

# Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

NEWSLETTER • July 2010

## President's Report

**Michelle Hanrahan**

Welcome to the June edition of our newsletter. In it you will find out more about FRCC's activities since last we wrote. As we look back on the financial year one thing that strikes is the considerable investment that FRCC has made into building the capacity of the region to manage our natural resources. A central component of this capacity building was the activities undertaken as part of our "6 best things – help protect the river campaign" a summary of which is provided in the EO report. At the same time as FRCC was running this campaign we continued to run highly sought after workshops, and events designed to provide information, education, and inspiration for our members and the general public. In all over 1000 people have taken part in these workshops and events over the past financial year which is a fantastic achievement. Congratulations.

## Executive Officers Report

**Cameron Wearing**

In August last year FRCC launched its "6 best things – help protect our river" campaign a response to our member's desire "we want a river, not a drain".

The six best things are:

- 1. Get involved**
- 2. Recognize best practice**
- 3. Watch your drain**
- 4. Keep it clean**
- 5. Care for your catchment**
- 6. Keep your ground covered**

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 members 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 was provided in our January newsletter and if you would like to obtain a copy of Mark's presentation it can be found on our website.

**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*

**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 gave away fridge magnets as a small reminder when you are in the home.

Next came “Keep it Clean”, **the fourth “best thing”** and we saw many examples of individuals across the catchment taking part in “Clean Up Australia Day” activities. Notably this year Yeppoon Beach was named Queensland's cleanest beach and we congratulate Rockhampton Regional Council and the work of local community groups in this success. For its part FRCC has worked closely with Fitzroy Basin Association, Rockhampton Regional Council and the coastal community groups to develop a large scale project proposal to support their award winning efforts which was submitted to the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program on 15th April.

**The fifth “best thing”** was to care for your catchment. FRCC's Management Committee members are local landholders dedicated to caring for their catchment and they met at the first FRCC meeting for 2010 on the 5th March. The committee members are elected by their peers to give the local community a voice in catchment management. The first meeting included presentations on governance, funding opportunities, and the current situation with regards to mine discharges to the river systems. They also considered funding applications for local on-ground projects with a combined value approaching \$125,000. FRCC's committee represents a wide range of interests including industry, Landcare, finance, grazing, conservation, horticulture, indigenous, and local government. Some of our committee members have been with FRCC since its inception in 2002 and others have joined more recently – but what they all have in common is genuine concern for our region.

And finally **the sixth “best thing”** is to keep your ground covered. To deliver on this on 16th March we held a Stocktake workshop in association with staff of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) and Fitzroy Basin Association Inc (FBA). Landholders from different enterprises attended the event to learn more about determining the right carrying capacity for their properties. Most of whom have recently begun a ground cover stewardship with FRCC, where they have agreed to improve ground cover on a parcel of land over time. Adequate ground cover, especially at the end of the dry season, is essential for maintaining land condition which helps avoid erosion and run-off into waterways. The workshop was offered specifically to support landholders to achieve the goal of good ground cover, by providing expert advice on pastures, the ABCD land condition scale, and how to work out stocking rates.

Thank you to everyone who participated in and made our “6 best things – help protect our river” campaign a great success.

## Member's Forum

### Cameron Wearing

It was a great pleasure to host a community forum on 7 May 2010 at the Kershaw House. The forum was an opportunity to discuss local challenges and solutions for sustainable production and conservation. To inspire everyone that local action and determination can make a difference we were fortunate to have with us special guest speakers Glenda from the *Save the Mary River coordinating group* and Arthur from *The Gympie Times* who talked about the community-driven 'Save the Mary River' campaign. A copy of Glenda and Arthur's presentation can be found on our website at: <http://www.frcc.org.au/publications/>

The forum was supported by Wycarbah and District Landcare, Morinish Landcare, Marlborough Landcare, The Caves and District Landcare, Raglan Catchment Working Group, and Capricorn Coast Landcare Group. It is made possible by funding support from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program.

Members of these groups were asked to respond to 3 questions:

7. What are your local challenges for sustainable production?
8. What are your local challenges for conservation?
9. How can they be overcome?

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

### Question 1

#### What are your local challenges for sustainable production?

- a. Leadership – downsizing of the importance of agriculture in society and the risk of centralisation of government in Brisbane while Beef is centralised in Central Queensland and that this may lead to increased restrictions to management and compliance costs. Closely impacting on this is the level of knowledge in government departments regarding land and vegetation.
- b. On-farm – soil / water / weeds and climate change. The profitability of enterprises and the factors that can't be controlled. Aging demographic and attracting young people to a career in agriculture. The appropriateness of farming techniques and on-going education.

