

# Newsletter

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## Trialling drones for turtle track monitoring



### DRONES ARE ENABLING CONSERVATION AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS TO GATHER BETTER QUALITY DATA OVER LARGER AREAS IN SHORTER TIMEFRAMES.

Cape York NRM has been supporting the Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA) to trial the use of drones for turtle monitoring activities on Apudthama Country where marine turtles can nest all year round.

Every year, WCTTAA members conduct extensive land-based monitoring surveys of marine turtle nesting beaches on the western Cape York coastline, many of which are difficult to access.

Rangers usually monitor turtle activities using visual cues such as different turtle track characteristics (size, gait) left in the sand, nest predation and hatching events. The results contribute to local planning for predator management as well as regional and global understanding of threatened marine turtle

populations. WCTTAA used a Cairns-based company called Droner to supply and operate the drones for the monitoring trials. They trialled different types of drones (fixed wing and multi-rotor), operation styles (manual and automatic flight paths), launching platforms (beach and boat), and various flight parameters (height, camera angles, etc) for monitoring turtle tracks.

The trial showed that while drones can't replace the work of Rangers on the ground, they have the potential to provide significant benefits by complementing current land and sea monitoring activities in remote and challenging locations.

*This project is funded by the Nest to Ocean Turtle Protection Program, which is a joint initiative of the Australian and Queensland Governments.*



### MESSAGE from the CEO

Welcome to the September edition of our newsletter.

Every day Queensland's 14 NRM bodies are busy working with communities and partners, including all levels of government, to deliver natural resource management outcomes across the State. They are focused on ensuring food security, clean water, healthy landscapes and resilient rural communities for our future.

The scope of work undertaken is diverse. Everything from working with farmers on drought resilience and adapting to climate change to helping community groups restore and rehabilitate our environmental assets.

If you want to find out more about what's happening in your local area, please contact your regional NRM group.

Until next time,

*Andrew Drysdale*

# Farmers discuss climate smart practices

Around 65 farmers in the Mackay region recently turned out to see the latest in innovative climate smart farming practices at an event co-hosted by Reef Catchments and Farmers for Climate Action.



The growers discussed multi species cropping, improving organic carbon levels in their soil and the latest science and research on climate and cane farming.

Keynote speaker and Deputy Chair of the Australian Cane Farmers Association, Robert Quirk said the community needed to understand the risk of inaction on climate

change and the opportunities to adapt and mitigate climate damage and improve productivity at the same time.

"Growing cane with a focus on carbon retention is one of the best ways to get carbon out of the air and into the soil and offers a range of benefits for producers including moisture retention, higher production and less input costs," he said.

Farmers for Climate Action Queensland Coordinator Michael Kane said there was so much interest in the event they had to stop accepting RSVPs.

"Farmers in the Mackay region are hungry for information about improving soils, carbon sequestration and climate change," he said.

## No-bull insights into beef production

With the prolonged dry conditions on the Western Downs, almost 20 beef producers from across the region met recently to learn how to maximise the production of their herds.

Experts from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and Tropical Beef Technology Services (TBTS) presented on a number of topics affecting farming and herd production practises including the effects of drought, genetics and pasture.

The free, day-long educational event was hosted by Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) and Murilla Landcare with funding from the National Landcare

Program (NLP) and GrazingFutures, the Queensland Government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program (DCAP) which aims to improve drought preparedness and resilience for Queensland producers.

User-friendly online tools and strategies were demonstrated to help beef farmers make informed decisions on nutrition options such as available feed, cost of feeding and comparing different feed and supplement options. Fertility, breeding

objectives and estimated breeding values (EBVs) were also a hot topic for discussion.

Tim Emery from TBTS has been travelling across Queensland to deliver drought resilience workshops for nine years.

"It's important for producers to make the most of the tools and resources available to them so that they can make objective, informed business decisions," he said.

# 50,000 trees to create Daintree wildlife corridor

A dream to create a rainforest is coming true for a Far North Queensland woman who is planting 50,000 trees to restore an important wildlife corridor connecting the coastal mangroves to world heritage rainforest, that was severed by logging and clearing in the 1960's.



Annie Schoenberger bought an old cane farm three years ago that borders the Daintree National Park, with a plan to transform 15ha into lowland rainforest. The largest trees are now 4m high and the wildlife is slowly coming back, first with insects and now lizards and birds.

Her 'Nightwings' project, in partnership with Rainforest Rescue and with funding from Terrain NRM and the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, is one of the largest rainforest revegetation initiatives in Far North Queensland.

