

Healthy Country

managing the land for healthy waterways

Lockyer Newsletter 1 – February 2009

Landscape restoration for a healthy waterway

This is the first of a series of newsletters to keep you updated on progress of the Healthy Country demonstration project in the Blackfellow Creek area.

The Healthy Country project aims to improve water quality by reducing the amount of sediment and nutrients entering waterways.

Project activities

The past 12 months has seen extensive work in project planning and development. Both regional and local advisory committees have been established, with local representation from Mount Sylvia. There have been two community meetings and numerous property visits, giving valuable opportunities for staff to gain a better understanding of the land management needs of the area.

In line with feedback from the community, scientists are presently undergoing further in-depth studies of the creek in order to make best recommendations for works in the waterway itself. It is anticipated preparations for creek works may begin in the second half of 2009.

In the next few months, on-ground activities will be focused on lands adjacent to the creek as well as the higher slopes.

In the paddock

November rains highlighted drainage and erosion issues on properties in the area.

As a result, some landholders have instigated Healthy Country works to reduce their on-farm soil loss and sediment transferring to the waterway. These works will include contour banking, repair of eroding gullies and improvement of drainage lines.



ASSESSMENT WITH TECHNICAL ADVICE PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF CONTOURING WORKS

Contouring

Rob and Anthony Bauer purchased a property from Zirbels at Mount Sylvia a few years ago to extend their farm, currently certified organic in conversion. The paddocks are elevated between Blackfellow and Tenthill Creeks in the northern part of the Healthy Country project area.

Extreme runoff from heavy rains late 2008 caused general sheet erosion of the sloping paddocks and gully cutting where flows concentrated off the paddocks.

Rob has said, "I have experienced heavy rain even in winter when the land is usually cropped. But my sons, with whom I make land management decisions, have spent their entire farming years being concerned about there being enough irrigation water to grow the crops. They have not had to think much about the possible wet years and the negative effects of same."

Surveying and works to contour the slopes have commenced, to be ready for planting next month. Eroding gullies will be repaired and flows spread over wider areas to be distributed into both waterways. The system of drainage channels and tracks established as part of these activities will complement the property management plan already in place.

"I appreciate greatly the opportunity that the Healthy Country Project support has given us," said Rob. "This money has made the joint decision to construct contour drains across the paddocks, to help prevent the loss of good top soil from the gentle slopes in heavy rain events, much easier."

Completed works will be on show as part of a local field day showcasing some erosion and sediment control works later this year.

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Incentives

Funding is available to landholders for works associated with land improvements. Funded landholders also have access to free property mapping and property management planning.

Contributions are graded according to the extent that proposed works are likely to

meet project objectives of sediment reduction and water quality improvement.

Landholders maintain control of what happens on their property under Healthy Country funding. Recognised landholder contributions may include management of works, labour and follow-up

maintenance.

The Suite of Incentives has been developed with advice and support of local community members.

Applications for works by landholders may be made to project coordinator Fiona Bengtsson ph 0417 764 754.

Summary of Suite of Incentives *

Type of works	Waterway	Hillslope management	Other
Towards achieving objectives	critical	Important	Part of whole farm improvements of natural resources
Examples of works	In-stream	Hillslope erosion control	Environmental weed control
	Riparian revegetation	Cropping system/ practice change	Remnant vegetation protection
	Repair of connected gully erosion	Repair of not-connected gullies	Soil health changes for improved groundcover
	Riparian fencing	Stock management for groundcover (eg fencing, watering)	Co-ordinated weed control

* The complete Suite of Incentives can be obtained from the project coordinator.

DPI&F

DPI&F has also been identifying opportunities to assist landholders to address both production and natural resource management issues within the Blackfellow Creek area .

Fruit and vegetable grower, Brian Crust of Crust Farms, is working with DPI&F on trials that will address different issues within his production system. These include monitoring to measure the amount and type of sediment that may be moving off his cropping area, evaluating the soil health and water efficiency benefits of compost application and

assessing the efficiency of nitrogen applications to identify if there are opportunities to optimise his nutrition program.

Brian is also interested in guidance systems and Controlled Traffic Farming (CTF). There is an opportunity for assistance with guidance and in evaluating the potential of CTF for his farming system through a new project currently being developed by DPI&F.

