

the burnett buzz...

Winter 2018

Grazing BMP; useful tool in challenging beef production methods

Boyd Paton, Michelle Chicken and their family (see photo left) run "Boyne Crossing". The property is a productive mixed irrigated farming operation including 50 hectares of pecan nut production and 400 hectares of cattle grazing land, located on the Boyne River, south of Mundubbera. The family diversified their traditional beef operation with the purchase of the pecan orchard several years ago in the hope of mitigating the highly fluctuating beef commodity price and to obtain the best dollar return per hectare off their land.

As part of the Burnett Mary Regional Group's (BMRG) Better Catchments Program, Michelle attended a two day Grazing Best Management Practice (BMP) workshop. At the workshop, she was able to benchmark the family's grazing practices against industry standards. Michelle said, "as participants in Grazing BMP, we were challenged on our current beef producing methods and in a brief time frame we have now really enhanced the efficiency and productivity of our trading and fattening operation".

During the workshop Michelle expressed interest in being involved with the Better Catchments program.

BCCA worked with Boyd and Michelle to prioritise their action plan from the Grazing BMP workshop to develop a project which would lead to improving their grazing practices. They were successful in receiving a small grant to assist undertaking subdivisional fencing across their property.

'..... prioritise their action plan from the Grazing BMP workshop to develop a project'

Boyd and Michelle have installed several watering points in the new paddocks and designed a program to evenly graze their paddocks to maintain good groundcover and promote quality and quality in pasture growth and diversity.

They have seen excellent, almost immediate results with pasture diversity and quality. "Stock are healthier and soils have been maintained through healthier constant ground cover," said Michelle.



They have been inspired to continue to grow their business while making positive land management changes.

They have found the greatest impact has come from the changes in grazing practices, because of their involvement in the Better Catchments program.

"We have implemented a cell/rotational grazing system, which has vastly increased the pasture quality and availability, enhanced our soil health and in turn increased the kilograms of beef per annum we are producing and hence our yearly profits," explains Michelle.

Although their learnings from the Grazing BMP process were initially applied to the beef production side of their enterprise, they have also been incorporated into their pecan production. "We have used a lot of the Best Practices standards in regard to Soil Health, People, Workplace Health Safety & Business in our pecan operation," said Michelle.

The Better Catchments program is an initiative of the Burnett Mary Regional Group and coordinated locally by BCCA, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Inside this issue:

- Improving resilience & risk-based decision making 2
- Monto growers collaboration & working together 3
- Endangered rainforest walk popular with locals. 3
- Last word... 4

Highlights

- Incorporating Grazing BMP principals into Pecan production!
- How risk affects farmers' decision making.
- Grower collaborations & working together
- Field walk identifies 144 species of plants at Rocky Creek in the Baffle Catchment.



Regenerated pastures after spelling paddocks and receiving overdue rainfall.

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Improving Resilience & Risk-based Decision Making

A large and enthusiastic crowd of 41 attended the Monto Colonial Motel in May to listen to Cam Nicholson's (Nicon Rural Services) advice on decision making and risk in rural operations.

Cam had all of the attendees listening very intently as he defined types of decisions, what factors affect decision making and different decision making tools. The audience were interactive and enjoyed seeing examples of decision matrices that can assist producers to simplify and quantify the decision making process.

'....what factors affect decision making and different decision making tools.....'

Cam went on to discuss the definition of risk and how risk affects farmers' decision making. Farmers were interested to hear Cam state that the Australian agricultural industry has the highest financial risk of any agricultural industry in the world!

Of particular interest on the night was discussion around the four general

types of temperaments identified amongst agriculturalists.

According to Cam, agriculturalists generally fit into the following temperament types (adapted from the Myers Briggs Personality Indicators):

- Dependable
- Doer
- Pioneer
- Team Builder

Attendees were able to judge which

temperament characteristics generally applied to themselves and how those characteristics affect decision making and farm operation in general. Different temperaments affect how the decision making process is carried out and all of them contribute to a successful and well-rounded business.

The content of this workshop was very relevant to our landholders as they work through ways to build the resilience of their operations following repetitive flooding events over the last seven years. Feedback from all attendees was positive and the lovely meal provided by the Colonial Motel



Agriculturalists from the Monto district listening intently.

contributed to a very successful evening.

This workshop was funded by the Qld Government Dept of Communities, Child Safety & Disability Services in conjunction with Reef Alliance 'Growing a Great Barrier Reef' project (funded by the Australian Government and delivered through the Reef Trust). Burnett Catchment Care Association worked in partnership with Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. and the North Burnett Regional Council to deliver this workshop.

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Grower Collaborations & Working Together Workshop

This Grower Collaborations workshop, held in June, discussed the benefits and principals required to establish and maintain successful grower groups and collaborations for greater economic, social and environmental



Andrew McKillop discusses opportunities.

benefit. The evening was presented by Andrew McKillop, an agribusiness consultant with extensive experience in establishing and developing cooperatives and grower groups, along with marketing, general management and quality assurance experience.

A large number of local agribusinesses attended from a mix demographic of grazing, cropping, fodder, manufacturing and piggery enterprises.

