

*Mary River
Catchment Coordinating Committee*

100th General Meeting

Gympie, 16 February 2005



99 steps towards a healthy and sustainable catchment

This booklet has been prepared to commemorate the historic 100th General Meeting of the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee on Wednesday 16th February 2005, at the Gympie Civic Centre.

Introduction

For over a decade, the MRCCC has forged productive partnerships with thousands of stakeholders throughout the Mary Catchment and beyond; government at all three levels, industry, farmers, large and small rural and urban landholders, landcare and environment groups, recreational and commercial fishing interests, forestry, irrigators, Waterwatch volunteers, researchers, school students, and the list goes on.

These partnerships have triggered a phenomenal groundswell of interest and activities in natural resource management across the Mary Catchment. The wider community is beginning to understand many of the causes of environmental degradation. The farming community is embracing sustainable production as a means of increasing productivity whilst protecting natural assets. Governments at all levels now recognise that community engagement is critical to environmental repair and ecological protection. Triple bottom line objectives are now common place in strategic planning documents.

So what were the factors that led to the need for an “across the board” shift in philosophy?

In the 1990’s, the Mary River was described as one of the most degraded catchments in Queensland. European settlement resulted in extensive clearing of the riverbanks. In recent times, massive landuse change due to subdivision, population pressure and other factors together with increasing demand for water resources led to deteriorating catchment condition.

Poor management philosophy and ad hoc reaction to issues combined with limited understanding of the nature of the issues, and lack of means to speedily affect restorative action compounded the problems.

Population growth in the catchment has been consistently high for a number of years and this trend is expected to continue. Projections from the current Water Resource Plan indicate that the population of the Mary Basin will increase from 250,000 to 800,000 by 2025. This growth is already placing significant pressures on the catchment’s natural resources and the provision of community services.

Traditionally, people in the Mary River Catchment relied upon government action to address issues, and this was and still is largely seen as a government function. Increasing recognition by many of the need to operate on a broader front, tapping into collective experience, knowledge and resources of local communities, generated community interest in addressing river and catchment problems, precipitating the formation of resource management groups including the MRCCC and landcare groups.

Over the last 15 years, the MRCCC and Landcare Groups in the Mary Catchment have been repeatedly recognised for their efforts, winning numerous national and state awards and accolades. Momentum has accumulated leading to major voluntary efforts to restore key ecosystem components and maintain sustainable primary production in the Mary River Catchment. It will be an ongoing task for the MRCCC to ensure that this momentum continues to grow, and that the vision of a sustainable and productive catchment one day becomes a reality.

River a killjoy

At its present low, the Mary River below Nash’s Gully outlet, is a veritable killjoy to children playing in the filthy, smelly water.

It’s not only the slush that empties from Nash’s Gully that produces the filth.

Channon Street Bridge provides a handy rubbish tip for thoughtless town people.

Dead dogs, cats, hares, and other polluting material find a last resting place in the river-bed after a final fling over the bridge rail.

Gympie Times article - 1951

In the beginning... To gather together individuals and representatives of a range of organisations and create a cohesive and functional body that would collectively care for the Mary River Catchment, an area

close to 10,000 km², was a concept initially proposed by Guenter Kath, at the time an Upper Eel Creek Horticulturalist and NFF Support Group Chairman. Guenter believed that Governments spent a great amount of the time fixing problems which were easily foreseeable, many of which could have been avoided if a long-term vision existed. Guenter recognised that the traditional “don’t worry, we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it” attitude did not give people a chance for a long term solution to environmental damage.

Guenter believed that an inspiring vision, especially if well thought through and based on thorough research, had by itself several long term advantages; it becomes a motivating force that generates communal energies and synchronises people’s activities, and it prevents individual energies being wasted in pursuit of dreams that later become irreconcilable with society’s requirements from which conflicts of greater intensity grow.

Early in 1991, Guenter convened a Planning Meeting at the Imperial Hotel, Gympie to discuss the formation of a Mary River Catchment Committee. Members were personally selected and invited by Guenter. At it’s inaugural meeting in February 1991, a suggestion led to the group referring to themselves as the Mary River Catchment Steering Committee. This was soon changed to the Mary River Catchment Planning Committee (MRCPC), setting the scene for future meetings and activities of the infant organisation. The vision of the MRCPC was a 50 year planning model for Mary River Catchment Management.

Membership of the MRCPC

- 🐟 Guenter Kath – Chairman
- 🐟 Perry Corbet – Commercial Hardwood Forestry & Sawmilling Industries
- 🐟 John Grimmet – DPI Forestry Research
- 🐟 Graham Smith – Sustainable Farming Communities
- 🐟 Hugh Viner – Beef Industry
- 🐟 Richard Hausman – Dairy Industry
- 🐟 Peter Buchanan – Horticulture & Sugar Industries
- 🐟 Peter Watson – Profitable Primary Industries
- 🐟 Graeme Elphinstone – DPI Agricultural Production Group
- 🐟 Ed Miller – Water Resources Commission



*MRCPC Chair,
Guenter Kath*

The MRCPC established a Demographics working party, a Land use sub-committee, a Water use sub-committee and met with representatives of the Gympie Landcare Group and Industry Bodies regarding new Landsat and Geographical Information System developments.

