

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • September 2009

President's Report

Michelle Hanrahan

Welcome to the September edition of our newsletter. In it you will find details of the many and varied activities that FRCC have been undertaking since last we wrote.

One of the most important contributions that FRCC can make is to ensure that individuals who are doing the right thing are recognized for their efforts. That is why in this and other FRCC newsletters you will find as many examples as possible of practical on-ground projects which contribute to the sustainable and productive use of the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments.

Let's get the good news out.

Executive Officers Report

Cameron Wearing

In challenging economic times I am proud to report that FRCC has had its biggest year on record with roughly \$860,000 of Australian government funds invested in on-ground projects. This investment was more than matched by the landholders we worked with who invested roughly \$1,340,000 (1.6 times the government funds) bringing the total investment in the region to in the vicinity of \$2,200,000. The scale of this investment highlights the resilience of our regional communities and their commitment to protecting land and water for future generations.

"We want a River, not a drain" was a clear message from the FRCC Member's forum in October 2008. This message shows that feelings in the community run deep when it comes to protecting water quality. Since the forum FRCC has worked hard to keep our membership informed of the work underway to address their concerns. It is important to respond when problems occur but it is equally as important to get on the front foot and be proactive and this is why in August FRCC launched its "Six best things – help protect our River" campaign. The campaign is about turning the passion which was on display at our member's forum into action. The Six best things are:

1. **Get involved:** Make time to participate in local events, get to know your local landcare and environmental groups.
2. **Recognise best practice:** Seek out the latest knowledge, learn from others and get expert advice, and celebrate those who are at the forefront of best practice.
3. **Watch your drain:** Don't turn our river into your drain. Be careful about water usage, watch what goes down the sink and think about how it will affect the river and reef.
4. **Keep it clean:** Don't rubbish the river with litter or fishing waste. Work with your local council to prevent pollution and help with clean up activities.
5. **Care for your catchment:** Understand catchment management, work with your neighbours to plan on-ground works, and consider whole of catchment problems and solutions.
6. **Keep your ground covered:** Maintain minimum of 30% ground cover, manage cattle to avoid over-grazing, and reduce erosion.

FRCC is planning to work over the next six months to showcase each 'best thing' and encourage people to participate, learn more, and help protect the river.

Marlborough and Princhester Creek Neighbourhood Catchment launch

Stefanie Carusi

FRCC is targeting landholders in the Marlborough and Princhester Creek areas to develop on-ground projects. Landholders from these areas were invited to come along to an information day held at "Coorumburra" Marlborough on the 3rd September. The day was an opportunity for landholders to find out more about the projects that can be funded and how they can be involved.

Presentations were given on the day by Cameron Wearing (FRCC), David Hicky (DEEDI), Lisa Sutton (FRCC), Glenn McIntyre (RRC), and Mike Keane (DERM). Cameron began by introducing FRCC, its past achievements and the types of project that have

been developed. David Hickey and Lisa Sutton then presented the latest technology in satellite ground cover monitoring and demonstrated how it could be used to evaluate grazing techniques. David explained that the new technology was in no way used to suggest or assume why a piece of land had or has low ground cover but only to provide an indication of ground cover which can be used by landholders for their interpretation and assessment.

After Lunch Glenn McIntyre explained his role as a Pest Control Management Officer and how landholders could utilize RRC resources for their pest control management. Glen mentioned that council takes requests from the public to carry out weed control which are then prioritised so that they can get around to all requests as soon as possible.

Mike Keane was the last to take the stage on the day and spoke about issues surrounding both the Eden Bann weir raising and new Rookwood weir as well as water demand from industry both in and outside of the FRCC'S area being a driving force for these storages.

Attendance on the day was great and FRCC appreciated everybody taking the time to come along.

FRCC proposal successful in Caring for our Country initiative

"Engaged community groups for rapid uptake of hillslope, Reef Rescue and sustainable farm practices" is a new project to support the activities of five Landcare Groups and Catchment Working Groups covering approximately 45% of the FRCC sub-region. The project will assist with coordination of the five groups, organise a forum to encourage information sharing and increase volunteer participation, and provide groups with devolved grants to implement projects of high local priority that will increase the capacity of landholders to rapidly adopt sustainable farm practices and deliver hillslope and Reef Rescue outcomes.

This project is supported by FRCC, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.

The project also aligns with FRCC's "Six Best Things" campaign which offers practical solutions to help protect the Fitzroy River. FRCC Vice President Paul Birch said one of the "Six Best Things" people could do was to get involved in local activities and Landcare groups.

FRCC submitted two project applications for funding through the Caring for our Country initiative. The "Engaged community groups..." project was one of 56 Landcare projects funded throughout the country, worth \$26 M in total. Over 1300 projects were submitted for funding and FRCC were very fortunate to receive funding to support a few of our local community groups in this way. FRCC cares for our local community groups and will continue to seek out opportunities for new projects in partnership with group members of the organisation.

Weed Free

"We want a River, not a drain" was a clear message from the FRCC Member's forum in October 2008. Another message from the forum was that our member's desired a "Weed Free" Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments. In response FRCC has over the past few months coordinated a number of capacity building activities focused on practical, on-ground weed control and weeds management.

