

# Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • March 2012

## President's Message

### Michelle Hanrahan

This year offers great opportunity for FRCC to showcase our quality services as well as expand our influence in the community regarding natural resource management issues. Well managed and sustainable development is a key driver for our organization and as the rapid resources development continues FRCC aims to enhance its position as a premier natural resource management organization in this area.

I am looking forward to the challenges this brings and with the other members of the FRCC Management Committee we plan to engage more widely with local industry and business sectors to develop high quality services and advice to our members.

The FRCC Management Committee for 2012 are:

Michelle Hanrahan	President
Rob McArthur	Vice-President
Peter Baggett	Secretary
Leise Childs	Treasurer
Ian Groves	Member
Sarah Becker	Member
Ian Dare	Member
Donald Black	Member
John Wall	Special Member
Evelyn Carte	Special Member

We look forward to continuing to work closely with our members in 2012.

## Executive Officer's Update

### Jeff Krause

This time last year many in our community were recovering and rebuilding following the floods. Thankfully this year's rainfall has not been as extreme and conditions are far more conducive to "normal" operations, so I take this opportunity to remind landholders that FRCC field staff are available now to advise on the generous financial incentives available for infrastructure on your grazing, grains or horticulture properties aimed at improving land management practices and reducing the impact of runoff into creeks and rivers.

This year FRCC will continue offering and contributing to awareness raising and community information sessions on natural resource management issues. Already we have a range of activities and events planned with advertising for some of these out there now including workshops in four convenient locations on the first modules of Ausgraze (formerly Grazing Best Management Practices). Our links with the three regional councils, Rockhampton, Isaacs and Gladstone continue to strengthen with more joint workshop and collaborative planning activities underway this year.

Water quality remains a topic of interest with FRCC compiling many of the issues and questions posed by members and placing this on our website with a view to securing credible responses in an attempt to provide quality information and explanations to our community regarding water quality and river health concerns.

This year is shaping up to be an even greater year of growth and development for FRCC services and activities and we look forward to members raising issues and opportunities with us.

## A 'Peak' At Some Marine Wildlife!

### Stephen Donaldson

Recently during a fact finding mission to observe some of the coastal area and Fitzroy River estuary, the Management Committee and staff aboard "Gundoo Spirit" from the North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre were witness to some examples of the work Reef Guardian Agreements aim to protect. This particular example was the turtle hatchery of Peak Island. Located approximately 23km north of Balaclava Island and 15km east of Keppel Sands, Peak Island is one of two major Australian Flatback Turtle rookeries on the east coast of Australia.

Flatback turtles, or *Natator depressus* if we break out the scientific names, are a species of marine turtle endemic to the Australian continental shelf. In addition to this, they are one of only two species of marine turtle that lack a global distribution.

Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, Australian Flatbacks are listed as a vulnerable species meaning their population is low, or in danger of becoming low and additional measures may need to be taken to increase population numbers. The area surrounding the Peak Island rookery is classified as being within the protection of Great Barrier Reef Coastal and Marine Park preservation zones and this is one of the steps taken to work towards this.

During our trip we were fortunate enough to witness firsthand turtle tracks on the sand from the previous nights nesting females, who generally nest in late November and early December. Nesting females generally return to the same nesting site for successive seasons, often travelling great distances, sometimes further than 1300km. To fuel these migrations they eat diets that generally consist of soft shelled invertebrates, including jelly fish, and are known to forage throughout much of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and Marine and Coastal Marine Parks.

Although the work of Reef Guardians is having a positive influence on the health of the reef, a number of human, or anthropogenic, activities are still having an impact on Flatback Turtle populations. Some of these include drowning as a result of gill nets, trawling, ghost nets as well as boat strikes, introduced pests, habitat degradation and light pollution. By taking care when out on the reef, and from our own homes and properties, we can do a lot to preserve the icon that is our Great Barrier Reef and it's wildlife.

## Coastal Community Groups Update

### Rhys Kellow

The five community groups FRCC is supporting along our coast are progressing well with their projects. It was a reasonably quiet time over the Christmas/new year break, but all groups are now gearing up for a busy year ahead!

The Livingstone Remnant Vegetation Study Group continues to meet at the Lammermoor Native Gardens each Tuesday at 8am to undertake a variety of activities to improve and protect the gardens. The group is also working towards an open day in May with guided tours throughout the gardens, highlighting the various vegetation communities and new walking track!