In July 1992, the inaugural Mary River Congress was held at Maleny. This was the first formal ICM event in the Mary, primarily organised by Maleny High School Teacher, Peter Oliver with support from Barung Landcare and the MRCPC. Two hundred people including farmers, students, politicians and scientists from all over the catchment and south east Queensland gathered to discuss aspects of the River and its health. Students were heavily involved in planning and implementing activities on the day. Students also helped in welcoming participants, chairing proceedings, making presentations, and running workshops on the water quality monitoring work that they were doing as part of their school environmental education programs.

Early meetings of the MRCPC discussed the future of ICM in the Mary River Catchment, Mary River Water Supply Options and avenues for ICM Project Funding. When the State Government announced that four Queensland Catchments would be targeted for a pilot ICM Project, the Mary was not included. Consequently, a deputation from the MRCPC went to see the Queensland Minister for Primary Minister, the Hon Edmund Casey, to lobby for the Mary to be included among these pilot catchments. The deputation was successful, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The pilot ICM Program provided the funding to employ a Catchment Coordinator. A civil engineer by the name of Steve Kelly had already been making a name for himself as the Total Catchment Manager for the Clarence region in northern New South Wales. Steve applied for the Coordinator's position, even receiving a visit to his office in Grafton from Gympie Mayoress, Joan Dodt, much to the surprise of his work colleagues, who were unaware at that time that he intended to resign. Steve was appointed to the full time position of ICM Coordinator in September 1992. That same month, the DPI ICM Project Management Group met in Gympie to discuss the process of introducing ICM to the Mary catchment. The key elements of this process were:



The first Mary ICM Coordinator, Steve Kelly



Steve Kelly credits a number of individuals within the landcare movement in the Mary Catchment for their direction and support in the early days of the formation of the MRCCC.

Many of these characters are still involved with the landcare movement today, and work in partnership with the MRCCC, achieving some award winning outcomes.

- ✦ Three public consultation meetings which were held in May 1993 at Maryborough, Gympie and Kenilworth. These information evenings would be a major step in the process of forming an Integrated Catchment Management Committee for the entire catchment. The meetings collectively attracted over 250 people, with the largest attendance being at Kenilworth.
- ✦ The formation of a Steering Committee consisting of six members of the community, one DPI representative, one local government representative, the ICM Coordinator and a Community Chair. The Community members were to be decided by the community at the three meetings (two from each).
- ✦ The key interest sectors to be represented on the Coordinating Committee were to be decided by the community at the three meetings.
- ✦ The role of the Steering Committee was to act as a selection panel for the interest sector representatives, which would cease to function by the first meeting of the Coordinating Committee.

Steering group membership included:

- ✦ Mal Lanham
- ✦ Richard Hausmann
- ✦ Noel Gerritz
- ✦ David Braddock
- ✦ Allan McGrigor
- ✦ Jack Beausang
- ✦ Adrian McClintock – Chariman, Widgee Shire Council and member of the state Catchment Management Coordinating Committee
- ✦ Tom Crothers – DPI Bundaberg

With Steve in the Facilitator's Role, a planning meeting was held with the Lower Mary River Study Taskforce at Maryborough. Also, in December 1992 a video was produced, "Everyone lives in a Catchment" with a script written by Steve Kelly and Graeme

Elphinstone. The final record of an MRCPC meeting was in June 1994. One of their major achievements had been to get people thinking at the big picture level.

1993

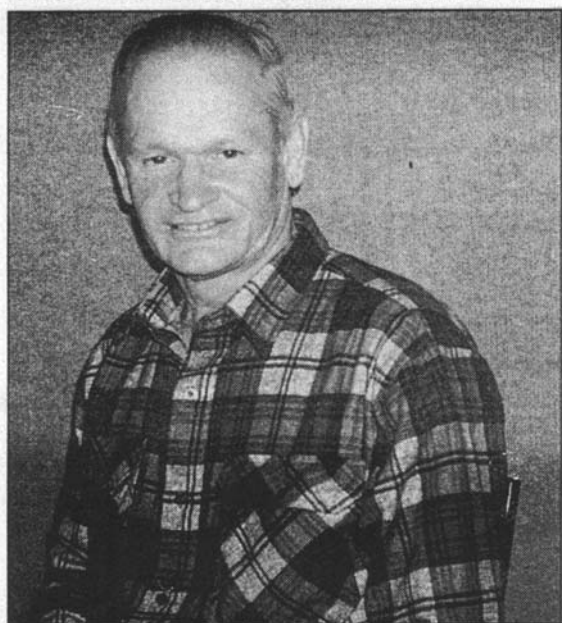
- *May - Public meetings held at Maryborough, Gympie and Kenilworth resulting in the appointment of a Community Selection panel and definition of sectors for the soon to be formed MRCCC*
- *ICM Steering Group determines sector representation for the MRCCC*
- *Land-use Study of rural subdivision blocks in the Catchment*
- *Riverbank Erosion modelling of sections of the Catchment*
- *Mary River Congress held at Kenilworth*
- *Catchment Tour*
- *Catchment Issues Workshops*
- *Inaugural meeting of the MRCCC held at Garapine, November 1993, where the MRCCC is formally launched by Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon Edmund Casey*



Above: Catchment Issues Workshop



Centre: Mary River Congress, Kenilworth and above: The launch of the MRCCC, Garapine, 1993, singing "All we are saying, is give creeks a chance"!



