

There's a lot happening in our backyard



Queensland's NRM

Rumble



If you fence it, they will eat it

Making cattle eat the right grass in the right place is a lot like forcing a child to eat their vegetables - it's difficult. When cattle find a more desirable grass species in a level, shady spot, they stick around.

This was the problem that faced Phil and Deborah Reid, the owners of Limestone, a cattle property located at the base of the Peak Downs Ranges near Emerald, with spectacular Open Downs and Mountain Coolibah Woodland country.

Reef Rescue funding helped the Reids make simple changes to their farm infrastructure that allow them to better control cattle movement to achieve more even grazing pressure and reduce erosion.

"The improvements mean we can spell country more frequently and manage land types to their capabilities, improving overall land condition and ground cover," Phil said.

Cattle naturally preferred to graze grass growing in the black soils of the flatter Open Downs country on Limestone, and would barely touch pasture growing in harder, hillier parts of the landscape.

The result was unevenly grazed paddocks with bare areas leading to erosion and sediment entering nearby Isaac River, while also providing the right conditions for parthenium weed to take hold.

Phil and Limestone's manager, Dave knew the answer was moving cattle from the black soils to encourage growth of native pastures but it wasn't until they discovered Reef Rescue incentives through Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) that the work seemed possible.

"The incentives made the process of doing the work in a shorter time frame much easier," Phil said.

In 2010 the Reids were funded to fence their waterway and improve the placement of water troughs to attract cattle to higher parts of the property, which dramatically improved ground cover.

"These waters, infrastructure and the combination of two great seasons has seen parthenium competitors explode - it has made the world of difference to these paddocks," Phil said.

In 2011 a project was completed on Limestone to construct 15km of land type fencing and 7 km of riparian fencing, again separating Open Downs country from Mountain Coolibah.

The fencing enabled paddocks to be rested more often which encouraged growth of pastures.

After many years of parthenium infestation the property is now host to a diverse range of native species.

"In the five years leading up to our first FBA project, we probably spent the same amount of money on spraying out



the parthenium as we've spent on recent infrastructure improvements," he said.

"I believe that although the health of the catchment is a big winner in all of this, through the funding landholders like me are also value-adding to our properties," he said.

More than 1 million hectares of land in Queensland is under improved management through Natural Resource Management groups across catchments flowing to the Great Barrier Reef.

With continued funding and support from the Australian and Queensland Governments for on ground projects, positive results like Phil and Deborah Reid have witnessed will continue to reduce the amount of sediment, nutrient and chemical entering local waterways and reaching the reef.



More than 1 million hectares is now under improved management thanks to Queensland's regional NRM groups and the Australian Government's Reef Rescue Program.

The wide reach of the O'Connell River



The O'Connell River drains one of the largest catchments in the Mackay Whitsunday region. It's in one of the 10 priority catchments under the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and has tidal influence of 83,358 hectares.

Flowing from Clarke Connors range to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon, the O'Connell River is a critical site for the Mackay Whitsunday community and for Reef Catchments, who are currently tracking migratory fish movement, installing engineered log jams and interviewing land managers on the river.

In August 2012 Reef Catchments coordinated fish tagging in the O'Connell River to determine how river flow, in-stream barriers and habitat quality affect the movement of fish between fresh water and salt water. Target species included jungle perch (*Kuhlia rupestris*), barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*), mangrove jack (*Lutjanus argentimaculatus*), sea mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), bullrout (*Notesthes robusta*) and tarpon (*Megalops cyprinoides*). Anglers have been asked to watch for the external dart tags.

To fight soil erosion which can harm fish and other organisms in the O'Connell River, Reef Catchments is currently working in partnership with the Australian Rivers Institute of Griffith University, Pioneer River Improvement Trust and a team of O'Connell River land managers to construct engineered log jams.

A demonstration reach was designed on a 300 hectare grazing property in one of the upper reaches of the O'Connell River. The reach will use engineered log jams to combat stream bank instability.

Four engineered log jam structures are scheduled for construction on a wide section of the river with a high unstable outside bank which presently takes the full shear force of the

river flow, causing soil erosion and sediment run-off. Over time, the structures will change the behaviour of the river, helping to re-align the channel to its recent path, while also creating pools and habitat to support the diversity of fish.

Constructing the log jams isn't light work. The four structures require around 200 logs each ranging from 8 to 10 metres in length. Half need intact root balls that help anchor the structures.

How do land managers value the O'Connell River? Reef Catchments has invited the 63 land managers that have property along the O'Connell River to participate in the *Collaborating Across Boundaries* project. It is an opportunity for land managers to have their say and provide input for prioritising future management actions.

The engineered log jams project is funded through Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Program as well as the Queensland Government with assistance from the Hail Creek Mine Community Development Fund. The migratory fish movement project is funded by Reef Catchments with in-kind contributions from Queensland and Australian Government departments.



Jimmy Fawcett and Dave Sternberg tag a jungle perch

Australia's 56 regional NRM groups have worked with their communities to improve more than 16,000 km of waterways and coastlines. This results in better water quality, healthier habitats and enhanced biodiversity.



Marlond Doyle and Samuel Dryden preparing compost

There's a lot happening in Gulf Kids' backyards

More than 100 students gathered in Croydon from across the Gulf to celebrate Gulf Kids Environment Day over winter. Northern Gulf Resource Management Group hosted the event which was themed around the Australian Year of the Farmer, as well as celebrating growing and cooking food at school and home.

Local producer Peter Kennedy from Alehvale Station opened the day with a speech about sustainable farming and what graziers on the Gulf Plains and Einasleigh Uplands are doing to manage their properties sustainably. This was followed by a working collie demonstration by Tom Mauloni, from Mena Creek.

