

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • September 2012

President's Message

Michelle Hanrahan

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

The Management Committee and staff are enjoying the challenge of developing and assessing our annual quota of projects contracted with FBA in the first three months of this financial year, so needless to say there is plenty of action.

I am pleased to advise that FRCC has secured base level funding through FBA for the 15 month period June 2012 to September 2013 to allow us to deliver our on-ground services to landholders and the community and we continue to investigate funding opportunities that will allow us to provide even greater levels of service to our members.

FRCC continues to explore new and innovative ways of engaging with the community and providing relevant training and awareness activities to landholders. Sessions at the Member's Forum and feedback following workshops and events continue to provide valuable information to inform the planning and delivery of programs that more closely meet members' needs.

We continue to collaborate with government agencies, local councils, many community groups and the general community in our region to bring current information as well as enhance community infrastructure to enable easier community access to our natural environment. I wish to thank many individuals and groups with whom FRCC partnered to deliver the Murray Lagoon viewing platform at the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens. This is a significant infrastructure project that will serve the community for years to come.

I look forward to your continued interest in FRCC activities.

Executive Officer's Update

Jeff Krause

Thank you to so many landholders who have contacted us wanting further information regarding the incentives available through FBA to encourage good natural resource management practices on properties. The level of interest has been enormous and we want to thank you for your patience as it is taking some time to investigate each enquiry.

A compounding factor has been the staff changes during this period, with 2 staff leaving recently after securing permanent positions. Kirstie Roffey who managed our Flood Recovery project has found a job in her chosen field of agribusiness and Thomas Hart who came to us from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines jagged a job with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

We are very fortunate to welcome Anne Alison to our team as she begins working closely with Lisa and John to assist landholders with project development. Anne's experience in the grazing industry and as a trainer will produce great benefits for FRCC.

Kelly Smith is about to join our team to manage the Flood Recovery project. Thank you also to our very helpful casual staff and volunteer (Stephen, Alan and Daniel) who are helping develop our ever-expanding programs and services.

We look forward to continuing to deliver relevant information and training events such as our Small Landholders Day at the end of September as well as other specialist services to you and look forward to discussing your ideas at our future events.

Cultural Heritage/Fuel Reduction Workshop

Shelly McArdle

Forty-three participants came to Gracemere from as far away as Banana, Gladstone and the Capricorn Coast to attend the workshop that developed from an idea of the Queensland Fire Service's Indigenous Liaison Officer, Flip Toby.

The workshop was a collaborative effort which saw FRCC partnering with Rockhampton Regional Council, CQ Consulting, Queensland Fire Service (QFS), local Indigenous elders Bob Muir and Bill Mann, Robert Toby representing the Gangulu people, Gwen Scott also Gangulu from the Mount Morgan Museum, the Rockhampton Branch of the Society for Growing Australian Plants, and local bush tucker expert Paddy Delalande.

The day was aimed at increasing awareness in the QFS and the general community around indigenous cultural heritage and how to help preserve it for the future.

Participants were able to hear from local elders about the importance of preserving cultural heritage, how to recognise these items and areas and CQ Consulting spoke about the relevant legislation around cultural heritage issues.

Local Bush Tucker expert Paddy Delalande showed some examples of indigenous plants and talked about their uses and Anne McHugh and Lenore Lindsay from SGAP cooked a beautiful afternoon tea that delighted everyone.

Free plants were on offer kindly donated by the Livingstone Remnant Vegetation Community Nursery who also provided information to attendees on how to care for their plants. The day was finished off with a tour and bush tucker planting activity conducted by Sandra O'Brien in the new Gracemere Community Garden.

Many thanks to all who contributed to the wonderful success of the day.

Corio Cultural Heritage Collaboration

Shelly McArdle

Working in conjunction with Darumbal Elders, QPWS, FBA and FBEC, a project was developed to help revegetate an area of indigenous cultural heritage value between Corio Bay and Nine Mile Beach.