Left: Inaugural Chair of the MRCCC, Graham Smith

A cattle farmer from Upper Kandanga since 1979, Graham has travelled the world and has had a varied career. He is descended from a long line of farmers from Northern Ireland and prior to coming on board with the MRCCC, was Chair of the Gympie & District Landcare Group.

Graham believed that the MRCCC was a step in a positive direction, and that while the river was important, it was what was going on in the river, what we see, which was a symptom of what's going on with the Landscape. Since Chairing the MRCCC, Graham has also chaired the Rural Futures Network in Pomona, and remains committed to catchment management and landcare principles.

Following nine months of an extensive education and awareness program, the three ICM public meetings held at Gympie, Maryborough and Kenilworth resulted in the community:

- raising over one hundred issues for consideration by a Catchment Coordinating Committee
- nominating the key interest sectors to be represented on a Catchment Coordinating Committee and
- electing two members of the community from each meeting to be on an eight member ICM Steering Group comprising 6 community members, one DPI member and one local government member.

The community based Steering Group was given a mandate by the two hundred and fifty people attending the three ICM public meetings in May 1993 to select a Catchment Coordinating Committee using selection criteria developed over the previous nine months of discussions with the community. The initial MRCCC membership involved an eighteen member committee comprising:

- Thirteen community/industry representatives
- Three local government representatives
- Two state government departments represented

Primary Industries Minister, the Hon. Edmund Casey launched the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee at the Garapine Outdoor Education Centre south of Gympie on the 23rd November 1993.



At the inaugural meeting of the MRCCC pictured from left to right: Rob Priebe, Mal Lanham, Steve Kelly and Fred Murray



Right: Steve Kelly with Telecom Education Award Runners Up, Maleny High School Year 11 Students, (from left) Luke Searson and Daniel Smart at the MRCCC launch, November 1993



Left: Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon Edmund Casey, with Luke Searson and Daniel Smart at the MRCCC launch, 1993

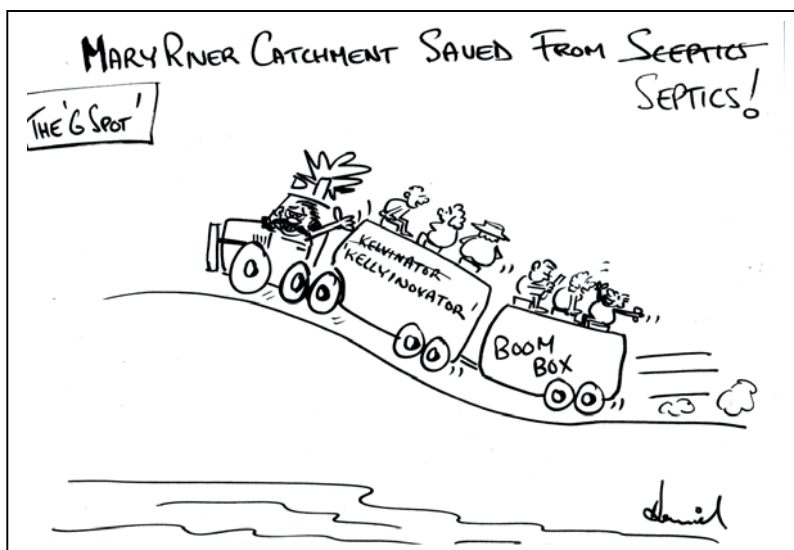
1994

- *Peter Oliver appointed as part time Waterwatch Coordinator*
- *First Catchment Crawl*
- *Roles and Goals Workshop, Forestry Centre*
- *Mary River Catchment Landuse study*
- *Statewide Catchment Care Road signage*
- *Community involvement strategy, Cod/Turtle Recovery Plan*
- *State of the Rivers Reporting*
- *Catchment Tours*
- *Establishment of the Mary Cod Working Group*
- *Water Supply Options Study*
- *Draft Constitution tabled*
- *Septic Tank Working Group*
- *Report into Water Quality of the Mary Catchment & proposed Monitoring Network*
- *LWRRDC Research Project by Griffith University on Ecological Basis for River Habitat & In-stream Flow Management*
- *PhD Study on Seagrass Death at River Heads*
- *'Take a Walk with Mary' Video produced*
- *Development of Catchment Strategy Planning process*
- *First Researchers Forum*

