

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • January 2010

President's Report

Michelle Hanrahan

Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc. (FRCC) would like to thank you for your involvement and interest throughout 2009 and we trust that, with your support, we shall continue the good work in 2010.

The busy year was capped off by our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on November 27th and it was great to see so many there. The AGM began with an informative and inspiring talk by Bill Burrows on "vegetation management - some insights from 40 years of research into Queensland's woodlands." If you would like a copy of Bill Burrow's presentation it can be found on our website at: www.frcc.org.au/publications/#Presentations. Following Bill's presentation the meeting got down to business and four elected committee members and the three special members stood down and four new elected members were announced. In a meeting directly following the AGM the office bearers were decided as were the three special membership positions. Special members are invited to join the committee where they bring skills and representation which might not otherwise be available. Members of the 2010 FRCC Management Committee are listed below:

Michelle Hanrahan, President
- *Continuing elected member*

Paul Birch, Vice-President
- *Continuing elected member*

Peter Baggett, Secretary
- *Continuing elected member*

Leise Childs, Treasurer - *Elected member*

IanDare - *Continuing elected member*

Ian Groves - *Elected member*

Rob McArthur - *Elected member*

Jeff Mills - *Elected member*

Donald Black - *Special Member*

Malcolm Mann - *Special Member*

John Wall - *Special Member*

John Wall will be joining the Management Committee for the first time. Many have probably met John at one of FRCC's field days or members forums but for those who haven't this newsletter includes a short introduction.

their local Council and ask for information and assistance.

Executive Officers Report

Cameron Wearing

In August FRCC launched its "6 BestThings – help protect our river" campaign a response to our members desire "we want a river, not a drain". We are now half way through the campaign and it is timely to reflect on what has been achieved.

The first "best thing" FRCC identified was to get involved, to make the time to participate in local events and get to know the local landcare and environmental groups. To kick things off in September staff and committee attended the Q150 Wycarbah Catfish derby at Hanrahan Crossing on the Fitzroy River. This day of family fun, organised by Wycarbah Landcare and supported by FRCC (amongst a long list of others) involved free food, kite flying, rock painting, a mini auction, and the chance to catch a fish or two. It was a great opportunity to meet like minded people in a relaxed setting.

Then in October FRCC held a member's forum which was an opportunity for members to come together and discuss how the region might develop over the next 10 years and determine how we might ensure that development is sustainable... socially, environmentally, and economically. As a discussion starter we were fortunate to have Mark Stoneman chairman of the NQ Dry Tropics speak on the recently introduced Reef regulations, the likelihood of these regulations being transferred to the Fitzroy Basin, and what he saw as future challenges for agriculture. A summary of the member forum outcomes is provided in this newsletter and if you would like to obtain a copy of Mark's presentation it can be found on our website at: www.frcc.org.au/

publications/#Presentations.

The second “best thing” identified was to recognise best practice. This is about seeking out the latest knowledge, learning from others as well as offering praise and encouragement to landholders at the forefront of best practice. To do this at our Annual General Meeting we recognised those projects from the previous financial year which stood out for their contribution to looking after our land and water for future generations. The winners were:

Ralph and Lorainne Bartlem and James and Joanne Cullen, *Grazing – Coastal Catchments*

Richard and Victoria Moffatt, *Grazing – Fitzroy*

James and Kylie Skuthorp, *Horticulture*

Read our article on page 4 to find out more about the winners.

The third “best thing” identified was watch your drain, that is 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. To coincide with our third best thing we are giving away a free fridge magnet as a small reminder when you are in the home, that we all have a role to play.

While the “6 Best Things” campaign has been in full swing FRCC has continued to develop on-ground projects and run a number of workshops in conjunction with our Reef Rescue partners Agforce. These include GPS and computer mapping workshops delivered by Agforward in Marlborough and St Lawrence and a forestry field day with Agforests at The Caves. Details of which are provided in this newsletter. Overall, 2009 has been a busy and rewarding year and we look forward to seeing you in 2010.

Wycarbah Catfish Derby

Janeen Whiting

On Saturday, 26 September the Wycarbah & District Landcare Group held the Catfish Derby at Emu Creek/Hanrahan Crossing on the Fitzroy River. This event coincided with celebrating Q150 and was sponsored by many organizations. On the day 150 people attended.

