

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • September 2011

President's Message

Michelle Hanrahan

Welcome to the September edition of our newsletter which highlights a range of FRCC's activities.

FRCC is continuing to explore opportunities to further develop services and to expand our influence in the wider community. Membership numbers continue to increase posing the challenge of continuing to deliver quality services of greater numbers of member organizations and individuals.

A reminder that as we move toward the end of the year, the AGM approaches and this will once again provide an opportunity to showcase significant achievements over the past 12 months and to celebrate our successes.

Executive Officer's Update

Jeff Krause

The past three months have seen FRCC staff focus on the development of incentive based projects with landholders. Two grazing projects and two horticulture projects were approved at the Management Committee meeting in August with a further six grazing and two horticulture projects in the development stages. There is also a possibility that support may be accessed by some of the small number of grain producers in our area.

In addition to these core activities the team at FRCC has also been engaged in a variety of landholder and wider community natural resource management awareness raising activities.

Activities such as the Small Landholder Information Day, a field day at Moora Plains where Andrew and Megan Lawrie showcased the impact of effective property planning and management, as well as support for Rockhampton Regional Council GRT grass control sessions, activities and events in schools and NRM Expo in Emerald have again highlighted the range of services available through FRCC and our partner organizations to assist in enhancing natural resource management.

FRCC continues to work closely with local NRM groups to manage and deliver projects on the Capricorn Coast and other catchment areas. We also continue to develop submissions seeking additional funds to allow us to offer more low cost awareness, information and training sessions for local land care groups, landholders and the community.

The FRCC team looks forward to working closely with members to deliver improved natural resource management outcomes.

Grazing BMP update

John Rodgers

On 12 July, 2011 a group of staff from DERM and the FBA network attended the first 'Train the trainer' day for the Grazing Best Management Practice program. The group were introduced to the first module, 'Managing soils and soil health' and ran through the presentation, procedures and planning of workshops. This module is divided into 3 key areas.

1. Maximising the water available for pasture growth (physical soil health)
2. Maintaining a balanced supply of nutrients (chemical soil health)
3. Improving organic matter and biological capacity for resilience in variable seasons (biological soil health)

Landholders will be assisted with the process of self assessing their grazing operation on-line. When individuals find areas needing more information, training or management assistance the network will endeavour to arrange workshops or other opportunities to acquire what is needed. If fencing or water infrastructure is identified as a constraint to attaining best management practice, assistance for this will be considered under the FBA Neighbourhood Catchment guidelines.

The FBA Grazing Land management team of Bronwyn Roberts and Joe O'Reagain are now planning workshops for the first groups of producers to undertake this self assessment process. Dates will be advised for each region when they are finalised.

On a much wider scale, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) have recently called applications for the position of Co-ordinator to develop and roll out the program across Australia. This demonstrates the importance placed on 'best management practice' by national industry bodies as well as local groups such as FBA and Agforce.

Erosion Control and Water Management

By Shelly McArdle and Rob Doyle

FRCC, Growcom, FBA and the Pineapple Study Group teamed up to host an Erosion and Storm Water Management workshop held on Wednesday, 22 June 2011 at the Burrows family farm shed, Ingrey Road, Bungundarra.

Grant Witheridge, Catchments and Creeks Pty Ltd spoke on a number of subjects including how to recognise the different types of erosion by looking at the type and shape of the erosion (eg if the erosion has very steep sides this can indicate that the soil has a nutritional deficiency). Drainage layout was also explained as a best practice way of reducing erosion on farms, as well as specific control practices for erosion and sediment.

Workshop attendees were then invited to participate in visits to neighbouring farms to share ideas, experiences and see firsthand some of the control methods in action.

FRCC staff were on hand to offer information on how landholders can apply for funding through the Reef Rescue program.

Feedback indicated that it was an informative day.

Weedbuster week

FRCC supported a range of community awareness programs during Weedbuster Week (5-11 September 2011).

Materials on FRCC activities were available at the Capricorn Coast Landcare display at the Keppel Bay Plaza in Yeppoon during the week to enable people to learn more about weed identification, control and management.

FRCC also helped Rockhampton Regional Council with display and activity sessions at Kershaw Gardens in North Rockhampton.

These events culminated with a native plant propagation workshop on Saturday during which FRCC Project Officer Shelly McArdle explained to people how to use native plants to control weeds by crowding them out with more desirable species.

Student Bursary

CQUniversity students who can demonstrate their environmental empathy are encouraged to apply for the Fitzroy Student Bursary, which is now open to students from all disciplines.

