastures, is very important for the health of horses. If an improved pasture is already present, how suitable is it for horses, what is the potential of this pasture for livestock production (if grazing different types of animals), and how effective is it for weed suppression, and repair of degraded land? This was one of the key issues discussed at Jane's seminar. Rob Fry from Selected Seeds was also there to provide information about what types of pasture are available locally and their suitability for horses.

The seminar focused on the holistic management of horses and their environment. It covered important issues that horse owners may not have considered previously. Whether you are new to owning horses and acreage or have been at it for some time, there was plenty of useful information for everyone.

North Rockhampton Green Expo

Shelly McArdle

This World Environment Day around 140 year six students from North Rockhampton joined with 15 natural resource management groups to learn about how we can become more involved in environmental projects in our local area.

The day, made possible with funding from the Queensland Government's Natural Resources Awareness Grants, enabled FRCC to bring together specialist groups and volunteers and link them with students.

Included on the day were presentations from Fitzroy Basin Association, Capricorn Conservation Council, Envirolink, Birdlife Australia and the Frog Society.

It provided an opportunity for the students, as future leaders, to learn practical skills, increase their awareness of environmental issues and to become aware of volunteer opportunities in local community projects.

Moo Baa Munching with AgForce

Shelly McArdle

Recently, I was lucky enough to head down to Brisbane to participate in Moo Baa munch which is an event organised by peak farm group AgForce. The event was held over five days and it aimed to show students that a career in farming was more than driving tractors and mustering cattle. Participants were able to talk to lots of industry groups and gain a greater insight into where their food and fibre comes from and how it makes it to consumers.

Plant of the Month

Shelly McArdle

Cupaniopsis wadsworthii

Common Names: Wadsworth's Tuckeroo or Duck's Foot Tuckeroo.

Habitat: Found local dry rainforests / semi evergreen vine thicket and serpentine vegetation communities.

Habit: Slender, multi-stemmed shrub to 3m. Leaves bright glossy green, wedge shaped with a small notch at the end.

Flowers: Small, cream, in pendulous sprays. Fruit – bright orange capsules.

Propagation: Grown from fresh seed.

Maintenance: Very hardy but slow growing. An attractive feature tree.

Waterwise: This tree needs little water once established.

The Duck's Foot Tuckeroo is found in vegetation communities that are limited in their range and extent, so if you have a spare spot in your garden for a plant that doesn't need a lot of care it is definitely a good choice. Planting native trees also benefit the local wildlife by providing food and habitat.

Opening Up A 'Can-o-Worms'

Stephen Donaldson

FRCC is now the proud owner of our very own worm farm! As part of our Green Footprint Project, aiming to reduce our impact on the environment here at the office, the worms are fast becoming right at home. The worms are used to remove organic waste created by the office and decompose it, producing a potent, liquid fertiliser. Our 'can-o-worms' worm farm started off with 1000 worms, though we're pretty sure they've been busy.

The most commonly used worms in composting are red and tiger worms, differing from traditional worms by having a faster breeding and composting rate, making them ideal for a worm farm! In addition to most food wastes, worms can also break down things like paper and tea bags, which we produce plenty of. The product of worm farms is known as worm castings, this liquid is considered one of the best, natural fertilisers available and has a number of useful applications. The plan is to reduce the amount of fertiliser we need to input into the garden by using these castings. Once the Green Footprint Garden has opened, you'll be able to come in and have a look at the worm farm and many of the other things that are taking place to reduce the impact our office is having on the environment.

Wetlands Day 2012

Shelly McArdle

Emu Park Community Bushcare hosted the annual Wetlands Day in Emu Park on Sunday March 25.

The day aimed at highlighting the ecological values of our Wetlands attracted around 150 people. Those in attendance were able to hear about the importance of our wetlands from representatives of many local NRM groups including Capricorn Coast Landcare, Livingstone Rem Veg, Fitzroy Basin Association, The Frog Society, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Central Qld Local Government Association.

The opportunity to jump on the shuttle bus for a trip to the Kinka Wetlands was also on offer where participants heard from many local experts who shared information on wetland birds, fishways and the wetland as a working ecosystem.

Livingstone Remnant Vegetation Study Group Open Day

Shelly McArdle

Members of the community came out in droves to recognise the amazing results achieved by members of the Livingstone Remnant Vegetation Study Group at an open day held at Lioness Park, Lammermoor on Tuesday May 5, 2012.

The project that involved developing the Lammermoor Native Gardens Walking Track complete with interpretive signage aims to educate and increase awareness of our natural environment.

Funding for the project was provided by the Fitzroy Basin Association through the Australian Government's Community Action Grants.

Upcoming Events ...

Fuel Reduction and Cultural Heritage Awareness Workshop, Gracemere

– 21 July 2012

Small Landholders Information Day - Venue to be confirmed

– 18 August 2012

Erosion Control Workshops, Marlborough and Westwood

– 3 and 15 July 2012

Keep an eye on our website for more information on these and other events or phone 4921 0573.