Besides catching a catfish or two, activities organized for the children included rock painting, kite flying and a water bug activity. There were displays from FRCC and the Society for Growing Australian Plants.

Hats off to the men who prepared a great BBQ lunch.

Everyone was presented with a goodies bag from the sponsors and a special birthday cake to celebrate Queensland's 150 years was cut after lunch. Catfish judging took place in the afternoon followed by a mini auction. At the end of the day when the catfish were lain head to tail they measured 50 metres in length. Comments from people on the day ranged from great food to a very relaxing day fishing and catching up with friends.

FRCC Member's Forum

Cameron Wearing

FRCC was delighted to host a member's forum on Friday, 16 October at the Brother's Leagues Club. The purpose of the night was to discuss how the region might develop over the next 10 years and determine how we might ensure that development is sustainable... socially, environmentally, and economically. The forum coincided with the announcement of the “Reef Bill” and continued uncertainty regarding the vegetation clearing moratorium which had everyone talking.

Cameron Wearing, FRCC's Executive Officer began the night by giving an update on activities since the last gathering and following that Paul Birch, FRCC Vice-President introduced the night's guest speaker, Mark Stoneman, Chairman of the NQ Dry Tropics. Mark's presentation was titled “Reef 'Regulation' and the Fitzroy Basin – Facts and a suggested way forward”. Mark began his presentation by explaining the legislative process behind Acts and Regulations. He did this so that FRCC members would understand what might be involved in transferring the “Reef Bill” from the affected catchments to the Fitzroy Basin.

The “Reef Bill” is actually an amendment of the EPA Act 1996. It defines the affected areas which are 1) Terrain (Wet Tropics), 2) NQ Dry Tropics and 3) Reef Catchments (Mackay-Whitsunday). It prescribes the focus industries of sugar cane and cattle grazing. It details priority objectives and allows for the identification of “hot spots”.

Based upon the legislative process he outlined earlier Mark concluded that inclusion of the Fitzroy Basin would require an amendment of the Act. The Government had limited resources/expertise to implement the existing Reef Bill and amendment would create problems including the requirement for a plausible reason for the original exclusion. Proof or otherwise of the effectiveness of regulations and also the need to demonstrate ‘take-up’ and economic benefits. Therefore, he concluded the “Reef Bill” would not be extended to the Fitzroy Basin.

In the second half of his talk Mark identified some immediate challenges for agriculture those were: 1) the urban disconnect with rural Australia, 2) an emotive and narrow media focus and 3) ‘green’ political impacts. To counteract these he suggested three steps forward: 1) communication, 2) innovation and 3) demonstration. Mark highlighted that the critical element in all

of this was to keep an open mind.

The three forum questions directly followed Mark's presentation. The three questions were:

1. What will the natural resources of the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments look like in the year 2019.
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?

Following is a summary of discussions from each of the above questions on the night.

Question 1

The response to question 1 can be divided into two areas. First, the pressures and impacts on the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments and secondly, what the FRCC would look like if it can do its job well. The pressures and impacts identified included increasing areas of public land and the associated weed/pest and fire issues if there is no management. Others listed included rural communities being replaced by an increasingly urban population. Greater restrictions being placed on grazing and the subsequent costs incurred. An ever increasing area of land being mined. FRCC members also felt there would be increasing competition for water not just from our region but Gladstone as well and recognized that "natural resources would be depleted under current growth policies."

If FRCC can do its job well members hoped that in 2019 we would have monitoring systems that everyone could understand. Increased farm productivity combined with grass covered banks, shady trees and healthy cattle. A close relationship between FRCC and Rockhampton Regional Council which would lead to an increasing urban awareness. A greater body of knowledge based on both science and experience and very importantly...

that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past year.

Question 2

When it came to the question of what influences will shape the management of our natural resources, FRCC members first identified the profitability of stakeholders and the time they have available. The profitability, they recognized, would be influenced by factors they could control, as well as those they couldn't such as global markets and selling price. Members also linked with Mark Stoneman's presentation and identified the ageing demographic and urban/rural divide as an issue. In relation to the urban/rural divide they recognized it might lead to increased government rules and regulations.