These activities are examples of the partnership between DPI&F and SEQC

under the Healthy Country program and demonstrate a collaborative working arrangement to address production and NRM issues.

Other horticultural or grazing enterprises are encouraged to participate and should contact either Julie O'Halloran, DPI&F, ph 5466 2228 or Fiona Bengtsson, SEQC.



In the paddock

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Gully repair and sediment controls

A settling pond established by Brian Crust about four years ago has been so successful in preventing sediment from entering Blackfellow Creek that it is already ready to be cleaned out. Brian was preparing to do just that when the summer rains filled the pond and exacerbated significant gully erosion at the inflow.

Prevention of sediment from entering the creek by methods such



as settling ponds are critical to achieving a healthy waterway for the Lockyer.

Brian has been in consultation with project officers from SEQ Catchments, DPI&F and Healthy Waterways Partnership to plan improvements to property drainage, soil conservation and water efficiency, as part of his overall property management planning.

“The opportunity to repair the inflow of the settling pond using proven advice allows us to continue with sustainable farming,” commented Brian. “We are also looking forward to starting creek bank stabilisation.”

Earthworks have begun in order to repair the inflow, which collects from adjacent cropping areas. Drainage improvements and buffer strips will also be established in combination with DPI&F soil and nutrient trials. Activities will minimize soil and nutrient loss off farm, and reduce ongoing maintenance of the sediment trap.

Grazing extension

Introducing Ian McConnel, DPI&F

Growing up on “Mt Brisbane”, a cattle station near Somerset Dam, I developed a strong affinity with the farming and the beef industry in particular. After studying a bachelor of Applied science at UQ Gatton, I travelled the world as a beef industry youth ambassador before returning to work on the family property.

In 2003 I began work with the DPI&F as a sheep extension officer in Longreach, a position I thoroughly enjoyed for 5 years. I now live in South East Queensland and have recently begun the new

role as the grazing extension officer for the Healthy Country project with DPI&F.

My main areas of expertise are in nutrition, breeding and sustainable grazing.

I am really looking forward to meeting and working with the farmers in the Lockyer region and helping to assist producers in all aspects of their grazing enterprises.

Ian may be contacted on ph 0407 768 995 or email ian.mcconnel@dpi.qld.gov.au.



Traditional owners in Healthy Country



JAMES BONNER, JAGERA DARAN CULTURAL HERITAGE BODY PROJECT
MANAGER AND TRADITIONAL OWNER, BESIDE A SCAR TREE

South East Queensland Traditional Owners Alliance

South East Queensland Traditional Owners Alliance Limited (SEQTOA) is a not-for-profit company formed by the Traditional Owner cultural group organizations of South East Queensland to represent and advance the interests of traditional owners in cultural and natural resource management. SEQTOA is a Healthy Country project partner.

What will SEQTOA be doing in the Healthy Country project?

- Sharing Aboriginal cultural knowledge, significance and values of the focal area with the community in free information sessions
- Establishing an Aboriginal work team that consists of direct descendents of the traditional Aboriginal People of the focal area
- Providing the traditional owner work team as an option for contracted labour for on ground works - at competitive prices
- Developing an Aboriginal Cultural Landscape Report for the focal area. This will include modeling of the traditional Aboriginal cultural landscapes and their uses in pre-colonial times based on historical accounts and landscape evidence.

For more information you can contact Fiona Bengtsson, SEQC or Clarrina McDonald, SEQTOA Mob: 0400 865 762 Ph: 3366 1116
Email: clarrina@seqtoa.com.au

Healthy Waterways Partnership

Over the past few months, the SEQ Healthy Waterways Partnership and the eWater Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) have developed the science and planning component of the Healthy Country project.

Researchers have undertaken field trips in the focal areas of Lockyer, Logan and Bremer catchments to gain an understanding of processes that cause and worsen erosion.

This understanding will assist in planning the first on-ground work such as stabilising gullies against erosion and structures to control sediment from entering the main waterway.

Plans which incorporate rehabilitation of the the overall landscape will also be developed for each focal area. These landscape-scale plans will be supported by a monitoring and evaluation design plan.

The rehabilitation plans for each focal area will be drafted over the period March-June 2009. Input will be sought during this time from each Healthy Country advisory committee as well as the local community.