This area is situated on the fore dune and secondary dune on the southern end of Nine Mile Beach and is an area of significance for local indigenous people. It has been severely impacted by people using the area as an undesignated walking track, which has resulted in the destruction of the protective vegetation, leading to massive erosion. This erosion had the potential to cut through the dune to Corio and if left would have led to the water breaking through, changing the point into an island and washing away the area.

Sand fencing was installed to slow the wind and address the erosion. Geofabrics were then laid over the area to hold the sand on the sloped areas. The area was then planted out with local endemic species. This was all with the help of local schools, who had the opportunity to learn more about the ecological and indigenous values of the area whilst they worked.

Soil Erosion Control Workshops

Anne Alison

Two Soil Erosion Control Workshops presented by Darryl Hill, Soil Save, Katherine NT, have been held in the FRCC area as part of his three week tour hosted by the Fitzroy Basin Association. The Wycarbah workshop held on 3 July attracted 28 attendees, while the wet and soggy Marlborough workshop on 15 July drew 12 participants.

Darryl has extensive practical experience on heavy machinery constructing earthworks in the Northern Territory. With his broad knowledge on the subject he is nationally recognised for his erosion control workshops. His workshops cater to primary producers as well as local government plant operators and contractors, and to other organisations involved with earthworks, such as Ergon Energy.

He has a practical understanding of how water flows, the situations in which erosion is caused and the impacts it has on infrastructure such as roadways, dams, contours, and fencelines. In his down-to-earth manner Darryl explained and demonstrated practical methods of preventing and rectifying erosion in these situations.

The main focus of the workshops was to teach and demonstrate practical ways to reduce erosion. Key learnings of the workshops were:

- Erosion is caused by water velocity and its associated energy removing sediment;
- How to identify and focus on the cause of erosion problems (as distinct from the result);
- How to construct erosion control infrastructure using practical methods to slow water down, with the use of flat bottom drains, banks and diversion channels
- The benefit of flat bottom drains in preference to V-drains;
- The importance of minimising the gradient when building drains to reduce water velocity;
- How to use a dumpy level to identify gradient and the direction of waterflow; and to ensure that earthworks are built at the correct gradient;
- How to determine the amount of earthworks required under specific conditions;
- Practical demonstrations of earth-works construction using a dumpy level and grader.

The workshops were developed to include indoor sessions involving numerous simple diagrams, to be followed by practical outdoor demonstrations. Participants were keen to ask questions of their specific situations, so they could apply their learning to their own properties.

The Wycarbah day was very successful with Darryl demonstrating on a grader how to construct whoa boys, despite a wet soil profile.

Unfortunately there was extensive rain prior to and during the Marlborough workshop, with the venue changed to the Marlborough Hall rather than being on-property at Strathmuir. The rain prevented a few people attending and made it difficult to do some of the practical activities with the dumpy level. Normally the grader demonstration is an integral component of the day, however due to the weather this element was omitted.

Emergency Services Day

Shelly McArdle

FRCC teamed up with Hydrologist Peter Voltz from DNRM to present information on the Fitzroy River system at the recently held Emergency Services Day at the Heritage Village.

The day focused on encouraging the community to be proactive and prepared for a wide range of natural disasters including fire, storms, cyclones and floods and also about the services available to the community should the need arise.

Peter provided information on the flood history of the Fitzroy and also the processes and timing around the prediction of river level peaks that proved to be of interest to many attendees.

Duck Pond Flood Recovery Project

Shelly McArdle

Volunteers have been working tirelessly on a significant project at the Duck Pond Environmental Reserve situated at the Port Curtis end of Old Bruce Highway south. They are repairing fencing destroyed in the 2011 flood and revegetating and restoring an area of erosion.

Reconstruction of the fences was made possible with funding provided by the Fitzroy Basin Association through the Queensland Government's Flood Recovery Program, with large timber posts being sunk into the ground sometimes to the depth of almost 2m in an attempt to withstand future flood events. The fences protect the sensitive area from unauthorised vehicular traffic and neighbouring stock.

