

Reef Rescue

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF LAGOON

NEWS BULLETIN:

EDITION 1 MARCH 2010

See what Aussie Growers are doing on their farms

WITHOUT LEAVING YOURS

In the first half of 2010, cane growers will receive two DVDs based on interviews with 25 growers who were filmed on farm showing how they have gone about implementing new technology and farming practices on their property.

CANEGROWERS have called the initiative a 'Virtual Bus Tour' because the idea was based on grower feedback that they like to see what other growers are doing, but bus tours only cover a small area and can be too time consuming.

This idea put the farm tours on DVD, making the grower stories accessible to everyone – growers, government and the community alike.

Being such a novel concept, to help us test the waters and see if it worked, CANEGROWERS sought partners to help fund the trial project, receiving \$71,000 from the Federal Government's Farm Ready program and \$50,000 from the Reef Rescue program.

The project will deliver 'Landline' type segments. Each segment will be 5-10 minutes long and will feature a cane grower showing us around their farm and talking about a specific project they have implemented.

The initial project will comprise of the release of three DVDs during 2010, which CANEGROWERS Members will receive at no cost with their Australian Canegrower magazine. These segments will also be available at no cost to the general public via the CANEGROWERS website and the publically searchable free video website YouTube.

The DVDs will also provide a valuable resource for government, as they will be able to see firsthand how our cane growers are farming in a proactive, sustainable and environmentally integrated way.

This large-scale project has a large project team.

We employed expert cameramen, Drew Llewellyn, who had worked on ABC's Landline program, and Henry Thomas who had filmed many cane grower stories for his Shed Meeting website project.

Scripting and filming has been the work of a large team including former magazine editor Nick Kennedy, magazine advertising executive Kim Thackeray, communications manager Suzi Moore and production supervisor, Karen Polglase. Our new editor Jasmine Haddow has also joined the project.

This is a new product, which was made possible by the great backing provided by the Australian Government in the first instance. Producing these items is time consuming and resource intensive, and CANEGROWERS will be keen to find out whether members believe it is a valuable addition to the arsenal of information they receive from CANEGROWERS. If the answer is yes, CANEGROWERS will start a longer term project to regularly produce and release grower 'farm tour' DVDs.

**Contact Suzi Moore, CANEGROWERS
07 3864 6444**



Filming for the Virtual Bus Tour takes place on farm

Welcome to the first edition of the Reef Rescue Newsletter. The newsletter will be produced quarterly and will aim to highlight the achievements occurring on the ground with the implementation of Reef Rescue.

Ongoing access to natural resources and the future of our agricultural industries will depend on our capacity to demonstrate that we are utilizing these resources in a sustainable, responsible way.

Reef Rescue is a five year, \$200 million initiative of the Australian Government. The program seeks to improve water quality flowing into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

The success of the establishment of Reef Rescue as a pre-election commitment from the government has been a direct result of the partnerships formed during the initiative's development. The combining of skills and knowledge of NRM groups, rural industry, and government offers an insight into what can be achieved when a progressive partnership outlines clear and agreed roles and responsibilities for project development and implementation.

Since commencing project delivery in 2008/09, Reef Rescue has delivered tangible positive outputs and outcomes via both regional and Great Barrier Reef wide partnerships. For example, in 2008-09, Reef Rescue achieved 2388 on-ground practice change improvements in landholders. The program has also successfully leveraged from these partnerships to attract additional investment from land managers and commercial investment partners.

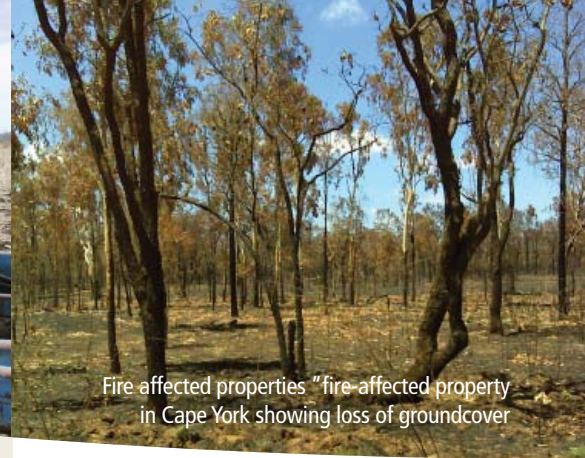
This newsletter is a joint initiative of Queensland Farmers Federation and Queensland Regional NRM Groups Collective. We look forward to your feedback and hope you enjoy the stories.

**Dan Galligan
CEO, Queensland Farmers Federation**



photo courtesy QPIF

Ivan Gowlett



Fire affected properties "fire-affected property in Cape York showing loss of groundcover

Industry partnership

PROVES RIGHT APPROACH

A partnership approach has seen Grains BMP (Best Management Practice) adopted quickly and successfully across Queensland. Grains BMP was developed collaboratively between Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries, AgForce, and Queensland's regional natural resource management groups in order to help producers benchmark their grain growing practices against best practice industry standards.

