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ENVIRO NEWS

For Bowen and Burdekin



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Bowen Forum

MEMBERS of the BBIFMAC Committee and staff travelled to Bowen in May to engage with interested stakeholders. The Forum was well attended, with representatives from the Whitsunday Regional Council; the Horticulture Industry; Department of Primary Industries, BDTNRM's Bowen Area Community Engagement Officer and the Bowen District Growers Association. Our chair, Robyn O'Sullivan opened the Forum with a report on BBIFMAC's current standing and our hopes for renewed communications and support between our two districts.

Carl Walker, of the Bowen District Growers Association, made note of the urgent need for work on the Don River. The River Trust has little resources or ability to take action. The February flood broke the banks in the lower reaches of the river causing considerable damage to fencing infrastructure and deposited large quantities of sand on agricultural land. Bowen representatives are also concerned about the new water meter installation program, which replaces existing water meters on bores with new ones, allowing government to charge for water usage. Bowen needs Government investment in infrastructure. The Abbot Point Industrial Estate and the water for Bowen scheme will make Bowen attractive for future development.

Robyn listed the possible support BBIFMAC could offer Bowen. Included in this support was assistance to hold meetings; exchange resources; assist with project development and provide administrative support.

Productive discussions between participants continued for several hours. BBIFMAC project staff demonstrated the PIXEL Water Quality project and gave an update on BBIFMAC's current projects. At the end of the Forum a BBQ and drinks were provided by BBIFMAC and participants were home in time for the State of Origin. The Forum resulted in a sense of improved positive relations between our two districts and offered an opportunity to work together in the future.



UHWB Update

Upper Houghton Water Balance Project

ROB Lait and Andrew Durick the consulting hydrogeologists from AGE presented their latest progress on the development of a groundwater model for the project to the steering committee on the 31st of March.

The original proposal was to utilise the model being developed by DNRW, however this model is still being developed so is not yet available. AGE will therefore develop an independent model for this project.

It should be completed by the end of July and will be used to predict the effect on groundwater levels of changing land uses, irrigation practices, groundwater pumping strategies etc. This will help to formulate recommendations to improve the management of irrigation and groundwater in the project area.

To help with the development of the model, additional information was required on:

- Yield figures from the mill/s
- Metered surface water irrigation
- Metered groundwater irrigation
- Climate (rainfall and evaporation)
- Soils mapping
- Vegetation coverage (with time)

The additional yield, climate, soils and vegetation data has now been supplied. Bryce Davies (Project Manager) is working with Sunwater to provide the water use data and BDTNRM for additional vegetation coverage data. Hopefully we will have this by the end of the month.

Russell Jordan is continuing to monitor the piezometer levels on a fortnightly basis. This information has been forwarded to Rob Lait for inclusion in the model.

Two of the three lysimeter sites have been selected with the third to be finalised this month. The lysimeters will be installed in the ratoon blocks after harvest.

CORES

Community Response to Eliminating Suicide

ON the 25 July there will be a public launch of the CORES program. It is designed to educate the community about how to prevent suicide.

What would you do if someone came to you and said "It's all too much, I can't cope anymore, I am thinking of killing myself" The program is designed to empower the community to assist through recognition of the warning signs and support by community members.

This has come about as a result of the hard work by the Burdekin Mental Health Foundation and the support of one

individual grower providing funding of \$35 000 for the year long program. This will enable us to train 6 team leaders and 200 community members.

There will be a call for interested individuals to train as team leaders to deliver the one day information sessions.

Come along to the Catholic Parish Hall and listen to what is on offer and take the opportunity to get involved.

What's this to do with caring for the environment, I hear you say?

If a person is unwell they do not have the time or energy to focus on anything but getting well. By looking after the community well-being we allow people the space to look after the environment and each other. Our goal - healthy people living in a healthy environment. **Contact the BCA on 47833744 if you have any enquiries.**

Spray application a key component to cane farming efficiency

BURDEKIN cane growers are getting a whole lot more efficiency out of their chemicals and liquid fertilisers, thanks to some innovative workshops. During the past month, "ASK GB" spray application workshops have been conducted throughout the Burdekin district. During May and June, more than 100 growers, chemical resellers and industry support staff have attended the workshops.

The workshops have been delivered as part of the Property Management Services initiative, a joint Burdekin Productivity Services and Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries collaboration under the State Government's Blueprint for the Bush to build a sustainable, liveable and prosperous rural Queensland.

"PMSI projects help producers maximise on-farm profitability through best management practices and sustainable use of our natural resources," said Avril Robinson, Farm Management Systems Officer for the Burdekin.

"Efficient chemical and fertilizer useage is an integral part of a Farm Management System designed to maximize business returns and minimize downstream effects."

"The success of the spray application workshops is a clear sign that Burdekin growers are seeking ways of improving their farming operations. Through this project, we intend to deliver growers information about efficiencies and innovations that they can implement across their whole business."

The workshops were also made possible with funding from Burdekin Dry Tropics Natural Resource Management, Nufarm and the MAFIA Grower Group.

Course presenter Graham Betts said that growers were potentially wasting precious dollars and achieving less than ideal outcomes in the application of their chemicals

and liquid fertilisers. "What it comes down to is the spray application process," Graham said.

"There are four major considerations in this process – these are the type of spray nozzles, water quality (pH, hardness, bicarbonates, dirt and algae), mixing order and weather conditions."

Additional "ASK GB" workshops are planned for coming months. It is extremely timely for growers to attend this kind of workshop. With rising fertiliser, fuel, and chemical costs, any course that shows how to reduce these inputs will be well-attended.

To learn more about the PMSI project, or to register interest in upcoming workshops, contact **BSES on 4782 5455.**



Do you have some information you want to share with our readers?

Contact Tamika on 4783 4344 with your story.