Waterwatch in the Mary River Catchment began in a small way in 1989, when Peter Oliver then a teacher at Maleny High came into contact with the work of Professor Stapp. He first started using the material in his classroom and, thanks to the help of the Frank Butt Foundation and others, was able to convince several other schools to become involved with Waterwatch. Early in its formation, Waterwatch was taken on as a major education and community involvement project by the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee. The Committee received funding for equipment and a part time Waterwatch Coordinator in 1993. Steve Kelly, anxious to find individuals who could propel the MRCCC towards their goals and objectives, had heard of Peter Oliver and his work. Peter was approached (headhunted) by Steve, who offered part time employment as the MRCCC's first Waterwatch Coordinator. By 1995 17 schools in the catchment and over 1500 students from Maleny to Hervey Bay and Barung, Noosa, Gympie and Kilkivan Landcare groups had all become involved in Waterwatch.



Peter Oliver water testing with school kids on the first MRCCC Catchment Crawl



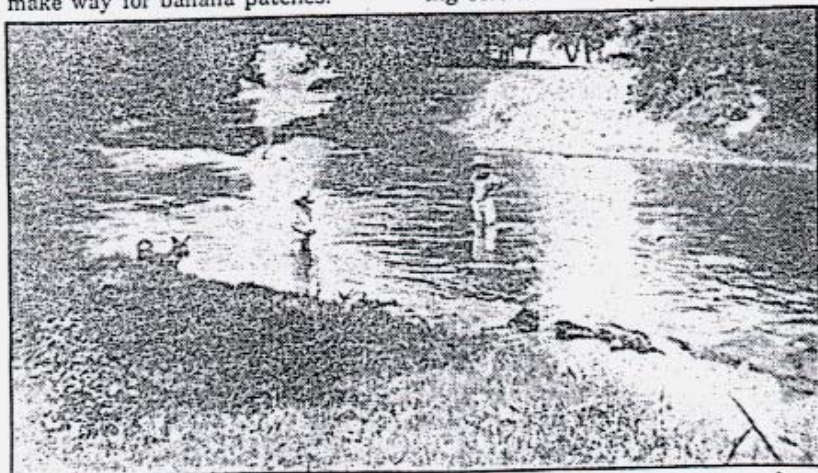
Trees went, sand came

SAND had begun to come down the Mary River in 1924, pressing small yellow banks into the up-stream ends of deep waterholes which, for centuries, had held the dark shadows of rainforest trees mirrored on clean water.

These trees held the river banks, meshed in friendly embrace by myriad roots.

Through countless wet seasons flood waters ran from steep hills, slowed and filtered through rainforests which clothed mountain side, valley and gully. On clear days those rainforests held a soft blue haze which played with distance and seemed to bring the mountains closer.

People now old will remember "Pickering's Crossing" on the Mary River at Lower Kenilworth before there was a bridge of any kind. They will recall a river beginning to fill with sand washed from alluvial flats where corn had replaced rainforest, and hill-sides where the scrub had gone to make way for banana patches.



Pickering's Crossing, Lower Kenilworth, 1924. Note sand on opposite bank.

Photo taken by the late Mrs H. Tutt.

Now the cumulative effect of settlement along the Mary River shows like a red light.

An article published in the *Gympie Times* in 1904 (extracts included in the booklet *Gheerulla (Lower Kenilworth) 75th Jubilee 1907-1982*) indicates the felling of "scrub" along the river.

SUNSHINE COAST SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Heritage

Stan Tutt

It went on year after year all along the river, from Widgee Crossing, below Gympie, to Boorobin, beyond Conondale.

Briefly, the article of 1904 lists: "Mr William Hilder settled on his 47 acres of land, 80 acres of which were standing scrub.

"Mr Alec McGinn has called his farm of 160 acres 'River View', and ten years ago when the land was taken up there were 40 acres of standing scrub.

land are comprised in the black soil flat and another 100 acres on the bank of the Mary are covered by scrub.

"Mr Alex Purdon owns 'Craiglie', a farm of 40 acres, situated on the left bank of the Mary, which includes 60 acres of felled scrub with 80 acres more of the same class waiting to be cleared."

And:

"Along the ridge at the back of the farm will be found the road that leads to 'Mount View' farm of 400 acres, owned by Mr Edward Pickering. Nine years ago he took up the land, and has since that date felled 9 acres of scrub, put 8 acres of this under the plough and planted one acre with fruit trees."

Brief paragraphs from a short chapter in the long history of the Mary River.

The first bridge across the upper Mary River was built at Lower Kenilworth at Pickering's Crossing — built by the co-operative effort of local farmers and their sons. That was in the late 1920s.

At that time there were long stretches of deep water in the Mary River. One was Gordon's "Long Hole", upstream from the bridge at Pickering's Crossing. It was more than a kilometre long, about 200m across, and deep.