The project also involved revegetating an area along the banks of Scrubby Creek, which had been heavily eroded as a result of the flood, to minimise further sedimentation of the wetland. Additional signage is also being developed to provide information about the values of the reserve.

We are planning a celebration to mark the completion of the project that will focus on raising awareness of the ecological value of the area and the need for ongoing protection.

Flood Recovery Project – Parkinsonia Management

Jeff Krause

The weed management project is well under way with all landholders along the river in the Fitzroy and lower Mackenzie Rivers being contacted to determine their interest in accessing incentive funds to support the management of infestations of parkinsonia and prickly acacia in the 2010/11 flood zone.

The first group of projects is under way and many other expressions of interest have been received, but there is still the opportunity to register your interest to access assistance where up to 50% of costs to a limit of \$8,000 may be available to support landholders to implement effective weed management programs.

Unfortunately the project manager, Kirstie Roffey has left us for a permanent job in the local agribusiness industry and we are awaiting the arrival of Kelly Smith to the team to assist landholders with the development of projects.

Grains Producers aim for Best Management Practice

Anne Alison

An intense day of concentration was spent by ten local grain producers who attended the Grains BMP workshop hosted by FRCC and held on Wednesday 25 July 2012. The workshop was presented by Rod Collins and Hayley Eames from Qld DAFF Biloela at the Rockhampton DAFF complex on Yeppoon Road, Rockhampton.

Grains BMP is a web based planning program consisting of a number of modules which gives producers the opportunity to develop a plan to take their grain enterprises towards Best Management Practice and beyond. Producers were able to identify which areas of their business needed addressing - from simple factors such as more efficient spray nozzles through to better tillage practices to prevent erosion or overlapping; as well as legal requirements regarding mixing of chemicals and spray drift.

One module completed was property mapping where participants firstly mapped their properties and then went on to identify future property development, which included the development of both irrigated and dryland areas, fencing, earthworks to reduce erosion and fencing of riparian areas.

A follow-up day of training, completing further modules, took place on 17 August 2012.

Now that basic training has been undertaken these producers can continue the planning and development of strategies and action plans in their own home offices using the internet to access their own data.

The hard work undertaken will put these producers in good stead to access up to 50% funding which is currently available through the Fitzroy Basin Association. This funding includes machinery upgrades – eg. adding GPS and guidance systems, updating spray nozzles and spray equipment, purchase of portable weather meters and modifying machinery to minimum or zero till.

Head Under Water Reef Monitoring Project

Shelly McArdle

Members of the community group 'Head Under Water' participated in a weekend course in conducting Reef Health Impact Surveys (RHIS) that was delivered by Queensland Parks and Wildlife trainers off North Keppel Island. The group led by Dr Alison Jones braved the wintery conditions to collect data on the reef which was then collated and submitted to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) to add to the ongoing data base.

The project aimed at providing participants with the training to be able to conduct future reef data collection activities. These would build on existing data providing a method of evaluating reef ecosystem health into the future. It also helped to increase knowledge of coastal and marine natural resources in the wider community.

Improvements for Land Condition and Horse Health

Lisa Sutton

For people who really love their horses and want the best for them, but don't live on expansive working cattle stations where horses can live as horses should, this is for you. In my travels as a Project Officer I try not to be too distracted by the equine elements of the grazing enterprises visited. On one occasion the "Killarney" horses came a bit too close, and I could not help but marvel at their glowing good health and obvious well being that is not enjoyed by most horses and ponies living closer to urban areas. (For a great week end, the St Lawrence Team Penning and 2 Handed cutting is on 15 and 16 September, contact Trevor Bradford for details 4956 9242) .