The climate changing to be hotter and dryer with more extreme weather event was mentioned as was increased competition between land uses – urban, horticulture, national parks, agriculture and mining. Technology in particular satellite imagery also received a mention.

Members also believed that community support through participation in groups such as Landcare, FRCC, and FBA would shape the management of our natural resources.

Question 3

When asked about what services and support FRCC could provide the concept of FRCC being a vehicle for leading technology exchange and education programs was raised. This would be combined with practical support that uses friendly language.

Assistance with business management was identified as well as the idea of moving from a funding program to tax relief for business management programs. At the same time members identified the need to continue to proactively seek funding for projects.

Communicating with Government and mediating between the rural and urban populations were identified as an important service FRCC could provide.

FRCC members identified the need for networking to facilitate information sharing and the role that forums play in this process.

Best Projects 2008/09 Awards

Sandra Grinter

Three outstanding on-ground projects were recognised by the 'Best Projects 2008/09 Awards' presented at the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc (FRCC) Annual General Meeting in November.

Nominees were judged on their planning, commitment to looking after the land, contribution to the project and its outcomes. The awards celebrate the outstanding efforts of landholders in the Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments who have improved land condition, protected sensitive areas and reduced erosion and run-off into local waterways.

James Skuthorp of 'Pinearama' won the Horticulture award for adopting an innovative chemigation and fertigation system on his pineapple farm located 10km north-west of Yeppoon.

A project on 'Muldoon' at Glenroy operated by Richard and Victoria Moffatt won the Grazing – Fitzroy Basin award. The Moffatt's project involved fencing to separate parts of the property to enable better control of stock movement and spelling

of overgrazed and sensitive areas including riverbanks, thus reducing erosion and run-off of sediment into waterways.

The Grazing – Coastal Catchments award went to a project to fence natural coastal wetland and mangrove country on 'Fernleigh' at Stanage Bay, which is a family partnership between Ralph and Lorraine Bartlem, and James and Joanne Cullen. The proactive and collaborative approach of two generations working together to develop the project impressed the Management Committee, as well as the dual production and environmental outcomes achieved through improved control of stock access to the property's tidal and riparian areas.

The Best Project 2008/09 Awards were created to recognise the efforts of local farmers and graziers striving to achieve best practice in land management. As part of the 'Six Best Things' campaign, FRCC is promoting the fact that one of the best things you can do to help protect the Fitzroy River is recognise best practice. Recognising best practice is key to encouraging greater adoption of sustainable farming techniques, as well as giving a much-deserved pat on the back to people already doing the right thing.

GPS Workshops

Stefanie Carusi

AgForce with support from FRCC held two successful GPS workshops in early November to help landholders in the Marlborough and St. Lawrence areas better understand how to use a GPS and what they can be used for.

The experienced presenters explained how a GPS works in conjunction with different satellites and global datum's, which GPS is better suited to a specific application and how to correctly read and interpret a GPS along with practical exercises including marking in and naming waypoints, tracks and using the 'go to' function on a GPS.

Participants were given a great information and instruction book to help them follow throughout the day.

The workshops were a great success with around 17 people attending the two workshops. Due to the interest of the participants a computer mapping workshop was arranged in Marlborough to follow on the process of using the GPS data to create useful property maps and show landholders the potential of having both GPS and Computer mapping skills on hand.

AgForests Field Day

Stefanie Carusi

On Wednesday the 9th of December the DeCosta family opened up their property at the Caves north of Rockhampton to around 30 people and AgForests to hold an information filled day for landholders interested in the selling and thinning of native timber on freehold land.

AgForests presenter Sam Ellis started the day with the basics of vegetation mapping restrictions such as what coloured areas mean on a PMAV and what rights a landholder has if they believe a PMAV to be incorrect. Sam also mentioned the possible implications of not having a locked in PMAV on a property and explained that the process of obtaining one is very simple.

Participants were taught about the code applying to native forest practice on freehold land. This runs through all stages of forest practices from who needs to be notified of an intention to conduct a native forest practice, to how to determine a defining bank on a waterway and what documenting evidence needs to be kept on property practices.