Fish were plentiful in the river. A night boys used to fish from the new low-level bridge, often catching Mary River cod. There was very little traffic at night.

Floods of the 1950s tore away countless acres of alluvial soil along the river. Sand filled the big holes. By 1959 a cow could wade across the Long Hole.

Now, like the first faint smell of smoke threatening a bushfire, there are uneasy rumours of plans for major dams on the Mary to serve the booming population on the coast.

Unless the watershed is again clothed with scrub (rainforest), would a major dam on the Mary fill with sand as surely as did the once deep river? As yet an unwritten chapter in the history of a river.

February 27, 1994

Early in 1994, the MRCCC received a report from DPI Fisheries, Deception Bay on the severe decline of numbers of the endangered Mary River Cod and their habitat. The Committee formed a working group to investigate options for survival and sustainable management of the Mary River Cod. The report noted that the largest remaining populations of Cod occurred in the Tinana/Coondoo Creek and the Six Mile sub catchment.



1994 - Construction of a rail crossing over Six Mile Creek, an area of known Cod habitat

Big cod landed

Mr. J. MacLeod, newsagent Monkland, who is a keen fisherman, has been hauling some fine cod from the river.

On Saturday night he beat all his previous records with one that must have gone at least 40lbs.

Our informant still lived in hopes of getting a dream fish to beat Mr. MacLeod's record.

Gympie Times - 1918

In November 1994, Steve Kelly and Jan Tilden from the Threatened Species Network, collaborated to develop a strategy to involve the community in activities aimed at raising awareness of the endangered Mary River Cod and the little known Mary River Turtle. The general principles of the strategy were:

- To involve the community in development of a plan
- To use existing groups/networks in preference to establishing new mechanisms
- Recognition that Cod/Turtle recovery would not occur with community involvement and ownership in implementation of the plan
- That community involvement would be backed by good science
- That community involvement is most effective when the community can relate to tangible on-ground outcomes. The

Strategy aimed to involve numerous sectors from the wider community including commercial and recreational fishing organisations, landcare and conservation groups, schools, industry, councils, irrigators and the fish hatcheries at Borumba Dam and Lake Macdonald. During 1994, the Mary River Cod Recovery was formed involving representatives of numerous organisations.



Please contact MRCCC if you know the names of the two people in this archive photo from Steve Kelly.....

1995

- *Voluntary Riverbank Restoration Grants Scheme – project commenced as a result of Cooloola Shire Community Survey. Funds received from CSC & Federal Govt*
- *Hey Slow Down booklet produced*
- *Mary River Cod Forum held*
- *MRCCC becomes Incorporated*
- *First Mary Catchment Mayors Forum, Gympie*
- *Researchers Forum - detailing the research conducted in the Mary*
- *Sand & Gravel Extraction Report by DPI*
- *Knowledge, Research & Education Working Group formed*
- *First Annual General Meeting of MRCCC*
- *Sand & Gravel Extraction Field Day*

Right: VRRGS Project Coordinator, Allan McGrigor explains how eroding riverbanks can be restored...

The Voluntary Riverbank Restoration Grant Scheme (VRRGS) was established to provide landholders with an incentive to rehabilitate their riparian land. Grants were provided to landholders on a 2:1 basis to fund riparian fencing, installation of off-stream watering points and hardened creek crossings, woody weed removal and regeneration of riparian species. On ground actions were aimed at increasing river bank stability, improving water quality and better drought management. The Scheme was kick started by a \$50,000 cash contribution from Cooloola Shire as part of the introduction of their Environment Levy and a \$140,000 Drought Landcare grant. Allan McGrigor was the first Project Coordinator. At that stage Cooloola Shire was the employment agent.

The VRRGS continued until 2000, with support from the Greening Australia through the National Corridors of Green Program, and Bushcare through the Natural Heritage Trust. The Scheme ultimately involved 225 landholders who collectively established 180 km of streambank fencing, planted 100,000 trees, installed 150 off stream watering points, excluded 15,000 head of cattle from riparian zones and generated over \$1.2 million dollars in cash and in-kind contributions.

The VRRGS was the first devolved grant scheme to operate in Queensland, and it's successful outcomes resulted in the MRCCC winning the Queensland Rivercare Award in 1999.



In response to a DPI Water Resources options paper outlining three options seeking to enhance sustainable management and limit extraction of this resource, the MRCCC worked with the Department to conduct a consultation process. A meeting was held in Gympie in May 1995, to release this document, provide some explanation and elicit comment. Some sixty interested people attended this meeting which was chaired by the Graham Smith and facilitated by Steve Kelly, with the assistance of Graeme Elphinstone and officers of Water Resources. The second meeting held on 28 June 1995, was again well attended. The MRCCC was asked to arrange a Reference panel to look at, and report on the submissions presented by any interested persons or party. The conflict resolution process used here represented a significant innovation to democratic process whereby submissions from the public were handled by a committee representing the affected community.



Above: Steve Kelly stands on a severely degraded bank of the Gympie town reach of the Mary River



SOME problems with the river are found in floods.