A successful Grains BMP pilot in 2008 with central Queensland growers coordinated by Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) laid the foundation for the program's success.

FBA Chief Executive Officer Suzie Christensen said Grains BMP had expanded to five modules and would be offered to up to 75 new growers across the Fitzroy Basin in 2010.

"We received support under the Reef Rescue component of the Australian Government's Caring for our Country to extend the delivery of Grains BMP through more workshops and incentives for on-ground projects," she said.

QPIF development extension officer Rod Collins said farming enterprises had been able to access funding to implement improved farming practices through the incentive scheme.

"These direct, on-farm incentives target priority activities put forward by growers that are resulting in better quality water flowing into the Great Barrier Reef," Mr Collins said.

AgForce Grains BMP spokesman Lindsay Krieg says even the best grain growers have improved after doing the Grains BMP.

"I've seen grain growers improve their own businesses, regions improve by comparing grain growing data and the industry as a whole has been elevated by having a vehicle to recognise our best practice," he said. "It also provides tools and information to help growers reach best practice in pesticide application,

farm design, rainfall efficiency and pest and soil management."

Having completed all five Grains BMP (Best Management Practices) self-assessment modules, Capella grain grower Ivan Gowlett is now achieving improved farm management and productivity.

Ivan Gowlett and his wife Karen farm 1215ha on their expanded Eldorado aggregation and share farm a further 1822ha with emphasis on a grain sorghum summer crop with some sunflower in rotation with winter wheat and chickpeas.

Mr Gowlett made the transition to zero till farming five years ago and 12 months ago introduced Controlled Traffic Farming (CTF) backed by the purchase of a John Deere 4830 spray rig with a 27.5m boom.

"Grains BMP provided the incentive to update our record-keeping and a portion of the Fitzroy Basin Association funding grant has been directed toward the purchase of a software mapping program based on satellite imagery," Mr Gowlett said.

"Record keeping is an essential requirement for all farming operations and we now have an effective tool to record all paddock treatments.

"The technology has enabled us to survey 1215ha of cultivation country bought last year and we are now progressing reconstruction of contour banks and addressing some minor erosion issues."

A Grains BMP incentive grant also helped the Gowlett's to install a new chemical bund storage facility and they are looking into building a machinery wash bay to prevent any chemical run-off.

**Contact Elizabeth Spry, Agforce
07 3238 6049**

Five a Reef issue ON THE CAPE

2009 was a major year for fire on Cape York Peninsula. Wildfire is a significant issue for managing nutrient and sediment flows in the Cape York catchments. Fires in the region are responsible for extensive loss of groundcover, release of nutrients, removal of organic matter and powdering the soil surface.

Eight million hectares of the Cape burnt during 2009, equating to 61% of the total landmass. Given that some of the Cape's 13 million hectares is rainforest, that should never burn, such a large area affected by fire has significant land management impacts. Many of these fires occurred during the late dry season, producing burns of great intensity which removed not only green vegetation, but also fallen branches and trees that provide valuable groundcover and habitat for biodiversity.

A number of properties have also been burnt-out by fire activity on the Cape. These fires, and the preceding drought, have had a very large impact on the extent of groundcover within the Reef Rescue catchments, and this will likely result in elevated levels of total suspended solids (>5x) and nutrients (>10x) being delivered to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon from these areas. The poor conditions have caused spelling and paddock rotation associated with Reef Rescue funded projects to be postponed until groundcover improves.

Cape York Sustainable Futures is planning a number of activities to support land managers deal with the impacts of fire. A series of fire management workshops will be conducted, to raise awareness of fire tracking websites and their functionality; property mapping will take place, including mapping of fire breaks and access routes; and mosaic burning will be encouraged, to break up the landscape and reduce large scale wildfire. The organisation will also continue its research work capturing data about fire, sediment loads and deposition as part of a water quality risk assessment program across the region.

**Contact Isha Segboer, Cape York
Sustainable Futures 07 4053 2856**



Reef Rescue overwhelmingly popular

IN MACKAY WHITSUNDAY REGION

An overwhelming number of land managers have taken advantage of a unique opportunity to not just increase their overall productivity on farm through improved land management practices, but to also protect the quality of the water flowing into the Great Barrier Reef

Local cane, agriculture and horticulture industries have enthusiastically jumped on board with the financial incentives available through the Reef Rescue Water Quality Grants, with 397 land managers across the Mackay Whitsunday NRM region sharing in a combined \$5,069,276 in 2009.

Funding for protecting the Reef has been made available through the Federal Government's more than \$200 million Reef Rescue Program being managed in the Mackay Whitsunday Region by Regional NRM Group Reef Catchments.