The \$1100 bursary is open to students residing in the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments region, which extends from just north of St Lawrence, west to Gogango and south to Mount Larcom.

This bursary is a partnership between CQUniversity and FRCC to provide encouragement to students who have an interest in ecology and the environment. The award will be assessed based on an application form, and 500-1000 word submission outlining what applicants believe are the environmental challenges of their generation and how theses relate to the local area.

Application forms will be available from the CQU scholarship page from the end of October.

The scholarship is designed to create awareness of FRCC's contribution as a local not-for-profit community-based natural resource management group.

GRT workshops well received

FRCC supported the two workshops conducted by the Rockhampton Regional Council aimed at controlling Giant Rats Tail Grass.

The workshops held at Kunwarara and Bajool attracted many landholders with quality information and presenters available to advise on management and control strategies. Information was provided by Dr Steven Bray, DEEDI representatives, R-Mach Aviation, Landmark and FRCC.

Congratulations to RRC for conducting these events and more are planned for other areas later in the year.

Threatened Species Vine Scrub Incentives

Rhys Kellow

There are now incentives available for landholders looking at protecting and resorting areas of Vine Scrub on their properties. These projects will be funded 100% and could include activities such as fencing to exclude stock to allow growth, fire management, revegetation and initial weed management (to be determined on a project by project basis). Other potential projects which meet the guidelines will also be considered.

Anyone interested in knowing more about this opportunity or are aware of any large patches of Vine Scrub in the region should contact Rhys or Lisa at the FRCC office

Staff Continue Learning

FRCC Project Officer, John Rodgers, has recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Rangeland Management through the University of Queensland.

To complete the certificate, John has studied courses in

- Sustainable Rangeland Production Systems and Regions
- Global, National Trends and local scenarios
- Grazing Land Management
- Advanced Rangeland Ecology

These courses have focused on practical applications of science and the environment as they affect people running businesses in Australian Rangelands. John feels that these courses will prove valuable in his current role as he will be better able to assist landholders to adapt to change.

John is continuing study with the next course on Building Effective Stakeholder Engagement. Congratulations John!

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Host a Natural Resource Management Expo at Moore's Creek

By Shelly McArdle

FRCC partnered with Pam Malyszczek from Greening Australia, Amanda Johnston of Plantsmart, Luke Ukkola and Lynda Rolfe from Fitzroy Basin Association, and Dr Bob Newby from CQU to present an environmental expo onsite at Moore's Creek on Tuesday, 21 June 2011 for students from North Rockhampton State High School.

About 80 year 8 students who have been actively involved in the Moore's Creek rehabilitation project this year took part in the expo. The project that is in its second year combines the skills of students from the Science, Information Technology and English departments to give the students exposure to a wide range of different areas that require varying skills for a more holistic understanding of real world natural resource management.

The expo delivered valuable information about the Fitzroy River and its catchments, and the value of its flora and fauna. It also showed students what work is being done on ground to improve groundcover in surrounding grazing land to help manage the negative effects of sediment flowing to the reef. The expo also made the students aware of organisations that are available to provide them with valuable information resources.

FRCC will continue to support this project and we look forward to seeing the students strive to make this project a showcase for other schools and the wider community.

Financial Incentives available

Financial incentives are available to assist landholders in reducing erosion and sediment runoff to waterways and the reef.

Grazing enterprises can benefit by fencing off creeks and streams to limit bank erosion, providing off stream watering points for stock. Incentive funding is also available to assist landholders who want to improve areas of poor ground cover on their properties through changing grazing practices through Voluntary Land Management Agreements (VLMAs)

Horticultural producers may be interested in the incentives available to purchase more efficient spray technology to reduce pesticide use or equipment that assists in creating mulch and improving ground cover, or in more efficient cultivation such as GPS technology.

Incentives are also available for larger scale agriculture such as grain and cotton production.

FRCC staff are available to provide more detail on these incentives and are always happy to discuss ideas on how to improve ground cover and reduce soil erosion and land degradation.

Please give us a call or drop into the office at 14 Wandal Road, Rockhampton to discuss your ideas.

NAIDOC Week Celebrations 2011

Members of the FRCC team helped celebrate the opening of NAIDOC week at a breakfast attended by around 100 representatives from local organisations at The Edge restaurant on the banks of the Fitzroy on 8 July 2011.

We were also there along with Luke Ukkola and Tamara Timms from FBA at the close of celebrations held after the parade at the Panthers Sports Grounds in North Rockhampton to spread the message of caring for our country and raising awareness about what we can do as individuals to help improve the health of our catchments.