Students from Croydon, Karumba, Normanton, Georgetown and surrounding properties participated in activities that reflected the measures local producers take to look after their local environment, including monitoring pasture and biodiversity, dealing with weeds, feral animals and erosion and looking at technology used such as solar power and GPS.

Across Australia, more than 70,000 school children have been engaged in natural resource management activities.

Another aspect of the day was exploring how to grow food sustainably at school, investigating worm farms, no-dig gardening, composting and permaculture design. In addition to this the older children cooked up a kitchen garden feast, while the younger kids made some delicious damper on the campfire.

The event was supported by Queensland Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Biosecurity Queensland, Education Queensland, Meat & Livestock Australia, Frontier Services and Savannah Regional Health Services. Connellan Airways Trust contributed to the travel costs for remote families attending the day.

Erica Blumson from Northern Gulf Resource Management Group said 'there has been a resurgence of food growing projects in our Gulf schools. Gulf Kids Environment Day has given students the opportunity to explore a range of ways of managing their backyards for a sustainable future, whether that is a small block in town, the school grounds or a 20,000 hectare cattle station!'

Spotting weeds in the Condamine catchment

Weeds cost Queensland an estimated \$600 million annually and have significant impacts on primary industries, natural ecosystems, and human and animal health.

In the Condamine catchment three Weeds of National Significance are a threat: Chilean needle grass, parthenium and blackberry. These along with other weeds are not only a threat to agriculture but some like parthenium, are noxious to animals and dangerous to people's health.

The community groups of the Condamine catchment are continuing to play their part in locating and identifying weeds in our region through the Weedspotters program, now in its second round. Their identification skills and reporting of infestations is contributing to the understanding of weed spread and consequent control in the catchment.

Training in identification and sample collection is the foundation for the Weedspotters program. This helps ensure the safety of participants and integrity of the reported data.

THE WEEDSPOTTERS MODEL

Condamine Alliance recognised that youth and community groups have two objectives in common – education and fundraising. Our weed projects have taken advantage of this concept by enlisting the help of local community groups such as scouts and Landcare groups to identify and appropriately report sightings of key weeds and new weed threats in the catchment. Groups not only learn about their local environment but their hard work also earns their group financial incentives to support their fundraising goals.

Program key achievements

- Surveyed approximately 500 hectares from Goombungee to Killarney for target weeds: parthenium, blackberry and Chilean needlegrass
- Discovered parthenium infestation and recorded 62 other weeds across all sites with lantana recorded at the most sites (18)
- Improved knowledge and skills of 14 groups, 94 people in total, to identify and report weeds
- Engaged and developed future natural resource management leaders with the majority of participants under the age of 15
- Reduced weed threat across a total of 490ha surveillance for outlier incursions of blackberry, Chilean needle grass and parthenium



Australia's 56 regional natural resource management groups have helped more than 200,000 people improve land management practice over 14 million hectares of land.

Luke Harrison spots parthenium.

5 Fishers Project – Improving the sustainability of the Commercial Trawl Fishing Industry

Following a detailed review of the Queensland East Coast Trawl fishery, the Queensland Seafood Industry Association has released a new Code of Conduct and an associated Environmental Management System (EMS) aimed at establishing a framework for responsible trawl fishing in the region.

The East Coast Trawl Fishers Code of Conduct and EMS sets out principles and standards of behaviour for responsible practices by licenced trawl fishers operating in the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery to effectively facilitate the safeguarding of the marine environment and sustainability of the trawl fishing industry.

The code provides a mechanism for fishers to document their existing practices in relation to issues such as by-catch reduction, catch quotas, vessel design and interaction with vulnerable species such as marine turtles and seeks to establish the EMS as a basis for creating standard procedures for trawl fishers.

Development of the Code and EMS is part of a larger "Five Fishers Project", supported by the Burnett Mary Regional Group and funded through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative. The project aims to improve commercial practices of fishers and to increase the uptake of Environmental

Management Systems among fishers via a targeted approach. To be run over the coming 18 months, the project will involve fishers from Tin Can Bay to Townsville in small group workshops which will identify actions that promote environmental guardianship and the profitability of trawling enterprises.

Elaine Lewthwaite, project manager says, "This particular EMS covering some of the most significant trawl grounds for the Queensland seafood industry also includes two World Heritage Listed regions. This project will, for the first time, see fishers introducing comprehensive environmental management systems that document and reflect their trawling operations into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park."

The scope of this EMS encompasses the highly productive area of Fraser Island to Mackay within the East Coast Trawl Fishery and includes both the coastal fishing grounds that produce iconic products such as scallops and shallower water species of prawns such as banana and tiger prawns. Operators in the deepwater eastern king prawn fishery in the Swain Reef area have been instrumental in developing the stewardship for their operations. This



Launching the Code of Conduct in August.

project when completed will result in a comprehensive chain of EMS adopted by the seafood industry in an area covering Moreton Bay to Hinchinbrook Island.

The Five Fishers project is an example of collaboration where all stakeholders in the seafood industry have input into ensuring that the wild caught seafood industry is managed sustainably.

The East Coast Trawl Fishers Code of Conduct and EMS was launched by Fraser Coast Mayor, Gerard O'Connell at the Hervey Bay Seafood festival in August 2012. The EMS and accompanying Code of Conduct was developed by the Queensland Seafood Industry Association and members from the East Coast Trawl fishery in collaboration with, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Reef Guardian Program, Queensland Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Fraser Coast Regional Council.



To find out more about natural resource management projects or contact details for your regional natural resource management group, visit the Queensland Regional NRM Groups Collective website - www.rgc.org.au or ph 07 4699 5000.

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