

**Fitzroy River and**  
**Coastal Catchments Inc.**

**Newsletter**  
**May 2008 – January 2009**

**Text Only Version**

## 1.0 President's report

*Michelle Hanrahan*

Over the past year FRCC has engaged in a continuous improvement process of review and restructure which will enable it to meet the challenges of the future head on. The new FRCC structure sees the introduction of one manager, the executive officer, who provides the leadership and direction required for day to day operations. This new structure allows the FRCC management committee to focus its attention more fully on strategic matters.

Linked very closely with the restructure was a root and branch review of FRCC policies and procedures, with the aim of providing much needed clarity on the various roles in the organisation i.e. who does what and how. The continuous improvement process does not end here however. To provide the impetus for future improvements, FRCC has undertaken a business improvement review with staff of the Fitzroy Basin Association. Out of this review, an action plan is being developed for the year to come.

While these internal processes have been going on, FRCC has continued to develop and manage on-ground projects, run highly sought after workshops as well as select our new Priority Neighbourhood Catchments. We also continue to support previous Priority Neighbourhood Catchments.

In the year to come FRCC hopes to continue this good work and also reach out and interact more fully with its membership and partner organisations. The first step of which was September's Member's Forum, which was an opportunity for FRCC staff and committee to meet with the membership and find out what issues are affecting them and where they think FRCC should be focussing its efforts. The results of the Member's Forum are now being used by FRCC to guide our works and discussions with our partner groups. The topic of this year's Annual General Meeting "WE WANT A RIVER, NOT A DRAIN" was an outcome from the Member's Forum.

We have also endeavoured to set-up a bursary to encourage more students to consider careers in the field of Natural Resource Management. The bursary is to provide financial assistance to students who, because of their financial circumstances, might otherwise be unable to complete or assist in their programs. This bursary will be advertised early in 2009.

Finally, a special thankyou goes to Murray Bullock and Fiona Anderson. There have been a number of staff changes at FRCC over the past year and we are very fortunate that Murray and Fiona have remained and are able to share their knowledge and experience with the new staff.

## 2.0 Executive Officer Report

### **Cameron Wearing**

Since taking on the position of Executive Officer in July FRCC I have been impressed by the passion that the committee and staff bring to FRCC.

We have commenced work in our new priority neighbourhood catchments in the north of the FRCC and have developed a number of high quality on-ground projects to improve production capacity, manage riparian areas, and protect biodiversity amongst other outcomes.

FRCC also continues to actively support volunteer groups in the region with project applications, individual projects and workshops.

At the same time there have been a number of staff changes at the office and we would like to welcome to a number of new faces - Lisa Sutton (project officer), John Rodgers (project officer) and Janeen Whiting (executive assistant). Farewells go to Murray Bullock, Judith Collin, Chantelle James, Moira Close, and Vicki Taylor who will be sorely missed.

It was a great pleasure to host the FRCC members' forum in October. The purpose of the forum was to put our collective heads together and try to imagine how the region might develop over the next 10 years and determine how we might ensure that development is sustainable ... socially, environmentally and economically. FRCC staff and committee who helped to facilitate the night were: Ian Dare, Ian Groves, Paul Birch, Bob Muir, Peter Baggett, Moira Close, Fiona Anderson, Lisa Sutton, and Murray Bullock, as well as Mike Bent representing our partner organisation FBA.

We were delighted so many people could make it along. There were also many people who sent their apologies but importantly they took the time to fill out the members' forum questionnaire which was also used.

From the feedback we received an action plan is being developed to guide FRCC activities. We are delighted that at our Annual General Meeting we were able to present a special discussion session on the topic of "WE WANT A RIVER, NOT A DRAIN" which was a clear message from the forum.

Be ready for more activities resulting from the member's forum in 2009.

Following are excerpts from the Executive Officer's introductory talk and the October Members Forum.

The purpose of the forum is to put our collective heads together and try to imagine how the region might develop over the next 10 years and determine how we might ensure that development is sustainable ... socially, environmentally and economically.

What do I see when I look at the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments... a region which is unusually rich in natural resources. I see nationally significant Shoalwater bay, this massive reef of the coast, excellent grazing country and massive energy resources of coal and gas. What do other people see?