Myrtle Rust Awareness

By Kristy Byers

A new invader is heading our way and its all hands on deck to avoid the spread. Myrtle rust is a devastating fungal disease affecting plants of the family Myrtaceae. These include the native species of bottlebrushes, tea trees including paperbarks and eucalypts. Other members of the family include the Geraldton wax and lemon-scented myrtle amongst many others.

Native to South America, Myrtle rust was first detected in the Gosford area north of Sydney. Since then it has spread significantly through native forests, gardens and nurseries and was first detected in Queensland in December 2010. Myrtle rust is capable of spreading quickly under the right environmental conditions. The rust produces tiny spores which are easily transported by several means including wind, insects and other animals, humans, vehicles, packaging and freight containers.

In the first stages of infection, tiny raised spots or pustules appear on the leaves. Within a few days, these pustules turn a very distinctive bright yellow rusty colour. The plant may suffer from stunted growth and infected leaves die. This can lead to the death of the entire plant. Although not harmful to humans, myrtle rust has the potential to devastate our iconic native forests and their associated timber and nursery industries. This would have a long-lasting impact both environmentally as well as economically.

For further information on myrtle rust visit the Biosecurity Queensland website at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au. If you think you may have seen myrtle rust please report it immediately by calling Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

FRCC Photo Competition commences this October, 2011

Are you a keen photographer and are you passionate about our beautiful natural environment? Watch the website for more information regarding FRCC's photo competition beginning this October to win great prizes donated by Harvey Norman.

Coastal Project Update

Rhys Kellow

The Communities Caring for Coast project is progressing well with five groups along the Capricorn Coast currently contracted. The Capricorn Coast Landcare group are gearing up for Weed Buster Week in September, Birds Australia will be undertaking their Shorebirds surveys around Curtis Island in late September / early October, and numerous revegetation activities have also gone ahead.

On Saturday, 27 August 2011 the Fitzroy Basin Association held a catch up at Rydges Capricorn Resort which was well attended by representatives from over ten groups from along the Capricorn and Curtis Coasts. There is certainly a lot of good work being done by volunteer groups, so if anyone would like to be involved, call Rhys at FRCC for further information.

Small Landholder Information Day

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments (FRCC) hosted an Information Day for more than 100 small landholders at the Rockhampton Showgrounds on Saturday 20 August 2011.

The day provided a chance to hear from industry experts and to learn about resources, support and incentives available to help people better manage their land.

Topics covered on the day included managing small blocks, advice on grazing land management, horticulture and water use efficiency, weed identification, native species identification and conservation management, animal health, native bees and their benefits for crop production. A variety of trade displays were also onsite including Centracks, Landmark, Coopers Animal health, Thinkwater, Selected Seeds, Savage Barker and Backhouse, Lance Jones fencing.

Michelle Hanrahan, President of FRCC said, "Participants enjoyed a great day with access to many high quality presenters. Particular thanks is extended to the Rockhampton Regional Council Showgrounds staff for their support and to the Caves Lions Club who provided excellent catering for the event."

Presenters include representatives from: Rockhampton Regional Council, Australian Lychee Growers Association, Agforce, Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority, DERM, DEEDI, Fitzroy Basin Association, Rural Fire Service, as well as community groups such as Envirolink, Neighbourhood Watch, Society for Growing Australian Plants, Capricorn Pest Management Group and a local native bee producer.

Based on the positive responses, FRCC plans to run an event aimed for small landholders again next year. Please do not hesitate to contact the FRCC office for any further information on 49210573 or email: admin@frcc.org.au.

Coming Events

1. **Dung Beetle Information Sessions and Field Walks** conducted by John Feehan are available in our area. Supported by FBA and hosted by FRCC, these sessions can be run during October based on levels of interest. Please contact FRCC to register your interest.
2. Workshops on **"Improving productivity of run down sown grass pastures"** are being offered by DEEDI and supported by MLA. DEEDI research has identified that productivity decline is widespread in northern Australia with productivity having reduced by 50% in sown pastures.
Further advice can be obtained by contacting Stuart Buck at DEEDI in Biloela on 4992 9187 or following the link to the brochure on the FRCC web site.
2. Do you understand the **Vegetation Regrowth Code** and how it applies to you on-farm? Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is offering free workshops to help landholders to better understand this legislation. Anyone with regrowth vegetation on their property, does not have a Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV), or has questions about native trees on their land should attend. Check the FRCC web site for further information.

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