Keep an eye out for more information on Emu Park Community Bushcare Group's upcoming Wetlands Day at Emu Park scheduled for late March. The group also meet once a month undertaking weed control and revegetation activities at numerous sites around Emu Park with some impressive results at the Tanby Point site.

Great news from Capricorn Coast Landcare Group earlier last week, where they gained greater value for money to conduct a further 3 wetland discovery days under the Junior Landcare Program. This will allow even more local school students to learn about the importance of wetlands and some of the species that inhabit them.

Birds Australia have now merged with Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA) and are now called 'BirdLife Australia'. The local Capricornia group will be heading down to Curtis Island in the coming weeks for further shorebird surveys. In past months, the group has found it challenging to source a boat and captain for their surveys. If anyone can help, please call here at the office for more information.

The Friends of the Beach group are beginning to put together some local species guides for the coastal region, so keep an eye out for these in the coming months.

Each group is always on the lookout for new members. So if you're interested in any of the projects listed above, or just want to know more about these groups, and others, feel free to call the office for more details.

## Frog Display Popular with the Young Ones

### Shelly McArdle

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments (FRCC) have been working with the Rockhampton Mirror, The Queensland Frog Society and Bunnings Warehouse Rockhampton to educate people on the plight of our native frogs in the midst of growth in Central Queensland. A series of articles have explained how to make our gardens more frog friendly and what is being done in the community when it comes to improving habitat for these precious creatures.

On Saturday, 21 January 2012, FRCC Project Officer, Shelly McArdle and representative of the Queensland Frog Society, Bethlea Bell presented an information session at Bunnings, Rockhampton. Participants were able to get help to identify frogs, learn how to create habitat to attract frogs to their gardens and what can be done to exclude toad invasion of frog ponds.

FRCC Executive Officer, Jeff Krause said, "The sessions are a great way to inform the community of what they can do as individuals to help conserve frog populations".

The session attracted a lot of young people who were very interested in frogs and when five year old Caitlin Rooney was asked why she liked frogs she replied, "Because they are cute and greeny." I think we all can agree with her!

## North Rockhampton State High School Students Presentation at AGM

### Shelly McArdle

The students from Year 8 worked hard on a project that started in 2010, which involved the rehabilitation of a section of Moore's Creek in North Rockhampton. They presented a summary of the project to the attendees at Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments' AGM held on Friday, 9 December 2011.

North Rockhampton High School student Brin Lorien said, "2011's activities have included learning how a creek system works, how to measure the health of an ecosystem with various monitoring techniques and using the correct terminology".

The project was helped along with an Expo held earlier in the year that saw the school partner with Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments, Central Queensland University, Greening Australia, Fitzroy Basin Association and Rockhampton Regional Council to enhance the hands on learning experience for students. FRCC was recently successful in securing a grant to host an even bigger NRM expo this year that is proposed to be held on World Environment Day.

FRCC Project Officer, Shelly McArdle said that it was important for the students to familiarise themselves with the networks available to them to learn and become more involved in environmental projects in the wider community and it was very exciting to have them showcasing their achievements at the AGM.

## AusGraze – Grazing Best Management Practice

### John Rodgers

Finally it is official! Grazing Best Management Practice, developed by the FBA, Agforce and DEEDI is going national under the auspices of MLA, and is being re-named AusGraze. The name will be the only noticeable change in this region while there may be some changes to the content in Southern Australia.

Those who attended the first FRCC workshop on 14 December indicated they had learnt from the day and now had some different aspects of their management to examine.

In March landholders from across the FRCC region will have opportunities to attend the same workshop in their area. FRCC will host workshops at the following venues.

St Lawrence:	6 March 2012	St Lawrence Bowls Club
Wycarbah:	7 March 2012	Wycarbah Hall
Raglan:	13 March 2012	Old Station
Marlborough:	14 March 2012	Marlborough Hall

All Sessions 8am-4:30pm - Smoko & Lunch provided

If you are interested in benchmarking your property management and improving your profitability and sustainability please register for any of these workshops with FRCC.