It was widely agreed that anyone selling timber on their land should have a signed agreement with the purchaser and should stipulate start and finish dates if the timber is to be cut off a property. Sam encouraged participants to know their forest product values and potential market values to avoid being short changes on the sale of the product.

Then it came time to get practical and Sam showed everyone how to correctly girth a tree and how to use the girth/bark and length dimensions of a trunk to determine the potential volume of a product such as a saw log.

Participants were also asked to help classify a waterway and determine what length buffer and filter zone should be used.

The workshop included a Tordon demonstration as well as useful tips for thinning of timber for future yield and production.

Everyone who attended the day was given an information pack containing a copy of the code, a log volume table's book as well as lots of other information of timber markets, roads and drainage and optimal basal area per hectare.

After popular demand gracious hosts Gayle and Fred DeCosta gave a working demonstration of their biggest saw mill that can hold up to a 6.3m log. This was a highlight for some of the bigger kids in the group.

The day received a lot of positive feedback from participants and we thank everyone who came along.

If you would like to know more about anything that was covered on the day contact Sam Ellis from AgForests on 0427694771.

End of Dry Season Photo Monitoring

Lisa Sutton

The dry season has hung on much too long this year. We hope you all get some good rain over Christmas. The end of the dry season and the end of the wet season is when photos should be taken by land holders or managers doing projects with FRCC.

Photo point monitoring enables you to document your success as a result of land management changes. Well maintained photo monitoring records are useful for: future land managers (through family succession or property sale); financial institutions; potential funding bodies; negotiating lease agreements and property sales. Long term records demonstrate the resilience of a well managed grazing ecosystem, which has improved productivity and the value of your property.

When monitoring points are set up by FRCC project officers you will be given monitoring folders. These contain data cards for each photo, please use these to make note of seasonal variations as well as management changes that has affected pasture growth.

Reminder letters are sent out at the end of the dry season and end of wet season after photo monitoring points have been established. After you have taken your photos please send a copy via email (info@frcc.org.au) or post (PO Box 288 Rockhampton Q 4700). We are interested to see your results and keep them on file for monitoring the on-ground success at the property and catchment scale of the Neighbourhood Catchment Incentive Scheme. If you have any questions about photo point monitoring please contact Lisa Sutton at the FRCC office.

VLMA

John Rodgers

Earlier this year FBA introduced a pilot scheme to help landholders improve ground cover on their properties so improving sustainability and reducing the flow of sediment to the Great Barrier Reef. You may have heard these referred to as "Groundcover Stewardships" This program has now matured to be known as "Voluntary Land Management Agreements" or VLMA's. Under this scheme graziers with "C" or "D" category portions of their property can be eligible for a range of assistance to improve the condition of the land. Every property is different and will benefit from a range of actions.

If you have country with some areas lacking good grass cover and would like to improve it, talk to one of our project officers who will come to your property and discuss the situation. The assistance ranges from fencing and water points, through ripping [dependant on soil type and slope], & seeding followed by wet season spelling and will be tailored to your conditions and aims. In some circumstances there can be a payment of up to 50% of the agistment rate when cattle have to be removed to allow wet season spelling.

Under a VLMA, payments are spread over 5 years with 20% after the contract is signed followed by 30% at the end of the first wet season. The remainder is spread as annual payments following the wet season.

The major component of this program is to match stocking rates to carrying capacity and so allow the country to produce to its optimum.

Feed budgeting is an integral part of this and the annual payments are dependent on measured improvement in ground cover. Levels to be attained are worked out through consultation with the landholder combining the type of country, condition of the pasture at the beginning and actions being undertaken to get the most sustainable combination. Historical data is also used when calculating sustainable targets to avoid unreasonable expectations.

Unfortunately we can't make it rain but we can help you get the most use of what does fall in the future!

Get involved: Join your Local Landcare Group

Sandra Grinter

FRCC are encouraging landholders to join their local landcare group to work together with other community members for sustainable land and water management. The five established groups in rural areas are:

- The Marlborough District Landcare Group that covers from St Lawrence to Marlborough and along the highway to Kunwarara including the areas draining into the Herbert and Styx rivers and Marlborough Creek.
- The Morinish Landcare Group that covers the localities of Morinish, Glenroy, Garnant and north to the Fitzroy River.
- The Raglan Catchment Working Group that covers the Raglan Catchment with support provided by Gladstone Regional Council.
- The Caves District Landcare Association Inc that covers the Caves area
- The Wycarbah and District Landcare Group that covers Wycarbah, Kalapa, Westwood, Gogango, extending east to

Gracemere and south to Bouldercombe and includes properties along both sides of the highway and both sides of the Fitzroy River.

