



ENVIRO NEWS

For Bowen and Burdekin

January/February 2010

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UPCOMING EVENTS

BBIFMAC General Meeting

BBIFMAC will be holding their General Meeting on the 26th March 2010 at the Summit Room, Haller Wealth Building, 15 Queen St, Ayr. Meeting will commence at 9.30am. Guest Speaker to be announced. Morning Tea will be provided.

Adam Connell

Adam Connell has resigned as Project Manager for BBIFMAC. Adam's last day will be Friday 19th February 2010. BBIFMAC Committee and Staff, thank Adam for his dedication and hard work and wish him well in his new endeavours.

PROJECTS

WQ Pixel Project

For more information please contact BBIFMAC or visit our website www.bbifmac.org.au.

Reef Regulations and WQ Pixel Information Session

WQ Pixel Info Session and Reef Regulation Presentation

On Friday 29th January BBIFMAC held the 4th WQ Pixel Information Session. The session started with a presentation from the guest speakers - Craig Cruickshank and Shane Hunter, Reef Protection Officers from DERM, who talked about the new Reef Regulations relevant to the Burdekin region. The presentation was followed by several challenging and important questions from local growers about the regulations, which in most cases could not be answered fully. However Craig and Shane tried to answer the questions as best they could and were very helpful and understanding of the farmers' concerns. BBIFMAC will try to get them back in the coming months to follow up some of the unanswered questions. The presentation helped sugarcane growers to understand what their obligations are in terms of the regulations, including: From 1st January 2010

- Growers must conduct a soil test prior to planting cane to allow calculation of the optimum amount of fertiliser required for their crop. This is based on the "BSES Six Easy Steps" system.

- Growers must keep records of soil tests and all fertilisers, soil conditioners and herbicides applied within 10 business days of application.

By 1st July 2010

- The person applying or directly supervising the application of any product containing atrazine, hexazinone, diuron or ametryn must hold the following qualifications:

- RTC3704A - Prepare and apply chemicals

- RTC3401A - Control weeds

- RTC3705A - Transport, handle and store chemicals

The Reef Regulation presentation was followed by a presentation of the results from the WQ Pixel Project. This gave a detailed overview of results from both on-farm and from the local creek monitoring program. In many cases water quality is showing good results especially for nutrients in farm run-off. However groundwater nitrates are a concern in the lower Burdekin Delta and nitrate levels are showing spikes in the Barratta Creek system during peak fertiliser periods. Pesticides have also shown elevated results in the Barratta Creek system during the September to November period, with the main culprits being atrazine and diuron although many other chemicals have been detected at low to medium levels including tebuthiuron which is a chemical used in grazing in the Burdekin rangelands. The Pesticide and Nutrient Report Cards were also presented to the attendees for comments with a positive response. These report cards will be used to report water quality values to farmers using the WQ Pixel project to evaluate on-farm water quality and provide a better indication of desired water quality targets. Approximately 60 people attended on the day, with the majority being farmers from across the lower Burdekin.

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WQ PIXEL Project

With the long spell of hot, dry weather, growers are continuing to collect a large number of water samples for testing. In the past six months 1600 water quality samples have been collected by participating growers indicating a good uptake of the project across the lower Burdekin and Bowen regions. BBIFMAC is developing a set of guidelines and a report card for pesticide and nutrient levels leaving cane farms in run-off water. Currently there is little information available for farmers as to what pesticide levels should be in run-off water. This is important for growers who are monitoring pesticides through the WQ Pixel project and development of a report card system was essential for helping growers understand what their water quality results meant. This is being done in consultation within NQ Dry Tropics, ACTFR, QPIF and BSES. A meeting was held on 25th November 2009 to discuss the development of the guidelines and report card. The report card was presented to growers at the WQ Pixel Project Information Session. It was widely accepted by growers and industry and will be used to report on water quality for farmers in the future. NQ Dry Tropics has offered to work on a developing an illustrative model, similar to the BWQIP illustrations, modelling the colour chart in a pictorial form as it moves down the catchment. Eg. Spray tank - red, on paddocks - orange, run-off - yellow, drains and modified creeks - green, natural wetlands and the reef - blue. BBIFMAC has been asked to work with the artist to develop this illustration with NQ Dry Tropics providing the funds to print the booklets once completed. The latest results from the project are showing pesticide levels in farm run-off and the Barratta system are still a concern, with nutrient levels remaining fairly low during the harvest period. Some nutrient spikes were seen in the Barratta system mainly in the local drains in the upper catchment area, where concentrated farm run-off is expected. Across the Delta and Bowen both nutrient and pesticide levels have remained low with the exception of one pesticide sample from Iyah creek with elevated atrazine levels.

Caring for our Turtles

BBIFMAC has been successful in receiving funding through the Australian Government's Community Action Grants for a project in Bowen to install shield lighting in the Queens Beach area to reduce the impact on nesting and hatching turtles. The project will also raise awareness within the local community of the impacts of residential lights on turtles. An turtle nesting and hatching event will be held to educate the community on turtle nesting in the Bowen area. BBIFMAC will also be managing the Queens Beach Action Group's funding for a similar project titled Supporting Sea Turtle Survival at Queens Beach, Bowen. This project will work in conjunction with BBIFMAC's to erect fencing and reduce the impact of pests on turtle's nesting and hatching.

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