Weed Free

– Photo competition winners

Stefanie Carusi and Cameron Wearing

At our Member's forum in May 2009 FRCC formally recognised the services of recently retired committee member Ken Rutherford. It is perhaps not commonly known that Ken is an avid photographer and a great number of the images that FRCC uses in its publications were taken by him. In recognition FRCC announced a photo competition, the winners of which (3 prizes) were sponsored to attend the 10th Queensland Weeds Symposium at Rydges Resort 26 – 29 July. The 10th Queensland Weeds Symposium celebrated 20 years' worth of research and activity focussed on practical, on-ground weed control and weeds management. The winners of this competition were judged in June and below are a few lines on the winning entries:

Damien Fowler - Lantana

Damien Fowler is a pipeline operator for Jemena working out of Gladstone. Damien submitted photos to FRCC's competition depicting an area of controlled Lantana (*Lantana camara*) that was growing on a gas pipeline easement. The easement is located on the Eastern side of Calliope Range next to the Wyalla tree farm.

Damien targeted the Lantana with Roundup Powermax at a ratio of 9:1 (9 litres of Roundup to 1 litre of water) and used a splatter gun with a 5 litre backpack to apply it.

Damien said 'we chose the splatter gun method after attending an FRCC Lantana field day last year and were impressed with the results and ease of use in this method'.

He also said that 'another reason for choosing this method is that the terrain the lantana is growing in is quite rough and 4WD access is very limited'.

Cliff Bunn – Paramatta Grass

Cliff Bunn is a passionate volunteer working with Seaspray and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to rehabilitate Cocoonut Point National Park. Cocoonut Point National Park is 61 Ha of coastal land located on the Capricorn Coast which in 2006 was gifted by Seaspray Developments to the people of Queensland to be gazetted and managed as National Park.

For his entry Cliff submitted photos depicting the control of Parramatta grass (*Sporobolus fertilis*) which was part of the wider rehabilitation activities. Treatment involved slashing, mowing, and follow-up spot spraying.

In his work Cliff places great emphasis on 'working with nature: at nature's speed following nature's lead'.

Richard Lunney - Hymenachne

Richard Lunney is the District Forester for Integrated Tree Cropping (ITC) and lives on "Greenlakes", a plantation property north east of the caves township.

Richard sent in a photo showing how he used Bioactive Glyphosate to control Hymenachne (*Hymenachne amplexicaulis*) on Greenlake and other areas of the property. Richard used a quick spray unit supplied by RRC and placed it in a flat bottom boat usually used by a neighbouring dairy to ferry milk out to suppliers when the Alligator Creek is in flood. With the quick spray unit in a boat Richard could access the Hymenachne on both sides of the lake at the same time better than if he had to spray the whole lake from the banks.

He said 'it gave him a more practical and viable way of spraying Hymenachne and allowed the chemical better reach and coverage on the weed.'

It proved a success with Richard receiving a good kill out of his efforts.

Weed Free - 10th Queensland Weeds Symposium

The 10th Queensland Weeds Symposium celebrated 20 years' worth of research and activity focused on practical, on-ground weed control and weeds management. As part of the Symposium activities three field tours were held in different areas for people to go and have a firsthand look at weed affected areas/properties and hear from the people on the ground working to control and better manage them.

FRCC sponsored all three tours and in addition attended one of the tours entitled "coastal plains and management of exotic grasses".

The tour group was taken to two properties at Rossmoya, "Greenlakes" and "Canal Creek". Both these properties have had recent and ongoing experiences with weeds and both can boast success with weed management and control.

"Greenlakes" is a hardwood plantation property containing wetlands that uses controlled grazing regimes and chemical application to manage weed problems predominantly Hymenachne. The visit focused on the relationship between farm forestry, grazing management and weeds.

"Canal Creek" is a cattle grazing property with sections infested with Giant Rats Tail grass (GRT) The owner of 'Canal Creek' has had success with GRT control through using a range of innovative control methods such as fencing to redirect wildlife around infested areas, ongoing patrols and spot spraying along water courses and tracks as well as the establishment of competitive pastures.

This was a good opportunity to hear about first hand experiences both success and failures from a property owner who had been fighting GRT for many years. It was also of great value to have Steven Bray (DEEDI) on hand while visiting 'Canal Creek'. Steven has dedicated much of his time to the study of GRT and its treatment. Steven spoke about his findings over the years and answered many questions from interested attendees.

Weed Free - Lantana/Badhara field days

Lisa Sutton

Lantana is a menace in many parts of the FRCC area. It is a class 3 declared pest plant in Queensland and is recognized as a *Weed of National Significance* due to its detrimental effect on biodiversity and primary production, particularly its toxicity to livestock.

To assist land managers with its control FRCC, together with Biosecurity Queensland (Formerly DPI) Rockhampton Regional Council, Capricorn Pest Management Group and the National Lantana Management Group ran Lantana control workshops at the Caves and Cawarral.