If there is one thing I have learnt while I've been in CQ it is that you are no kind of man unless you have a fishing photo in your presentation. So here it is. The fish's name is not Johnny by the way.

About a month ago I was fortunate to take part in the International Riversymposium and there I met one of their ambassadors, Johnny Sundstrom, from the Siuslaw Basin in America. Johnny was made an ambassador in recognition of the excellent work he has done in the Siuslaw Basin, where, as the Associate Chief of the US Forest Service noted "The partnerships in the Siuslaw are a window to the future of collaboration in America". Johnny Sundstrom has now started to share the Siuslaw expertise in restoring waterways, with the some of the Sakhalin Island communities in Russia, which have a similar landscape and common issues with protecting salmon. Imagine that, Americans working with Russians to look after salmon! Anyway, Johnny and I got to talking and he explained that probably the biggest challenge they faced was the fact that in Russia, unlike America, people did not own the land and therefore did not have direct control over how it was managed. How then could they effect change. He suggested it could be done through engagement, awareness raising, coordination and demonstrating to those who did make the decisions, that the people he was working with had a positive contribution to make. The situation in Australia is a little different to that in Russia (luckily) however I would suggest that FRCC has a similar role to play.

Which brings me to tonight's questions:

- 1. What will the natural resources of the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments look like in the year 2018?**
- 2. What influences will shape the management of our natural resources?**
- 3. What services / support could FRCC provide to enable the sustainable development of our natural resources over the next 10 years?**

As a discussion starter I am going to look to the past and suggest that some of the influences that will shape the management of our natural resources over the next 10 years have been known for a rather long time. The thing that is different however is that our awareness of their influence has increased. With this increased awareness comes responsibility, the responsibility to work together and manage their influence, minimising any negative impacts.

I'll use a few examples from my own family's history to demonstrate. My great grandfather fought in Gallipoli and when he returned to Australia he took up a soldier settler's block in NSW near the Qld border town of Goondiwindi, the property's name was Osterley. He went into sheep mainly but later cattle and wheat too. Great granddad helped his son, my grandfather, obtain a block on a prickly pear lease and when cleared of pear (mainly via cactoblastis moth) he ran sheep and cattle, this property's name was Adastral. Granddad then decided to develop the property for farming which involved clearing the land. At the same time he did retain some uncleared land for grazing sheep and cattle.

Just before I show you some examples of the influences which affected the way they managed the land, let me just show you what the area looks like now. This slide was taken from Google Maps and as you can see there is hardly a square centimetre which is not developed for copping.

The types of influences which shaped the development of this land included:

1. the impact of globalisation (sheep);
2. the relentless drive of development (vicker's bulldozer);
3. the variability of the climate (droughts and floods);
4. the scarcity of water when you needed it (divining);
5. the constant battle with weeds and pests (prickly pear / feral pig);
6. and chemical use (diazinon).

All of which still influence us today. The difference being collectively we have the benefit of experience and as a result are more aware of their impact.

So, having had a quick look at how the land has developed in my family's neck of the woods it is now your turn to look to the future. Let's put our heads together and imagine how the Fitzroy and coastal catchments might develop over the next 10 years and determine how we might ensure that development is sustainable ... socially, environmentally and economically.

### 3.0 AGM Discussion

#### *Cameron Wearing*

AGM discussion “We want a River, not a drain”

“We want a River, not a drain” was a clear message from the FRCC 2008 Member’s Forum. FRCC was delighted to host a special presentation and discussion on the Fitzroy River system’s water quality during our Annual General Meeting on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2008 at Kershaw House, Glenmore Road, North Rockhampton.

Significant work is underway to address community concerns. An overview of this work, its results, and implications for the river system was given by Ed Donohue – Department of Natural Resources and Water, Water Services Regional Manager, Charlie Wilson – landholder and Fitzroy Basin Association Deputy Chairman and Suzie Christensen – Fitzroy Basin Association CEO.