# Endangered moth given a fighting chance

A community project to restore lowland rainforest habitat on the Sunshine Coast is set to provide the endangered pink underwing moth a much-needed lifeline.

For several years, a passionate group of residents known as Friends of Cahills Scrub (FOCS) have worked alongside experts to improve the condition of Cahills Scrub Reserve, a patch of lowland subtropical rainforest along London Creek at Peachester. The reserve contains several significant rainforest species including carrionia vine, a small collapsed shrub which is the ideal food source for the pink underwing moth.

The restoration work has involved curbing the spread of weeds, repairing damage caused by illegal dumping and planting dozens of native rainforest species.

It is hoped the reserve could become a breeding ground for the notoriously elusive moth, which is only found in pockets of lowland subtropical rainforest in northern NSW and South East Queensland. Sightings of the pink underwing moth, known for its brilliant array of pink and white spots on its 14cm wingspan, are rare in the Sunshine Coast.

The project to restore the moth's carrionia vine habitat is a collaboration between FOCS, Sunshine Coast Council, Healthy Land and Water and the National Landcare Program.

## DUSTING OFF THE DROUGHT

Livestock autopsies, disease surveillance and weed eradication methods were just some of the topics being discussed at this year's annual Basalt Bash and Beauty event in the Northern Gulf recently.

Over 40 women drove hundreds of kilometres to attend the event, many of them living in some of Australia's most remote areas. Recognising the hardships faced by women involved in the region's cattle industry, the event is an opportunity for them to learn new skills to make their lives easier and keep up to date on industry changes.

Kathy Rowling, Northern Gulf Drought Support Officer, said the event was focused on the importance of mental wellbeing.

"They breed them tough out here in North Queensland but these women can sometimes go more than a year without having break, and often they are left alone for weeks while their husbands are out mustering. Events like this are an opportunity to connect with others and let their hair down a bit," she said.



## Carbon farming an extra income stream

**Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG) has joined forces with GreenCollar, Australia's largest carbon project developer, to enlist eligible landholders into the Australian Government's Carbon Farming Initiative.**

Mark Lincoln, GreenCollar's Central and North Queensland Relationship Manager, said he was excited to be part of the partnership with BMRG.

"Many landholders throughout the Burnett Mary region are not receiving the full potential value of their land. Carbon farming is an opportunity

to generate income through changes in land management practices, which reduce greenhouse gas emissions or store carbon in soil and vegetation," he said.

"Carbon farming doesn't mean locking up land or destocking. Successful carbon projects are integrated into a farmer's production system to achieve a better bottom line".

BMRG's Chair, Tony Ricciardi, said the initiative is a win-win for landholders since many of the region's farmers are already undertaking eligible activities on their land.

## Forget the Farewell Flush

**Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) have joined forces with local pet retailers to spread the message about not flushing pet fish down the porcelain bowl. While the "farewell flush" is convenient it also risks sending waterway health down the gurgler.**



**Six pet retailers in Rockhampton have agreed to display educational stickers on their fish tanks to help to educate fish owners about the risks of improper fish disposal.**

Foreign fish pose a danger to Australia's biodiversity as non-native seeds, diseases and eggs attached to the dead fish can enter our waterways. Once these exotic species have created a home for themselves, it is very difficult to remove them.

All this toilet talk is no laughing matter. Tilapia is listed in the world's 100 worst invasive species. Within the Fitzroy region, confirmed tilapia habitats exist at Yeppen Lagoon, within the Fitzroy River and Raglan Creek. This species is nearly impossible to eradicate once it has been established in a waterway and threatens native species.

So how should you dispose of little Freddy the fish? Bury him in the garden or throw him in the rubbish bin.

## Burdekin cane growers pitching in

Cane growers in the Burdekin have been putting in a major ongoing effort to improve their practices and reduce runoff – with NQ Dry Tropics supporting them every step of the way. Earlier this year, results came in showing that one project supporting cane growers to reduce fertiliser use without affecting yield had so far prevented 116 tonnes of dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) from entering waterways and impacting the Great Barrier Reef.

A high level of DIN in water has been linked to outbreaks of crown of thorns starfish on the Reef.

The reduction in fertiliser rates was achieved by 16 growers who signed up to the pilot round of the three-year Burdekin Tender project, funded by the Australian Government's \$225 million Reef Trust.

Under the project, growers proposed trialling ways to reduce fertiliser use – and put a price on the cost of making the change. Trials included matching fertiliser inputs to crop requirements and using technology to only apply fertiliser precisely where it is needed.



To find out more about natural resource management projects or contact details for your regional NRM visit: [nrmrq.org.au](http://nrmrq.org.au)