Councils play a part

WITH 12 local government authorities having some responsibility for the Mary River Catchment, the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) initiated a Mayors' Forum in Maryborough in 1995 to forge closer links between local government and Integrated Catchment Management (ICM).

The forum comprised the mayors of Hervey Bay City Council, Maryborough City Council, Cooloolool Shire Council, Noosa Shire Council, Marooch Chy Shire Council, Caloundra City Council, Woocoo Shire Council, Tiaro Shire Council, Kilkivan Shire Council, Kilcoy Shire Council, Biggenden Shire Council and Caboolture Shire Council.

A significant outcome of the first Mayors' Forum was a request by the mayors for the MRCCC to produce a Catchment Management Strategy, which has since been produced, and contributions from a number of councils toward Waterwatch, which, as a result, is now more secure, with more reliable equipment and greater links with councils.

A second Mayors' Forum was held in Gympie in April 1996, and a third is

planned for Maleny in 1997.

MRCCC chairman Graham Smith said there was no doubt that the cooperation between local authorities and the MRCCC had contributed significantly to successful federal and state funding submissions.

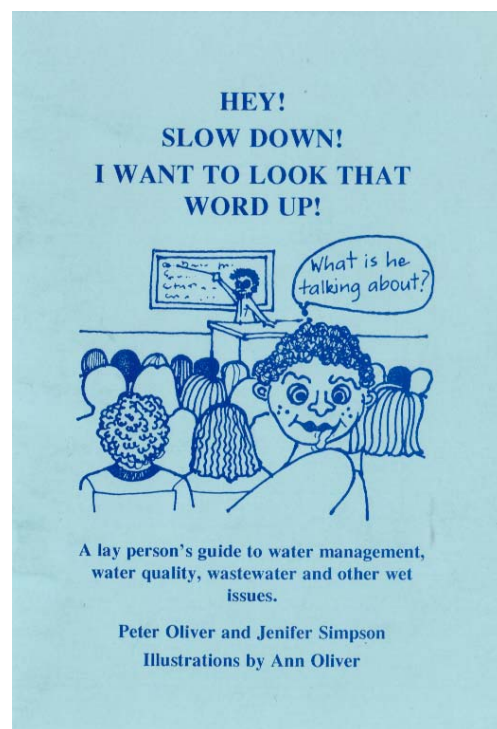
"These submissions involving Waterwatch, the Voluntary Riverbank Restoration Grants Scheme and four riverine projects involving the National Riparian Zone Program are key projects delivering strategic outcomes in catchment management in the Mary," he said.

"The recent round of National Landcare Program and ICM funding has seen the MRCCC submit funding submissions totalling \$1.5 million, including a major land resource assessment project across the catchment. I believe the majority will be successful — again the links with councils being significant."

In coming months the MRCCC will be acting on the priority actions suggested at the last Mayors' Forum — in particular the MRCCC has already written to the Minister for Natural Resources, Howard Hobbs, supporting Cooloolool Shire Council Mayor Adrian McClintock's deputation on accelerating the raising of Borumba Dam.

The first Mary Catchment Mayors Forum was held in Gympie in March 1995. The MRCCC organised the Forum intending to lobby local government in the catchment for funds to continue the Waterwatch program. However, Fred Kleinschmidt, then Mayor of Hervey Bay, advised the Committee that it had set its sights too low and that it should be aiming for council support for a number of initiatives aimed at sustaining the Mary River. The Mayors agreed to take a number of proposals back to their councils, which would focus on the interlocking responsibilities of

authorities in the Mary River Catchment. MRCCC Chair, Graham Smith noted that one of the most important matters raised at the Forum was the issue of high water demands placed on the Mary River. The 1995 Mayors Forum was described as a historic event, as this was the first time that the Mayors had come together to discuss issues relating to the Mary River.



The MRCCC's Environment Sector Delegate, Jenifer Simpson, collaborated with Peter and

Ann Oliver to produce the "Hey Slow Down" booklet in 1995. The booklet was designed to help the "man on the street" understand some of the basic terms relating to water management, water quality, wastewater and other wet issues. The MRCCC subsequently reprinted this booklet in 1993, and it is still widely circulated to schools and individuals today.

1996

- *Draft Catchment Strategy endorsed*
- *Peter Buchanan appointed as Chair of MRCCC*
- *LWRRDC funded Riparian Revegetation Demo sites*
- *Mary River Cod Recovery Team formed.*
- *Mayors Forum*
- *Waste-water Working Group formed*
- *Extractive Industry Reference Panel formed*
- *LWRRDC funded River Processes Workshop at Conondale*
- *Mary River Congress, Maryborough incorporating youth parliament*
- *Farm Forestry sector representation included*
- *Feedlot Working Group formed*
- *Land Valuation Working Group formed*
- *Landcare Forum established*
- *State of the Rivers Reporting finalised*
- *Draft Management Plan for Sand & Gravel Extraction*
- *Riffle project, Kenilworth*
- *Crystal Waters Fishway*

The first draft of the Mary Catchment Strategy was developed in 1996 together with position statements on contentious issues of the time in the Mary e.g. sand and gravel extraction, bamboo, water supplies, feedlots, woodchipping. Public meetings were held to enable community consultation on the draft. These meetings generated invaluable and positive input. The draft Catchment Strategy was developed to provide a framework which would lessen and reverse negative impacts on the catchment. Also catchment-wide septic tank guidelines, and catchment-wide Pest Management Programs were being developed.