Coastal residents and landholders can join the Capricorn Coast Landcare Group based in Yeppoon, who run the Envirolink Centre to provide education and information to the community on catchment and land management and other environmental issues and run Junior Landcare activities with local schools.

The Livingstone Remnant Vegetation Study Group work on remnant vegetation projects and weed control and promote the growing of local plants in public spaces and gardens. There is also the Emu Park Community Bush Care group who have completed a project weeding and mulching beach scrub at Fisherman's Beach in Emu Park.

Environmental groups that you might like to join include Capricorn Conservation Council which is the peak environmental group for the Central Queensland Region or The Rocky Creek Group who work on the Rockhampton Urban Waterways Initiative together with Greening Australia, government agencies, local business and industry to engage and educate the local community and inspire involvement in on-ground restoration works.

If there is not already a group in your area, you could always form your own. A "new group starter kit" is available from the Landcare Australia website at <http://www.landcareonline.com.au/>

FRCC are supporting local Landcare groups through a project funded by Caring for our Country. "**Get involved**" (by making time to participate in local events and getting to know local landcare and environmental groups) is also the first of FRCC's "6 Best Things" campaign to help protect our river.

Introducing John Wall

John Wall is the Coordinator for Raglan Creek Catchment Working Group and works closely with the Gladstone Regional Council Coordinator – Rural Lands Protection to coordinate and manage group activities.

John is a cattle and grain producer and understands the value of new innovative ideas to develop sustainable farming and grazing methods. As a hands-on manager and producer he has been an advisor to farmers and land managers on issues such as climate change adaptation to crop and animal production, water and nutrient efficiency, waste and salinity management. He has almost 40 years experience as stockman manager/farmer and understands the controls of self discipline needed for sustainability in land managers to identify opportunities, utilise, plan, trade better and boost income to take tough conditions.

Computer Mapping Workshop

Alf Collins Jnr says the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Reef Rescue program is improving his property's river frontage and boosting productivity.

For his family's Marlborough property 'Belah Valley', Mr Collins has received a substantial Reef Rescue grant administered by Fitzroy River & Coastal Catchments to fence to land types and add new stock watering points.

Mr Collins was one of 16 primary producers to attend a property computer mapping workshop at Marlborough on 17 December 2009.

At the workshop, delivered by AgForce Projects with support from Fitzroy River & Coastal Catchments through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Reef Rescue program, Mr Collins said the technology will assist with budgeting and providing quality maps to staff.

"We will be able to work out the areas we plough and budget for diesel and grass seed, plus the distances of fence lines and a whole lot more," he said.

AgForce Projects Reef Rescue project officer Natalie Schick and Fitzroy River & Coastal Catchments project officer Lisa Sutton said it's great innovative producers like the Collins family are on board with Reef Rescue.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

Sandra Grinter

Check the FRCC website under *News & Events* then *Funding* (<http://www.frcc.org.au/latest-news/funding-opportunities-and-resources/>) for the latest information on funding opportunities and resources that may be relevant to community groups. We will endeavour to update this information as we hear of new opportunities.

The **Gambling Community Benefit Fund** and the **Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund** are ongoing programs which fund applications submitted by community groups. Applications can now be submitted on-line. Both funds are administered by the Queensland Government Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing. The link to the webpage for both of the grants is: <http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/grants/index.shtml>.

The closing date for applications for both funds is 28 February 2010.

The **Rockhampton Regional Council**, under the Community Assistance Program, is currently accepting applications for the **Community Grants Scheme** and the Corporate Sponsorship Scheme. Visit the RRC website to find the information under *Your Community*, then *Grants and Sponsorship* or the link to the webpage is: http://www.rockhamptonregion.qld.gov.au/common/Pages/Display/article_all_view.aspx?id=233

Applications for the current round for both programs need to be submitted by Monday 25 January 2010 at 4pm.