Following is a summary of their presentations:

#### **Charlie Wilson, Landholder and Deputy Chair of FBA**

Charlie provided a landholders perspective on how things are going at the moment. Charlie related how he used to live at Emerald and his property was below the Ensham Mine. In October 2006 Charlie attended the Mining Forum at Emerald and at that meeting a number of issues were identified:

- Flood plain development levies
- Lack of resources from DNRW
- 2 rule ethos – one rule for the Mine and one for the rest of us
- Compensation issues
- WQ
- Communication consultation
- Loss of primary land

In November this year Charlie attended the mining Forum at Dysart and was disappointed that the very same issues were raised there. He felt that nothing had been achieved in the past 2 years. With 35 coal mines active and 17 mines coming on board there will be a lot of work ahead.

Charlie also discussed the Barry Hart report and noted that if it wasn’t for community concern the investigation may not have happened.

As a landholder Charlie was distressed that beautiful land was being ripped up for coal and worried about the long term impacts on our ability to meet the food and fibre needs of future generations. To highlight this he read an extract from a paper that Professor Julian Cribb had written at the recent Agri-Food National Conference in September 2008.

*“the challenge facing today’s farmers and farm workers is to double world farm output, using less land, far less water, fewer nutrients and with the prospect of less technology to do so – in the teeth of increasing drought”.*

On a final note Charlie felt that as landholders we should all be passionate about this issue and then took questions from the floor.

**Suzie Christensen – Chief Executive Officer, FBA**

Suzie started with a detailed discussion of the situation which led to water being discharged into the rivers by the mines. She noted that January and February saw extreme rain in the north and west of the catchment, flooding the Nogoia River and Theresa Creek. This resulted in the Ensham levee banks overtopping as well as other mines capturing significant water on site. A Transitional Environmental Program (TEP) agreement was granted to Ensham to dewater the mine and discharge into the river. There were many other mines also granted TEP’s or discharging under normal Environmental Authorities. The community raised their concern from June onwards about the condition of streams, river and weirs.

There was also media attention with sickcatfish., A DPI investigation showed an increase in levels of metals in tissue and gills. There were also reports of stock not drinking from the river or drinking less or walking further to troughs to get good water, but no information was available to the community on what was in the water. She noted that landholders felt the river just didn’t look right and wondered if it was safe to put on crops? Over 500km of the Mackenzie / Fitzroy system is affected and 80km of the Isaac River.

Suzie noted that drinking water supplies had reached 1200EC/200mg Na and there had been reported impacts on health, hot water systems, and hospital equipment. Even the mining companies are supplying bottled water to small towns. The Rockhampton Regional Council is very concerned about what is coming down the river. Residents are also detecting an unfamiliar taste in the water.

The quality of the water was also affecting the Stanwell Power Station cooling towers. These were designed for good quality water. The water being recycled would normally be 8 times but this has now been reduced to 2-3 times which has resulted in an increase in discharge to maintain dilution.

What had been the response? Government action followed increasing pressure from the community to address the issue. A Technical Working Group was formed, which then expanded to include FBA and Capricorn Conservation Council. A Terms of Reference to deal with immediate impact only, and focused narrowly on town drinking water supply.

Further pressure by the community saw the appointment of Barry Hart to provide an independent assessment of the “impacts of Ensham release” and advice on future processes. The Barry Hart report was to be released on the same day 5 December 2008.

In response to the investigation FBA’s recommendation is for a full cumulative impact of mining assessment in the region (not just discharge) and a regional development plan. There needs to be legislative review to enable consideration of cumulative impact. Water quality objectives and environmental values need also to be considered. Consultation on TEP’s needs to occur and be consistent with above. An integrated monitoring and reporting system was also essential.

Following her presentation Suzie answered many questions and also discussed the recent announcement that the State Government intends to regulate agricultural practices in reef catchments.

#### **4.0 New Wetland Bulletins Available**

*Fiona Anderson*

Wetland Care Australia engaged FRCC Catchment Services to produce five fact sheets based on results and learnings from projects conducted across the Southern Fitzroy Floodplain in 2006 & 2007.

The information series is available on-line at [www.frcc.org.au](http://www.frcc.org.au) in the 'publications' section or hardcopies can be provided upon request. Topics include Helping Wetlands, Fish, Fire, Grazing, Waterbird and Getting Involved.