Back to those horses on smaller blocks – earlier this year Jane Myers delivered a great seminar on how to better manage these much loved but not so well accommodated horses. Incredible results can be achieved on small parcels of land through good planning and relatively small initial financial outlay. The return is ongoing for you, your horse, your property and the environment.

In order to help horse owners achieve this, FRCC is offering to support establishment of a Capricorn Equine Landcare group which will enable more of such training and networking opportunities. Its time Central Queensland horse owners stepped up to the plate to improve the equine community, environment and public perception of their activities.

Equine landcare groups have been developed successfully in the Yarra Valley and South West Goulburn Landcare network, with support from the Mitchell Shire in Victoria, with another under development on the NSW central coast. Initially these groups are focused on natural resource management outcomes (in this region fire control is a major issue that needs to be addressed by all rural property owners), as the group evolves they can branch out further to specific equine health issues, access areas for recreational riding or whatever the group thinks is needed.

This program can't operate or even begin without strong support from the equine community. To register your interest please contact Lisa Sutton on 4921 0573 or lsutton@frcc.org.au

FRCC planned to have Jane Myers back for another seminar this year, however due to a serious health problem this needs to be delayed, and we hope to have her back early in 2013. In the mean time the Fitzroy Basin's Boyne Calliope sub region is having a Regenerative Pasture Management for Horse Properties workshop delivered by MB Equine services on Saturday 20 October in Calliope. Please contact the Boyne Calliope office for further details 4975 6555.

Landcare Update

Katrina Conway

(Landcare Facilitator, Fitzroy Basin Association)

Queensland Landcare Conference

The Queensland Landcare Conference held in Brisbane during June was themed 'Paddocks, backyards and balconies together making a difference'. The conference was attended by Fitzroy Basin community members from different backgrounds keen to share experiences with others. There is already interest in holding a conference in the region. A special thank you to Michelle Hanrahan for sharing her experiences from this year's conference.

Michelle Hanrahan is a member of Wycarbah and District Landcare Group Inc. and President of Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments (FRCC).

What session/s did you enjoy the most about the conference? Why?

Rick Burnett from Keep Australia Beautiful. He was prepared to "call a spade a spade". Rick brought with him his experience from his previous life in media, and hospitality and is now applying it as the Executive Officer of Keep Australia Beautiful, based in Brisbane. One image in particular that stuck with me was his description of the Pacific Ocean's Plastic Gyre. Google it, if you need a reason to pick up the rubbish you see on the ground.

Another speaker, Tim Wright, was a truly grass-roots Landcarer. He, his wife and family own and run "Lana" at Balala, NSW. Tim took over "Lana" approximately 30 years ago and through a change in management style, based on education, research and implementing Holistic Management principles, he and his family have achieved much greater economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Finally, an honourable mention has to go to our own, Jeff Krause, Executive Officer from FRCC, who spoke about FRCC in the sense of a good news story and the amount of activities we were able to support / provide our community with over the past year. His was a fitting final session to a good conference, and a great one to for everyone to take home with them a sense of what can be done.

Landcare Week

With Landcare Week being celebrated from the 3-9 September it is a great time to work towards better land management. If you have an activity planned for Landcare Week I would be keen to learn about it. Please contact Katrina at katrina.conway@fba.org.au

Melrose Field Day Provides Real Life Learning for Rocky High Students

Shelly McArdle

Students from Rockhampton High School's Year 12 Agriculture course were fortunate to be able to participate in a field day arranged by the school and hosted by Jeff and Karen Mills of 'Melrose' in Morinish late last month. The field day provided an opportunity for students to take the classroom to the paddock to see firsthand how a landholder is improving production by sustainable management of their natural resources.

Jeff was able to show students how to identify some key pasture plants as well as some of the most common weeds encountered on grazing lands. Improved pasture health and biodiversity leading to increased productivity were highlighted as positive outcomes resulting from a more strategic grazing program.

The day also included carrying out vegetation surveys by conducting transects in a selection of areas and the collection of soil samples for analysis back in the classroom.