MRCCC Chair, Graham Smith ignites the cannon and opens the 1996 Mary River Congress at Maryborough

The 1996 Mary River Congress held in Maryborough had an overwhelming response from schools throughout the catchment, attracting over 200 students and hundreds of adults. This Congress featured an activity entitled "Build A Catchment Out of People". A remarkable survey from students of the Maryborough Primary School identified, amongst other things, that the term 'catchment' was little understood. The Congress also featured a Youth Parliament where students debated issues relating to the catchment.



"Elpho" regales students at the Mary River Congress 1996

LWRRDC Newbury Workshop - In March 1996 Canadian stream restoration specialist Dr Bob Newbury joined with Stuart Bunn from Griffith University and others to run a Workshop at Crystal Waters on stream hydrology and geometry and their relationship to stream habitats. Principles from the workshop were applied to a number of demonstration projects in the Upper Mary.



Field Component of Newbury Workshop

ICM – Cooloola Conservation Rate Rebate - In 1996 the Committee initiated the first ever ICM Grant for Nature Conservation Area Rate Rebates in partnership with the Cooloola Shire Council which by 1999 had resulted in voluntary conservation agreements entered over 711 ha of important remnants in the catchment.



DNR's Bob Watson makes a point at the Newbury Workshop, Crystal Waters

Draft Riparian Zone Position Statement –

Published in 1996 this document included sections on the Value of Riparian Zone Planning and Management. It included a position which stated that “it must be recognised that landowners can manage riparian zones on behalf of the broader community and that the broader community is prepared to assist in paying for this management.” It also set out a suggested clause to be included in Local Government Strategic Plans, which was subsequently included in the Cooloola Shire 1997 Planning Scheme.

Crystal Waters Fishway – In partnership with DNR Riverine Project Officer Damon Telfer, cost effective fish passage was restored in the Upper Mary near Crystal Waters community. It involved the local community in planning and contributions from Caloundra Council and extractors.

Working Groups – By 1996, the MRCCC had established 13 Working Groups including the: Cod Working Group, Wastewater Working Group, Vegetation Management Group, Education and Awareness Working Group, VRRGS Management Committee, Research and Information Working Group, Riparian Policy Working Group, Riparian Projects Working Group, Sand and Gravel Reference Panel, Extractive Industry Policy Working Group, Subdivision Policy Working Group and Land Valuation Working Group.

1997

- **Endorsed Mary Catchment Strategy released**
- **First community Riverbank Restoration undertaken at King's property, Conondale**
- **COG Consortium formed**
- **Mayors Forum**
- **Strategy Implementation Officer employed**
- **Dairy Effluent Management project commenced**
- **Wide Bay 2020 established**
- **Runner Up in QLD BP Landcare – Catchment Award**
- **Mary Catchment Land-use Study commissioned**
- **Gympie - Imbil Land Resource Assessment**
- **Mary River Congress**
- **Mary Water Allocation Management Plan (WAMP) commenced**
- **Brian Stockwell appointed as full-time Catchment Coordinator**
- **Maryborough – Hervey Land Resource Assessment**

Right: King's project Conondale - the first large scale collaborative riverbank restoration project undertaken in the Mary

In 1997, the MRCCC collaborated with DNR Riverine Projects Officer Damon Telfer and numerous other community organisations and commercial sponsors to undertake the first major attempt at riverbank restoration in the Mary. Approximately 1 km of riverbank was stabilised at the King's property on the Mary River at Conondale.

Mesh embayments were erected and a 25 m wide strip of revegetation was planted aimed at halting serious bank erosion that had occurred at the site. Numerous local, regional, interstate and international visitors have since visited the site.



1997 Annual General Meeting - In the 1997 Annual Report, MRCCC Chair Peter Buchanan stated, "Whilst at times we may think that progress of our many goals seem slow, I believe it doesn't hurt us to stop and think that given the fact that we are a voluntary organisation we now are currently handling or in the process of receiving funding in excess of \$500,000 on various projects."