- c. Infrastructure – man made infrastructure on an individual's private land has an impact and input into that planning is required.
- d. Land use competition – between agriculture / mining / urban uses. Mine water management and discharges. Also mining restoration requires a vision and articulation of community values.

### **Question 2**

#### **What are your local challenges for conservation?**

- a. Weeds / water quality / erosion linked to drought management and dramatic weather changes.
- b. Lack of commonality in legislation and contradictory conditions combined with incentives which are not well advertised or understood make conservation difficult... it can be easier
- c. Managing land use and land management practices.
- d. Road corridor vegetation management.
- e. Attitudes and priorities linked to education.
- f. An over reliance on modern technology & media (e.g. internet & computers) especially for youth which restricts capacity to 'get out there,' 'get hands and feet dirty' and experience what it is like to live on the land in rural areas.
- g. Financial limitations to implementing infrastructure to better manage a property.
- h. Communication from the research scientists down to the landholder in an understandable way (education / sharing of information).

### **Question 3**

#### **How can they be overcome?**

- a. Policy change through consultation.
- b. Changing public perception positive news stories and balanced reporting – dissemination of factual information – recognition of best practice.
- c. Established lines of communication.
- d. The need for leadership.
- e. Build the passion and education of landholders for sustainability.
- f. A continuation of funding and even increase for initiatives e.g. save the reef and grazing & farming initiatives.
- g. Formation and support for local groups.
- h. Conversations with government to develop plans for the future.
- i. Working with small landholders.

## **End of Wet Monitoring**

### **Lisa Sutton**

The grazing industry is under ever increasing pressure to demonstrate its environmental credentials in a positive way. The level of interest in undertaking FRCC projects to improve land condition is a good indication that environmental performance is of increasing importance in developing a successful grazing enterprise.

Photopoint monitoring is the simplest and quickest way of documenting how management changes such as fencing off water ways, fencing to land type, and providing off stream water points can make improvements to land condition. Monitoring sites can be established at any time, however at the conclusion of FRCC project infrastructure development field officers set them up at representative sites within project areas with star pickets. This is accompanied by a site description of land condition including soil condition, ground cover %, identifying 3P species, trees other vegetation including weeds present, the stocking rate, rainfall and any other events such as flooding or fire in the last 6 months. At the end of each dry season and wet season photos are taken again for comparison with the time of set up. These monitoring sites assist with feed budgeting and other important management decisions. If these records are maintained over a number of years they provide a clear record of how land condition can be improved through management changes.

The following photos were taken by the Bradford's of Killarney and show the variation in ground cover from the end of dry 2009 to end of wet 2010.

## **AgForward Computer Mapping**

### **Stefanie Carusi**

Throughout May two free property computer mapping workshops were held within the FRCC area, Wycarbah and Marlborough both hosted a one day workshop for over 15 participating landholders.

Through the AgForce partnership with AgData and FarmReady some participants were able to receive the phoenix mapping software as part of the workshop training materials.

As the interest and benefit of property computer mapping grows, more and more producers are taking the opportunity to learn new skills or to refine existing skills.

A number of workshop participants had either previously attended a computer mapping workshop, or had computer mapping programs at home and were keen to progress their skills and knowledge on the possibilities of the software.

It was also great to see a large number of producers who had no previous experience with computer mapping take this opportunity, and learn the benefits of how a property map can be individually created for an almost infinite number of purposes.

The helpful AgForce and AgData presenters showed all participants how to draw in fence lines, mark in water points, measure on ground distances and paddock sizes, map in landtype information, how to save and print property maps and how to link GPS for data up load and download.

All producers received their properties latest digital data and satellite imagery, including landsat and SPOT 5 imagery, regional ecosystem mapping showing remnant vegetation and regrowth vegetation maps showing regulated regrowth.

All participants agreed that Property computer mapping was a valuable tool in the management of their properties, and allowed them to better plan future infrastructure and assess the productivity of existing infrastructure.

FRCC continues to support Computer mapping workshops such as these and invites anyone wanting to know more about this topic to contact the FRCC office, or the Rockhampton AgForce office on 07 49276100.

## **RRC & FRCC Memorandum of Understanding**

Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) and FRCC have agreed to work together to deliver viable and sustainable land use in the region, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), established between the two parties. The purpose of the MoU is to formalize our collaborative relationship, to enable and encourage our executives and officers to explore new business models and projects that will add value and enhance the outcomes for RRC and FRCC. The MoU was endorsed by Council at the April 13th meeting.