The majority of these projects were funded in the cane industry with \$4,498,844 allocated to 320 land managers to undertake projects; grazing received \$512,432 for 71 land managers to undertake 71 projects; and horticulture received \$58,000 for 6 land managers to undertake 6 projects.

2009 has also seen the establishment of grazing and sugar industry working groups which comprise of industry reps, land managers, and NRM staff who oversee Reef Rescue's planning

and delivery. These groups, through their members, have done a great job to date and continue to look at program improvements ensuring effective and efficient delivery of public funds.

Partnerships with industry also continue to flourish, with the development of a new partnership formed with AgForce to host the Key Contact Officer position for Grazing.

With all this success, it was only a matter of time before the word got out about the innovative work being undertaken by local farmers, with an official visit from the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke MP in October.

With the first half of year two Reef Rescue now behind us, interest in the financial incentives on offer continue to grow.

Reef Catchments Mackay Whitsunday are continuing to see the difference this program and the subsequent land management practices are making across the region - not just for the Reef but overall productivity of local industry.

The Reef Rescue Water Quality Grants will continue to be a major component of our activities in 2010 and beyond, with financial incentives provided to land owners to adopt A and B class management projects (as outlined in Mackay Whitsunday Water Quality Improvement Plan).



Bronwyn Higgins, Claire Rodgers, Jessica Feder, Geoff Dyne and Sir Graham McCamley

Showing off on-ground results

IN THE FITZROY

A group of government officers saw the on-ground impact of funding under the Reef Rescue component of the Australian Government's Caring for our Country in the Fitzroy Basin recently.

Bronwyn Higgins, Jessica Feder, and Geoff Dyne from the Australian Government joined Fitzroy Basin Association staff on a tour across the basin to see first-hand the results of projects supported under Reef Rescue.

FBA Chief Executive Officer Suzie Christensen said the group met with landholders, including Sir Graham McCamley of Glenprairie near Marlborough, north of Rockhampton.

"Sir Graham worked with FBA and local group Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments to fence tidal areas to enable him to better manage grazing and help protect mangroves and other coastal vegetation, which will also reduce erosion and improve water quality downstream," Ms Christensen said.

"This is a great example of how money is being spent on-ground, working with landholders at the frontline of natural resource management to adopt world-leading farming practices that will reduce erosion and run-off to the reef," she said.

"Landholders across the basin are already reducing annual average sediment loads delivered to waterways by about 75,000 tonnes, and are on target to cumulatively reduce sediment entering waterways by 4.1 million tonnes by 2014," she said.



Above and at top: tractor installed with GPS farm mapping on the Blackburn sugarcane farm, Mackay

Grower John Pastega demonstrates air spray technology on his farm

Reef Rescue

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF LAGOON



Strathmore Stateion owners Paul and Sally Fry with AgForce Reef Rescue officer Joshua Schwarz

Reef Rescue

GIVES NEW GRAZIERS A HAND

Paul Fry and his wife Sally took over the running of Strathmore Station last year. New to managing the extensive grazing enterprise near Collinsville, the Frys were grateful to learn about assistance available to graziers through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Reef Rescue program.

Mrs Fry is a descendent of the well known Queensland explorer and pastoralist Edward (Ned) Cunningham whose pastoral partnerships were said to span from Collinsville to the outskirts of Townsville at the turn of last century.

The Frys learnt of Reef Rescue at a grazing industry field day delivered by AgForce, NQ Dry Tropics, Greening Australia and Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) at the Bowen River Hotel last year.

"It was good to see AgForce, NRM groups and DPI come together in our backyard so we were able to put a face to a name," Mr Fry said.

"We had heard a lot of media talk about Reef Rescue which in the early days left us quite confused, but after their presentation and questions from the floor, it became far clearer."

AgForce Reef Rescue project officer Joshua Schwarz and DEEDI extension officers Reg Andison and Bob Shepherd visited Strathmore Station again this year to help the Frys identify erosion issues and discuss what improvements could be made through Reef Rescue funding.

The Frys have submitted an application to subdivide and riparian fence a large paddock which has 8km of river frontage.

"The paddock will have a new water point,

enabling the cattle to be fenced off from the western banks of the Bowen River, minimising stream bank trampling and erosion," Mr Schwarz said.

"They'll be able to rotationally graze the new paddock and do wet season spelling which will increase ground cover and reduce the amount of sediment possibly entering the river and heading downstream to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon."

Mr Fry said: "Yes it is about the water, however the grants enable us to do some work now that will assist with improving our pasture, hence better management practices which in turn will lead to improved productivity."

Contact: Elizabeth Spry 07 3238 6049.



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

Reef Rescue is funded by the Australian Government through its Caring for Our Country initiative