Topics discussed included, the importance of change and how working collaboratively can facilitate outcomes, the advantages and disadvantages of collaboratives, the sequence of development and the key drivers for

success.

By working collaboratively and building upon social capital (both bonding and bridging), communities and groups can develop greater collective capacity and accomplish more significant environmental, social and economic outcomes in the longer-term, than can be achieved individually.

This workshop was supported by the Burnett Mary Regional Group & the Regional Landcare Facilitator through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

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Endangered Rainforest Walk Popular With Locals

Over 50 locals attended a rainforest field walk recently, organised by BCCA as part of the Baffle Reef Systems Repair project. The field walk was held on the property of Craig and Judy Walters in the Captain Creek area near Agnes Water, on a section of Rocky Creek which flows through the property.

The riparian vegetation along this section of Rocky Creek is classified as Regional Ecosystem (RE) 12.3.16, which is described as *complex notophyll to microphyll vine forest on alluvial plains*.

This RE is habitat for threatened plant species including *Xanthostemon oppositifolius* (southern penda), *Fontainea rostrate* (Deep Creek fontainea), *Macadamia integrifolia* and *Macadamia ternifolia*. This type of vegetation is important for fruit-eating birds, many of which migrate seasonally from upland to lowland



Maureen Schmitt explaining vegetation attributes to the group.

rainforest. It is habitat for threatened fauna species including Coxens fig parrot and the Richmond birdwing butterfly.

Of the original area in Queensland of 14,000 ha, it is estimated that there is only about 3,000 ha remaining, or 21%

of the original extent.

Local ecologists Maureen Schmitt and Ann Moran led the group along about 800 metres of the creek, providing identification and interesting facts about the incredible range of species present.

Ann Moran identified 144 species of plants during the three-hour event, which may only be a small proportion of the species present in this incredibly diverse area. The list of species that Ann compiled has been circulated to all participants.

This project is an initiative of the Burnett Mary Regional Group and is supported by funding from the Australian Government. The project is coordinated locally by BCCA.



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Riparian area of Rocky Creek.

What's on 'round the Burnett...

- 1 Aug Grains BMP workshop (day 2), Monto
- 19 Aug Agri-business by Design—Biloela
- 31 Aug 'Scale Up Your Business' - Brian Pastures
- 1 Aug ChemCert Certificate—Biloela
- 5-11 Sep Farming & Grazing for Profit—Toowoomba
- 8-10 Sep 4th Australian Marine Turtle Symposium—Bundaberg
- 17 Oct MLA BeefUp Form—Mundubbera

BCCA events calendar can be found at:

<https://betterburnett.com/events/>



Burnett Catchment Care Association

BCCA is a member-based, not-for-profit organisation, employing professional staff to develop and implement natural resource management projects across the Burnett Catchment.

We work directly with landholders to support sustainable land management practices.

We partner with associated, like-minded organisations such as the Burnett Mary Regional Group and landcare groups where much of our funding is derived from State and Federal Government funding programs.



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Last word....

It has been a sad couple of months for BCCA with the departure of two of our long term employees, Veronica Chapman and Peter Crawford. Veronica left BCCA after 5 ½ years to join SRA as a cane adoption officer in Bundaberg and Peter leaves us after almost 5 years to retire on his Baffle Creek property. We will miss both Veronica and Peter whose significant contribution to our organisation and grazing industry has been greatly appreciated by the team at BCCA and the great grazing Burnett and Baffle communities. We wish them all the best in the future.

June has seen the finalisation of three of our multi-year projects. Baffle Reef System Repair, Better Catchments and Restoring Riparian Habitats (20 Million Trees) projects have all come to an end having all achieved significant natural resource outcomes.

The Baffle Reef System Repair project was a BMRG initiative, coordinated by BCCA and

aimed to curtail riparian and wetland vegetation loss and the contribution of sediment and nutrient entering the Great Barrier Reef. This was achieved through the protection and restoration of riparian areas and wetlands through restricting cattle access, revegetating cleared and degraded areas and managing invasive weeds and feral pigs. Throughout the 5 year project, 55 on-ground projects saw 4925 ha of lantana, cats claw creeper and rubber vine controlled, 3750 ha of feral pig control, 28 ha of revegetation and 277 ha of riparian vegetation protected by fencing.

The Better Catchments program; another BMRG initiative, was a success, even during the struggles of droughts and floods. An impressive 74,812 hectares of agricultural land has been subject to improved land management practices in the grazing, cropping and native forestry

industries by 128 producers. Overall, 74 participants attended capacity building events across every corner of the Burnett to increase their knowledge skills in improving land management practices in the grazing, cropping and native forestry industries.

The Restoring Riparian Habitat in the inland Burnett was an Australian Government 20 Million Trees project and involved planting 6377 tubestock over three sites on the Burnett River with a survival rate of 79%.

With the ending of three major projects, we are waiting with bated breath on the numerous funding submissions we have submitted over the last 8 months. For BCCA's continued existence and influence throughout the Burnett into the future, it is essential we are successful in achieving more funding in the coming 12 months.

Katie Muller

2018/19 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

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- \$1 cash stamps **NEW \$5 for 5 year membership**

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