## **Grazing Industry Information Day**

On the 18th of June at the Marlborough Hall 15 Landholders attended a multi topic day targeted at Graziers within the Fitzroy Basin area.

The workshop was run by AgForce in conjunction with AgForward and proudly supported by FRCC and FBA. The day was made possible through the Australian Governments Caring for our country Reef Rescue initiative.

The day started with Katrina Brennan from AgForce speaking about the essentials of vegetation management. Katrina spoke of the latest legislation affecting the clearing of native vegetation on both free hold and lease hold land, the relevance of obtaining a Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) for a property, and also what benefits and restrictions are placed on a landholder as a result of having or not having a locked in PMAV. Some participants were surprised to learn of the various government applications needed to undertake on ground works such as clearing of fire breaks and basic weed control in areas marked as pink or endangered regrowth on a PMAV. There was lots of interesting and productive discussion on the interpretation and relevance of regrowth mapping.

Katrina also spoke about exemptions to native vegetation clearing and this lead in nicely to the presentation by Sam Ellis from AgForests speaking about the exemptions a permit for native Forest Practice has on a property.

Sam spoke of the sometimes forgotten value of native forest on free hold land and discussed the best practice management methods landholders can use to ensure they get long term benefits out of this natural resource.

Sam stressed the importance of submitting a notice of forest practice form to DERM by letting people know this allows them to conduct forest practices under the code of practice for Native Forest harvesting on Free Hold Land through a self assessment agreement.

Sam also reassured landholders the recent letters from DERM in the post informing them of an audit of their forest

practices was nothing to worry about and merely a manner in which DERM can assess how well and successful the self assessment process is running on ground. Sam also reminded people that they would receive an individual report from DERM as a result of their participation in the audit.

Steven Bray from DEEDI spoke about Balancing Carbon and the Grazing Industry, the audience was treated to a comprehensive yet understandable presentation on the Carbon cycle, Methane emissions, National and QLD emissions, the net Carbon position of the QLD beef industry, Grazing verses destock and also results from a soil carbon study, Steven himself was surprised at the results from this report, that showed little or no difference in soil carbon content between good and poor condition soils surveyed during the study.

After lunch the Fitzroy Basin Associations (FBA) Healthy Waterways Manager, Nathan Johnston presented findings from FBA's healthy waterways program and focused on one of the sample sites in the nearby Styx River.

He explained that compared to some of the other sample sites within the Fitzroy Basin that the Styx River looks to be fairing well in terms of water quality and was able to show a pattern in sediment levels and flood events.

Nathan explained that the tidal influenced waterways such as the Styx River have very different sodium levels than inland waterways for obvious reasons however the sodium level in those inland waterways is a bigger indicator of land/soil degradation due to the fact that these waterways naturally should have a very low salt content compared to tidal waterways.

The healthy waterways program and the results found over time from all the sample sites across the basin provide a monitoring tool not only for the individual water bodies but for the overall success and outcomes of the incentive funding FBA helps develop and implement.

Attendees on the day were also presented a summary of all incentives available through FRCC by staff John Rodgers and Stefanie Carusi.

John explained the Guidelines, targets and structure of Voluntary Land Management Agreements (VLMA's) and showed photos of land in various conditions to demonstrate possible candidates for the funding. Stefanie explained all other incentives available and a summary of in funding figures and the overall Neighbourhood Catchment incentive scheme process from start to finish.

FRCC thanks all the attendees for coming along to the Grazing Information day and also AgForce for the opportunity to support and participate in the day.

## **Australian Government visit to Mamelon and Apis Creek**

### **John Rodgers**

On the 10th & 11th June Central Queensland was visited by Peter Cotsell and Mikaela Griffith from the Australian Government Land and Coast Division. They are FBA's contact for Reef Rescue Funding so were interested to see the results obtained from that funding.

The first property visited was "Pinearama" which had won the FRCC "Best Projects Horticulture award" in 2009. James Skuthorpe showed the visitors the innovative chemigation and fertigation system on his pineapple farm 10km north-west from Yeppoon. FBA and FRCC staff were on hand to discuss any aspects of the program. All visitors were impressed by the quality and taste of the pineapples!

On the second morning FBA operations manager, Claire Rodgers drove the visitors to Apis Creek where Tim & Lynette Olive are undertaking land type fencing assisted by Reef Rescue funding. The Olive's are also undertaking a VLMA project and I took the opportunity to demonstrate some capabilities of the VegMachine program to Tim for the first time.