The first was hosted by David and Gail McCartney with neighbour Jim Besley on Milman Road, Milman Wednesday 8th July. The second was on Thursday 9 July Veterans Bush Camp 124 Camms Road Cawarral, this also covered control of Badhara Bush, a Class 1 declared pest plant in Queensland.

Both workshops included presentations on: good pasture management; Lantana poisoning in cattle; control with fire; weed hygiene; chemical control including basal barking, use of quick spray unit and splatter guns; biological control and a demonstration of mechanical control by Peter and Brendan Hinchcliffe of "alternate woody weed control".

The Caves Landcare, with assistance from FRCC, Rockhampton Regional Council and Dow Agro conducted a Weed Control Workshop Saturday 25 July at the Lions Club Hall Barmoya Road the Caves. This workshop investigated the most appropriate chemicals and application equipment available for control local pest plants including lantana. Practical control was demonstrated by Glenn McIntyre from Rockhampton Regional Council, and Peter Hinchcliffe at Sally and Terry Etherdens' property on Fourteen Mile Road, the Caves.

Weed Free - Weed Busters Week

Stefanie Carusi

September 7 – 13 was officially Weed Busters Week across the nation. Weed Busters Week is a community awareness program designed to get people looking at what pest plants may be growing in their area and what they can do to better recognize and control pest species.

The Fitzroy Basin and Coastal Catchments have attracted weeds that have adapted and thrived on the local climate and conditions. With the Fitzroy River having many tributaries, water weeds are a topic many people are familiar with. Some of the most commonly known water weeds in the area are: Water Lettuce; Hymenachne; Water Hyacinth; and Salvinia (common names only). There is information available on the identification and control of these plants on a number of web sites including Queensland Government's Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM): www.derm.qld.gov.au

The Fitzroy boasts as being the beef capital of Australia and as many landholders have found they are not left out when it comes to pest species, apart from pest animal species such as pigs and dogs having an impact on Grazing lands and their profitability, pest plants put at risk the sustainability of some lands. A few of the most known well known of these introduced plants are: Parkinsonia; Giant Rats Tail Grass; and Lantana.

For Weed Busters Week FRCC partnered with RRC and Capricorn Coast Landcare on three information displays which were located at Yeppoon's Keppel Bay Plaza, and Rockhampton's Allenstown Plaza and Northside Plaza. The displays included information and activities for the public to come along and learn about weeds occurring in their area as well as how to control them. In addition the public were invited to bring along a plant they did not recognize to one of these stalls to be identified by one of the experienced RRC Pest Management Control Officer's or Landcare representatives.

In return the public received a free native plant alternative to put in their garden. The plants given away during weedbusters week were all grown at the RRC nursery at Yeppoon and were all endemic to the area. There are many attractive and low maintenance native alternatives to planting exotic plant species that may have the potential of becoming a weed.

If anyone would like more information on how they can identify or control a weed problem on their land they should contact their local Council and ask for information and assistance.

Protecting land and water for future generations – FRCC visits Stanwell State School

Janeen Whiting

On Tuesday, 4 August 2009 I had the privilege to go with Shane Westley and Jody McDonald of Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) to visit the Stanwell State School. FBA brought to the school the catchment trailer which houses a 3D display of the Fitzroy Basin. We were greeted with a warm welcome from the students and teachers. Shane spoke about the Fitzroy Basin, how big it is, naming the rivers in the Basin and how when we experience heavy rain in the Basin where the flood waters eventually ends up. A great visual hands on display was a model of a hill slope in which Shane asked three children to assist with the demonstration. The children had to place dirt on the model and then place over the dirt a towel and this represented ground cover and trees. The other children assisted by pouring water on the hill slope showing them what the rain does when you have good ground cover and what happens when you don't. He explained that both the Fitzroy Basin Association and Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc. are groups who are helping landholders look after their land and creeks. The children responded back with some very clever questions and were given prizes for answering our questions. We were presented with a thank you gift for taking the time in our busy work schedule to speak to the children. Although we may not see the fruits of our work now it is vital in getting that information out there to these children who when they grow up will be our future guardians for the environment.

Funding opportunities

Sandra Grinter

As part of FRCC's day to day activities, we review grants for community groups as they become available. As part of this we envisage that FRCC will be able to post new funding opportunities that may be relevant to Landcare and other community groups on the FRCC website. The current summary of some relevant funding and other useful resources that are available is on the FRCC website under News and Events, then click on "Funding" or view the information directly at the address: <http://www.frcc.org.au/latest-news/funding-opportunities-and-resources/>.

What's available during October?

Community Action Grants 2009-10

Grants from \$5,000 to \$20,000 are available to help local community groups take action to conserve and protect their natural environment. Applications close at 5pm (Australian Eastern Daylight Savings Time) on Thursday 22 October 2009. For guidelines and more information about applying online visit www.nrm.gov.au or call the Caring for our Country hotline on 1800 552 008.

Jupiter's Casino Community Benefit Fund and the **Gambling Community Benefit Fund** are open to applications for granted from eligible groups in the FRCC area. Further information on both programs is available from <http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/grant>