#### **5.0 2008 Environmental Protection Agencies Rural Sustainability Award**

*Judith Collin*

AgForce Members Ian and Sandi Groves recently received the 2008 Environmental Protection Agencies Rural Sustainability Award. The Groves family operates Groves Grown Tropical Fruit at Bungundarra near Yeppoon. Ian is also a committee member of the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

#### **6.0 Rangeland-Relevant Education and Qualifications**

Are you looking for some inspiration, some challenges? Would you like to have a better understanding of the rangelands that you work in? Could you be better equipped for your current job, be given great greater job opportunities, or have better career prospects?

If you thought 'yes' to any of these questions then perhaps investing in a Rangelands Australia course is what you are looking for?

And there has **never been a better time** to take this on, with:

- More Commonwealth-supported places for the postgraduate coursework programs in Rangeland Management
- New rangeland-specific courses
- More courses offered in intensive mode to better suit work and family commitments
- Continuing support for rural and remote learners

**If you would like more information on Rangeland-relevant Education please contact the FRCC Office on (07) 4921 0573 or Rangelands Australia (John Taylor) on (07) 5460 1662.**

## **7.0 Water Quality in Limestone Creek.**

*Lisa Sutton*

Limestone Creek is part of the Alligator Creek Catchment. Its water drains from the coastal range west of Yeppoon. Water quality monitoring has been undertaken in the Alligator Creek catchment by volunteers in Limestone Creek, Daly Creek, Plains Creek and an unnamed tributary. The water samples are analysed for nutrients and pesticides by the Queensland Health Scientific Services Laboratory. Copies of the water quality site reports are available from the FRCC office, please phone 4921 0573 if you would like them posted to you.

Ian Hutcheon is a retired electrician who has been collecting water samples from Limestone Creek at The Old Byfield Road crossing of since 2006. Ian was born and has lived in the Rockhampton area most of his life. For 10 years Ian called the Northern Territory home, working as an electrician in Gove, and later as a bore runner on a cattle station near Daly Waters.

Ian is interested in water quality because we all need to drink it and water scarcity in this country means we all need to think a lot more about how wisely we use it. Rainwater tanks supply his domestic water requirements as well as a private bore which provides excellent quality drinking water. Twenty years ago Ian installed solar panels on his roof and has no need to connect to the electricity grid.

Late in the year Ian grows his beard and in the lead up to Christmas was busy wearing a red suit for much of the time. Thank you Ian for all your hard work, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

## **8.0 GBRCWPP 2008-2009 Wetlands Inventories**

*Judith Collin*

The wetland inventories for the Great Barrier Reef Coastal Wetlands Protection Program were completed in late 2008, with the sites including Corio Bay, Hedlow, Raglan Creek, the Southern Fitzroy Floodplain, St Lawrence Wetlands, Kinka Wetlands, Hinemoa, Purbrook and Moncton Hills. With the last local and catchment rainfall events being within the past 6 months and no major changes in the climate, the flora and fauna observations did not change from when the last inventories were conducted.

## **9.0 Murray Lagoon Project**

*John Rodgers*

Bundaberg Rum through Landcare Australia are funding a project to improve the condition, biodiversity and access to the Murray Lagoon at the Rockhampton Botanical Gardens.

Since the 1870's the "Gardens" have been a focal point for recreation and education of many thousands of locals and tourists and this project aims to contribute towards the continuation of that in the Twenty-First century.

Greening Australia has been contracted to prepare a wetland management plan for Murray Lagoon and foreshore that will show the way to improve; water quality, small bird habitat, biodiversity, and public awareness while reducing; bird strikes at the airport and pest and weed infestation. It is hoped this plan will lead to the implementation of best practices in wetland care.

The Green Corp team, in conjunction with Rockhampton Regional Council, Greening Australia and FRCC are providing training for a group of young people to prepare them for the workforce. To date they have received training in weed identification and treatment and have started construction of a pathway leading from the disabled car park to a viewing platform they are soon to construct on the lagoon edge.

This will provide greatly improved access to the waters edge for able and disabled people alike.

## **10. Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchment assists Local Landcare and NRM Volunteer groups with the National Landcare Program.**

*Murray Bullock*

Since 2007 the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments (FRCC) has managed the National Landcare Program funding for the FRCC Region and provided the part time services of a Landcare Support Officer to assist the Groups with their projects including workshops, field days and on-ground activities such as establishing trial sites for pasture and strategic weed management.