Phone: 07 49210573

Fax: 07 49210528

e-mail: [admin@frcc.org.au](mailto:admin@frcc.org.au)

## Our Backyard Photo Competition Holds added interest in the Community

### Shelly McArdle

FRCC would like to thank Harvey Norman for their sponsorship, The Morning Bulletin for their support and all who participated in our recent photo competition. The response really did exceed all our expectations, highlighting our region and all the features that make us want to live here.

We also had a member of the community pop into the office who was so impressed with the photos that were published in the Rural Weekly that he asked if we could put him in contact with one of the photographers. Mr Bill Young contacted Tania Saint and expressed interest in her photo 'The Causeway'. Not only did Tania supply the photo along with two others, she arranged for them to be enlarged and helped Bill to put them into his frames. As you can see the end result is very impressive! Mr Young plans to use the photos to decorate his newly renovated home. What a great community.

Look out for our next photo competition that will be held later in the year.

## Sustainable Horse Property Management Seminar

### Lisa Sutton

FRCC, thanks to a grant from the Australian Government's "Caring for Our Country" funding, is pleased to be bringing Jane Myers from "Equiculture" to deliver a free one day seminar in Rockhampton. This seminar is a great learning opportunity for owners of small horse properties which covers: horse characteristics and grazing behaviour, land degradation, pasture renovation, grazing, water, vegetation, pest insect and manure management. All of which is integrated into how to design and develop a property that is better for your horses, the environment and your neighbours.

Pasture management principles are similar for all grazing activities. Maintaining vigorous groundcover rich in species diversity is essential to improve soil health (and therefore productivity), reduce weeds and soil erosion, and to improve catchment and waterway health. The benefits for horse owners are: improved horse health, reduced feed and supplementation expenses, reduced worm burdens, better neighbourhood relations (due to improved equine behaviour, reduced dust, flies and odour) improved aesthetics and property values.

Jane Myers says "Caring for your horse property is equally as important as caring for your horse. Horses are not native to Australia, and can cause a huge impact on the environment if the land that they live on is not cared for properly." An effective horse property management system saves time, money and is good for the environment. A well managed grazing ecosystem, whether for horses, cattle or both, has: healthy pasture which protects the soil, a lot of dung beetles to control parasites and improve soil health, shelter trees which provide habitat for insectivorous animals, which in turn control pest insects far more effectively than any costly human intervention.

Horses are a very good indicator of environmental health. If your horse is lacking vitality, exhibits behavioural vices, or the equine budget is excessive, attendance at this seminar is highly recommended.

About the presenter:

Jane has been involved in the Horse Industry for over 35 years (both here and in the UK). In this time having competed in endurance riding, dressage, carriage driving, show jumping and competitive trail riding, and being the author of **Managing Horses on Small Properties**, and co-author of **Horse Sense - The Guide to Horse Care in Australia and New Zealand (2nd edition)**. Jane holds an MSc (Masters Degree) in Equine Studies and undertook research for her thesis on the grazing behaviour of horses. Recently Jane has been awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship to study sustainable horse keeping systems in the USA. For further information please visit Jane's website [www.equiculture.com.au](http://www.equiculture.com.au).

Please RSVP by Monday 4th, June  
to FRCC at 4921 0573  
or [admin@frcc.org.au](mailto:admin@frcc.org.au)

## **Local Horse Sports Champion: Jill Lyons**

### **Lisa Sutton**

In the lead up to the Sustainable Horse Property Management Seminar in June, FRCC is profiling people in the local equine industry, the first of whom is Jill Lyons. Jill is Vice President of the Central Highlands Barrel Horse Association and organises divisional barrel races in the Rockhampton area once a month.

Jill is keen to promote the sport and would like to recruit new people including juniors and adults who want to try a new discipline. Jill will be at the workshop so if you are interested in barrel racing and don't know where to start please see her on the day.

Jill has been living and breathing horses most of her life, having been raised on her parents farming and grazing enterprises near Capella and Dingo. Professionally Jill has developed an extensive knowledge of grazing land management.

Since completing her education at Rockhampton Girls Grammar school Jill has been employed in the Natural Resource Management sector, learning the craft from highly regarded practitioners such as George Bourne and Cliff Smith.

For six years Jill worked for the Department of Natural Resources (now DERM) in Cloncurry and Emerald, and for 2 years was the Pest Management Officer with Central Highlands Natural Resource Management Group based at Peak Downs Shire Council.