Students were also informed about some of the challenges that are faced by landholders including working to keeping good ground cover in unfavourable seasons and the threats to their cattle as a result of uncontrolled wild dogs.

Students agreed that it was great to be able to participate in field trips such as this as it takes them out of their comfort zones and they can see what is actually happening in the industry in real life.

Results from information gathered on the day will be used in the development of reports that will go towards their end of year results.

The day was educational, interesting and enjoyed by all involved and concluded with a trip to the nearby Glenroy Crossing on the Fitzroy River that was still under water.

Small Landholder Day Back by Popular Demand

Shelly McArdle

Last year, FRCC hosted an information day for more than 100 small landholders at the Rockhampton Showgrounds. The day provided a chance to hear from industry experts and to learn about resources, support and incentives available to help them better manage their land.

This was a great event and this year, based on the feedback provided by previous attendees, we think this year's event will prove to be bigger and better with a range of topics covered by leading experts including:

- Property Planning
- Pasture Stocktake
- Dam Infrastructure and Maintenance
- Dam Health and Biodiversity
- Managing Hobby Horses in Central Queensland
- Farrier Demonstrations
- Grafting and Marcotting Fruit Trees
- Alpacas- Care and Textiles

Also attending on the day will be a range of local allied businesses and community groups bringing you the latest on their products and services.

Where: Rockhampton Showgrounds

When: Saturday, 29 September 2012

Time: 8:30am – 3pm

RSVP: 26 September 2012

Phone 4921 0573 or admin@frcc.org.au

Introducing Anne Alison

Stephen Donaldson

Anne Alison has always had an interest in cattle. Growing up in the Hunter Valley on a dairy farm, she headed north after completing university and worked in the northern pastoral industry from the Kimberley, through to north-western and western Qld. She operated a mixed farming operation in Central West NSW while managing a national grain co-operative. Having worked as a small business and agribusiness consultant, and recently with the Braford Society, she brings a set of unique skills to engage and work effectively with landholders in the FRCC area.

Having been a member of FRCC for a couple of years now, you may already know Anne, but we would like to take this opportunity to welcome her into the role of Project Officer Catchment Services where she looks forward to working with landholders to produce beneficial results for them and the environment.

Murray Lagoon Viewing Platform

Jeff Krause

A project that began more than five years ago is complete with the final stage of the construction of a covered viewing platform that extends out into Murray Lagoon at the Botanic Gardens in Rockhampton.

The project, managed by FRCC, was made possible through funds raised by a rugby league charity match and the Bundy Bush Fund in the form of a grant through Landcare Australia, as well as considerable assistance from Rockhampton Regional Council.

Attendees that included Michelle Hanrahan, Deputy Mayor Tony Williams, Cr Greg Belz, other representatives from Rockhampton Regional Council, Greening Australia, Birdlife Australia, Frog Society and Capricorn Conservation Council gathered at the site to celebrate the long awaited official launch of the platform.

Greening Australia were contracted by FRCC to produce a Management Plan for the entire area, and in the early stage, the project also provided opportunities for training activities conducted by Green Corps with activities such as weed control and revegetation.

The eventual outcome has delivered a wonderful asset that helps showcase the beauty of our natural environment with many visitors and locals including wedding parties choosing the new location to take advantage of the spectacular sunsets over the lagoon.

Upcoming Events ...

FRCC Display – 9 September 2012 – Rockhampton Heritage Village

Small Landholders Information Day - 29 September 2012 – Rockhampton Showgrounds

FBA Muster – 17-18 October 2012 – Leichhardt Hotel, Rockhampton

FRCC Annual General Meeting – 7 December 2012 – Rockhampton Leagues Club

Pasture Rundown workshops to return later in 2012 (Date TBA)

FRCC Photo Competition

Check our website for details of this year's competition.

First round closes 15 October 2012

Second round closes 30 November 2012

Theme

'Reflections of our Reef and Rivers'