The Landcare Groups supported by FRCC are The Caves District Landcare Group, Morinish Landcare Group, Capricorn Coast Landcare Group, Wycarbah and District Landcare and the Marlborough Landcare Group, while the other NRM Groups consist of Livingstone Remnant Vegetation Study Group, and the Raglan Catchment Working Group. Please see below for 2007/08 NLP activities

- Morinish: Pasture Management Workshop "Melrose"
- Capricorn Coast: Maintaining the Envirolink Centre and delivering community awareness and a number of Junior Landcare and Wetland Discovery Days
- The Caves: Rehabilitation of the 14 Mile Rd Remnant Vegetation Site
- Wycarbah: First Aid

- Marlborough: Belly Ache Bush management trial sites
- Livingstone Remnant Vegetation Study Group: Safe operation and Use of Brushcutters and the establishment of trial sites
- Raglan Catchment Working Group: Lantana Field Day

In November 2008 FRCC hosted its second *Information Sharing and Project Development* session with representatives from most Groups. From that session seven new projects were developed for 2009 that include:

- Morinish: Lantana and Rubbervine Management trials
- Capricorn Coast: Maintaining the Envirolink Centre
- The Caves: Plant and Weed identification as well as Rehabilitation Workshops
- Wycarbah: Workplace Health and Safety course
- Marlborough: Building on Belly Ache Bush best Management Practices (BMP)
- Livingstone Remnant Vegetation Study Group: Establishment of a Bio-control Nursery and Cats Claw associated community awareness workshops
- Raglan Catchment Working Group: Aerial application of herbicide for Lantana trials

We are starting a new year that will offer its rewards and challenges so at FRCC we would like to wish everyone all the best with their NLP projects and are looking forward to assisting you in the future

## 11.0 CQ B.E.E.F. (Better Economic and Environmental Futures)

*Lisa Sutton*

The Broadsound CQ B.E.E.F. group was launched in Marlborough on 16<sup>th</sup> October by David Hickey (Extension Officer) and Rebecca Gowan (Agricultural Economist) from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. Members from six grazing enterprises participated in an interesting and informative day of **ProfitProbe** Input which covered: Australian grazing industry profitability; herd inputs and other costs; cattle transfer; landcare indicators; Profit Probe data collection requirements and managing other property income. Participants departed with the major task of preparing their property data for **ProfitProbe** analysis by Resource Consulting Services.

The Broadsound group's analysis was completed for the **ProfitProbe Interpretation and Analysis** meeting 18, December. Mick Sullivan, DPI Beef Industry Development Officer also attended to facilitate further development of the group. Members advised of what changes they had made to their grazing enterprise in the last 18 months, these included rotational grazing, land type fencing, agistment of stock, more effective watering systems and getting having PMAV mapping correct. This was followed by a group discussion of whether these changes had been effective, and how future management decisions may change as a result.

Rebecca led the group through an interpretation of **ProfitProbe** terminology and data, and an examination of historical data and trends including how the current hostile business environment is impacting on productivity in the industry. **ProfitProbe** data for each enterprise was examined and discussed in greater detail by small groups with assistance from Mick, Rebecca and David.

The sharing of experiences by group members and guidance from DPI&F staff make **ProfitProbe** a powerful tool for improving herd management and profitability of grazing enterprises. If you are interested in joining one of the seven existing groups across Central Queensland (Bajool, Moura, Biloela, Rolleston, McKenzie River, Bogantungan and Broadsound), please contact David Hickey at DPI&F Rockhampton on 13 25 23.

## 12.0 Southern Fitzroy Floodplain GBRCWPP Project

*Moira Close and Judith Collin*

FRCC has helped to deliver on-ground projects as part of the Great Barrier Reef Coastal Wetlands Protection Program, funded by the Australian Government. We received funds to improve fish passage at a site on the Southern Fitzroy Floodplain, just south of Rockhampton.