Six years ago, Jill began working for the Fitzroy Basin as Strategic Regional Facilitator, then as the Three Rivers Coordinator and is now FBA's part time Librarian.

Jill lives outside of Gracemere with her husband Mark, a farrier and a diesel fitter, and 16 month old daughter Charlee Brinsley. Jill is a fierce competitor in barrel racing, breakaway roping and team roping. In his spare time, Mark is a team roper and pick up man (of injured bullriders).

Jill and Mark train young horses and compete in futurities on them, rodeo them, then sell them on and start again. They aim to buy well bred horses to maximize benefits at sale time, having invested so much time and money in training them. On average they have 6-9 head of horses in work and sometimes a few head of roping calves – the number of stock run dependant on the seasons and how much rain they have had.

They manage their land according to seasons and try to maintain a good level of ground cover. Overstocking land with horses accelerates land degradation, which leads to numerous equine health problems and excessive expenses for feed, supplements and veterinary services.

The best way to keep horses healthy is to give them an environment that has a good body of natural grass, shelter, clean water... to find out more we'll see you at the Frenchville Sports Club on 16th June 2012.

## **GRT – Weed Awareness Events**

FRCC supports local Councils with the delivery of Weed Awareness Workshops with the current focus on Giant Rats Tail Grass. Look out for workshop dates in your local area.

## **Capricorn Coast Witnessing King Tides Event**

### **Community rallies to make the WKT a huge success**

#### **Shelly McArdle**

Members of the community were enlisted to take photographs to help capture a snapshot of inundated beaches on the Capricorn Coast which experienced one of the highest tides for the year on Sunday, 22 January 2012 to help improve our understanding of climate change impacts.

FRCC, Fitzroy Basin Association, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Envirolink, Rockhampton Regional Council, Greening Australia and others joined forces with the community to gather information about how our region fared. The information was collated into a database that was then shared with Green Cross Australia who put it together with data from other regions to give a Queensland-wide snapshot of the impacts. This data will then be used to help plan for and mitigate climate change impacts in the future.

Photos were submitted from Shoalwater to Emu Park and out to the Keppels. Capricorn Outriggers impressed by submitting photos taken offshore looking towards the coast.

Thanks to all participants, in particular the FRCC members for supporting the event.

Thanks go to chef Paddy Delalande for looking after catering.

We hope to see you all next year when we do it all again!

## **Sarah Becker**

### **Janeen Whiting**

We welcome Sarah Becker to FRCC and would like to introduce her to you. Sarah was elected to the Management Committee at our Annual General Meeting on 9 December 2011. She is the sixth generation of her family to be actively involved in agriculture in the Dawson Valley. Needless to say, Sarah has a strong passion for the rural sector.

She holds a Bachelor of Commerce and a Bachelor of Business Management from the University of Queensland. She is a Chartered Accountant who assists her father to run the firm James Becker & Co in Rockhampton which specialises in agribusiness. Sarah also acts as Financial Controller to the family's rural operation. This business includes cropping, dry land irrigation, commercial cattle and stud cattle. This hands on experience has made her sought after in dealing with her national agribusiness client portfolio.

## **Parkinsonia and Prickly Acacia Project**

### **Rhys Kellow**

FRCC recently negotiated with the Fitzroy Basin Association to undertake a Parkinsonia and Prickly Acacia management project. The project, which is funded by the Qld Government, will 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 these species. Specific project details are yet to be finalised, however any landholder interested in controlling these two species are encouraged to register their interest with FRCC. Further information regarding this program will be available in the coming weeks, with landholder and community consultation high on the list to identify target areas and priority actions. FRCC plans to support a small number of trial projects over the next few months, so those who would like some assistance in managing Parkinsonia and Prickly Acacia and can undertake the work quickly, please call the office.

## **Upcoming Events ... Save these Dates**

### **Wetlands Day**

– 25 March 2012 at Emu Park

### **North Keppel Island and Rockhampton High Schools Fitzroy River Adventure**

– 28 May to 1 June 2012

### **Kids NRM Expo Moore's Creek**

– 5 June 2012

### **Jane Myers Presenting One Day Seminar on Sustainable Horse Management**

– 16 June 2012

### **Cultural Heritage and Rural Fires Awareness Day**

– 21 July 2012

### **Small Landholder Information Day**

– 18 August 2012

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

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