Pete and Mikaela appreciated the opportunity to see a landholder interact with the software and were able to discuss his reaction to the tool. They were also able to see some on-ground results from funding and gained a better understanding of a few of the land types producers are dealing with.

VegMachine is a very useful tool for planning management of bare or degraded country and examining the best options for remediation. It is also a useful tool for planning fencing to help avoid degradation. If you are interested in learning more about VegMachine please contact the FRCC office or 0428 123 060.

## Raglan Catchment Working Group RCS Workshop

### Janeen Whiting

Local landholders dedicated to reclaiming Raglan met at "The Old Station" for the first of two workshops being run by Mr David McLean of Resource Consulting Services (RCS) on behalf of Raglan Catchment Working Group and Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc.

Raglan Catchment Working Group Co-ordinator John Wall said the knowledge gained in this fascinating workshop will empower participants to increase the overall health, productivity and value of their land.

"I believe that this workshop will give land managers a whole new perspective on better land management. This, I believe will also encourage them to take on future projects, to improve their land management and maintain the desired outcomes. The principle is based on the proven adage of "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, however teach a man to fish and you will feed him for a lifetime," Mr Wall said.

"The workshop content included an ecological management model, soil health, biodiversity, energy flow, grazing, matching stocking rate to carrying capacity, planning, monitoring and managing the principles of sustainable land," he said.

John Wall said that the workshop had been suggested to him by Darryl Saw Co-ordinator for Rural Lands Protection with Gladstone Regional Council. Darryl had attended a similar workshop last year and found it to be extremely interesting, thought provoking and enlightening, which had caused him to become more aware and able to identify conditions affecting the sustainability of our land and natural resources.

## Funding Opportunities and Current Projects

### Sandra Grinter

#### Community Action Grants

Community Action Grants will provide grants of \$5000 to \$20 000 (GST exclusive) to support local community groups to protect and improve their natural environment.

More information about the 2010-11 round will be available on the website [www.nrm.gov.au](http://www.nrm.gov.au) (from Tuesday 6 July), where you will find the 2010-11 Community Action Grants *Applicant Guidelines, How to complete the Community Action Grants application* and the on-line registration and application form. If you are unable to access the website call 1800 552 008 to obtain any or all of these documents.

Enquiries may also be made at [communityactiongrants@nrm.gov.au](mailto:communityactiongrants@nrm.gov.au).

All applications must be submitted by 5pm EST Tuesday 31 August 2010.

#### Gambling Community Benefit Fund

The fund invests in the community sector, supporting the capacity of community organisations and groups to provide services, leisure activities and opportunities for Queenslanders in their local communities.

Applications close 31st August 2010.

Further information is available from <http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/grants/gcbf/index.shtml> or phone 1800 633 619

#### Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund

The fund assists community organisations to maintain properties and premises and acquire essential equipment to help in their service delivery.

Applications close 31st August 2010.

Further information is available from <http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/grants/JCCBF/index.shtml> or phone 1800 336 958

#### Current projects

FRCC have partnered with CQUniversity and Rockhampton Regional Council to develop three projects which have been submitted for consideration under FBA's Innovation Grants 2010.

The three projects are enhancing the biodiversity corridor for Frenchmans Creek, using thematic communication for specific messages (for climate change as an example) and profiling regional stakeholders using network analysis to optimise engagement and investment for NRM.

FRCC will continue to investigate other sources of funding for projects.

## **Tax System Supports Good Land Management**

Good land management is not just good for production and the environment – it can also save you on your taxes, according to Mike Bent from Source Fitzroy Ltd.

“Many landholders are currently overlooking the opportunity for incentives to improve their property within the tax system,” Mr Bent said. Local land managers can now obtain approved land management plans for taxation purposes, through Source Fitzroy and FRCC.

“Land type fencing is 100% deductible in the year of expenditure, but landholders need an approved land management plan to take advantage of these benefits,” he said. “It is also worth talking to your accountant before proceeding with a plan.”

The cost of obtaining an approved land management plan varied depending on whether an existing property plan was in place. “We can offer the greatest cost-effectiveness to landholders that already have a property action plan associated with an FBA project that includes land type fencing,” he said. “In other cases, the price to develop a plan varies from \$1500-\$2500 depending on the amount of ground work required to develop the plan.”

This service has been developed in response to a need identified by members at the forum held late last year to assist with tax relief for businesses.