Within the Floodplain, Scrubby Creek is connected to Gavial Creek and water from the Fitzroy River can head back up Gavial Creek during moderate flooding. In the 2008 floods, water from the Fitzroy River backed up to fill many lagoons within the floodplain, replenishing dry wetlands and creating opportunities for fish migration.

In May 2008, several "baffles" were installed by the DPI&F's Northern Fish Community and Fish way Monitoring team, on the old bridge near the Duckpond Environmental Reserve on Scrubby Creek. The 150mm long baffles were constructed from 3mm galvanised steel and were placed on the outside walls of the bridge. These baffles are a cost-effective way of improving fish passage during flow events. They assist the movement of juvenile fish in flowing waters, by providing rest spots for them to take a break from strong water flows. These young fish then have the energy to successfully complete their migration.

## 13.0 St Lawrence NC Launch

*Cameron Wearing*

In August 2008 FRCC held its new priority neighbourhood catchment (PNC) launch for the St Lawrence, Torilla and Waverley Creek catchments at the St Lawrence and District Bowls Club. The day was an opportunity for landholders to find out more about the projects that can be funded and how they can be involved. It was also an opportunity to discuss catchment scale projects with their neighbours, meet the people from FRCC and find out what the group is about, as well as getting a free feed. Presentations were given by Rob McArthur local landholder and FRCC committee member, Dave Hickey from DPI&F, and Trudy Baker from CPMG.

Our staff are now undertaking property visits to develop on-ground projects and planning a timetable of workshops and events with those who attended. Some of the workshops that landholders have expressed an interest in include property planning, GPS and pasture management. We are also looking to participate in another St Lawrence Wetlands Discovery Day with Isaac Regional Council in early 2009.

If you are a landholder in the St Lawrence, Torilla and Waverley Creek catchments and interested in taking part in these activities or others please contact FRCC.

#### **14.0 FRCC Committee Member wins Elder of the Year**

**Cited on:** [http://www.naidoc.org.au/award\\_winners\\_nnaw08/default.aspx](http://www.naidoc.org.au/award_winners_nnaw08/default.aspx)

Born in 1958, Bob Muir is the descendant of the Woppaburra people of the Dharumbal nation. Bob has devoted his life to three major goals: the retention of the Woppaburra history, the reclaiming of Crown land for the Woppaburra people and the maintenance of cultural heritage sites.

He has been a powerhouse in Central Queensland community, working with Government agencies and higher education institutions to promote awareness of Indigenous cultural heritage and environmental protection issues.

Bob has inspired others to believe that dreams can come true, and in pursuit of his dreams, he has touched many lives and achieved many things for his people and the Reconciliation process within Queensland and the nation.

Leader, speaker, activist, mentor and innovator- are all titles that can describe Bob Muir, whose deeds in the Central Queensland region over the past two decades have become the stuff of legend.

#### **15.0 Information Sharing Day**

##### *Judith Collin*

DCCA have been funded by FBA under the Innovation Fun to hold an **Information Sharing Day** to showcase innovative practices across Central Queensland.

When: March 2009

Where: Blackwater International Coal Centre

The day is designed to foster the sharing of projects throughout the Fitzroy Basin region. We want to:

- Share local success stories with others in Central Qld
- Hear about tinkering with change in practice
- Learn about an entirely new approach or trialling a little-known practice; and
- Discover how these activities are delivering natural resource and production benefits on property

To encourage landholders to get involved we're offering small grants of \$1500 for them to tell their story. One landholder per subregion is eligible for a grant to reimburse them for their time spent collating their story.

Presentations should be about the results or progress of projects with an innovative slant within the Central Qld region.

Presenters will have 10 minutes to speak and 5 minutes to answer questions from the audience.

DCCA needs your help to make this event a success!!!

**For more information contact the FRCC office on (07) 4921 0573 or Kellie Nilsson at DCCA on (07) 4993 1004**

**16.0 Acknowledgement Statement about Gambling Community Benefit Fund Grant.**

The Queensland Government's Gambling Community Benefit Fund provided \$2160 to FRCC for the purchase of equipment that will assist with training and capacity building with the sub-region.

Community Groups and FRCC Group Members are most welcome to borrow the gazebos, portable BBQ, ice boxes and the portable tables. Please make bookings through the FRCC Office.