Above: Meeting of the Mary Cod Recovery Team

Cod Recovery - Also during 1997, the plight of threatened species in the

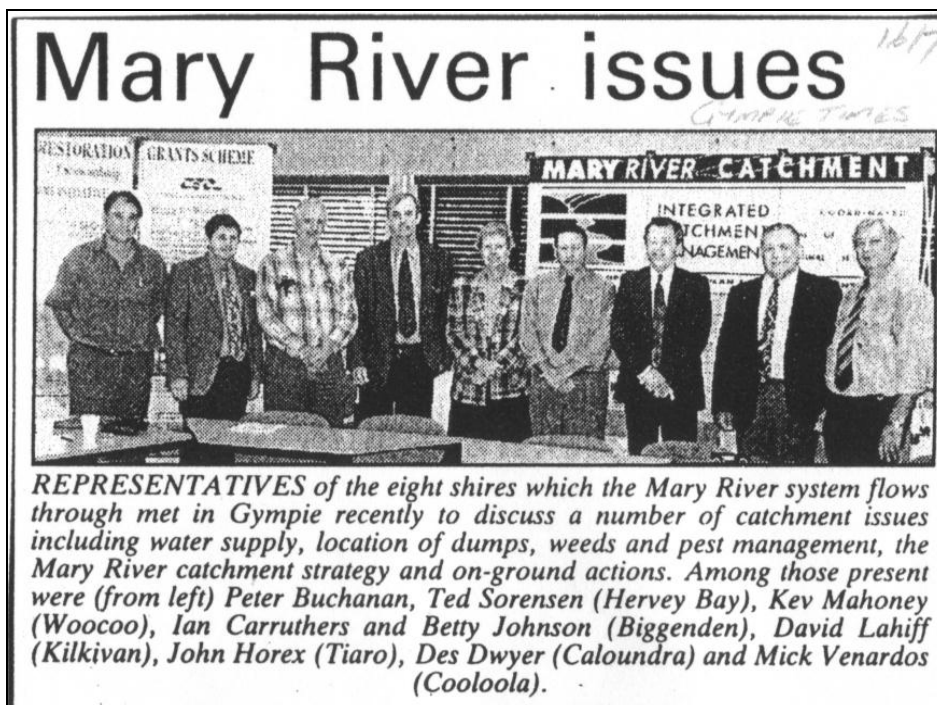
catchment, in particular the endangered Mary River Cod, was being highlighted through the Mary River Cod Recovery Team, based at Maleny. A member of the team, DPI Fisheries Biologist Bob Simpson, had commenced a two year study to determine habitat requirements for Cod. Funded by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, the study involved implanting radio transmitter tracking devices to a dozen of the rare fish.

The study revealed that Cod travelled as far as and possibly further than 25 km through the river system during periods of high water levels. The study also investigated improving hatchery requirements to enable reliable production of Mary River Cod, determine best strains for restocking, develop broodstock

management techniques and investigate artificial structures such as plastic pipes to enhance spawning.

1997 Mayor's Forum

This year's Mayors Forum in Gympie discussed implementation mechanisms for the Mary Catchment Strategy and other key issues such as catchment-wide pest management plans, water supply and placement and management of dump sites. This was a very topical issue at the time, as Maroochy Shire had released details of their



proposals to build a super dump at Belli, resuming a portion of the MRCCC's Community Delegate Geoff Wellington's property. The MRCCC subsequently sent a delegation to Brisbane to discuss the issue of landfill sites in the region with Hon. Di McCauley, Minister for Local Government and Planning.

1998

- **Catchment Strategy Launch**
- **WWF Cod Mapping commenced**
- **LWRRDC Riparian Revegetation Booklet produced**
- **LWRRDC Cost/Benefit Analysis of riparian rehabilitation conducted**
- **LWRRDC funded Riparian Landholder Attitudinal Survey**
- **Mary River Congress**
- **Over 2000 students in the Catchment involved with Waterwatch**
- **Brad Wedlock employed part time as VRRGS Coordinator**
- **Mayors Forum**
- **Catchment Tour**
- **Presentations to Local Government**
- **Catchment Committee Evaluation Survey**
- **Evaluation of VRRGS project**
- **Quilting the Catchment – Planning Forum**
- **Rural Sector Forum**
- **Wildlife & Nature Working Group**

At the 1998 Annual General Meeting, the MRCCC launched the Mary Action 2000 Plan. This was an ambitious plan aiming to make the Mary the most active Catchment in the country by the year 2000, through motivating as many individuals, community groups, industry and government sectors as possible to become actively involved in the implementation of the Mary River Catchment Strategy.

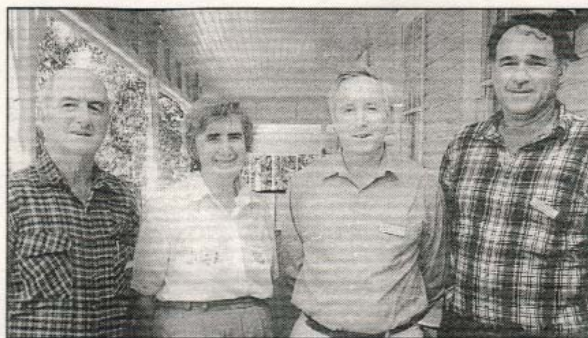
Group promotes river action plan

CONTINUING chairman of the Mary River Catchment Co-ordinating Committee Peter Buchanan has received unanimous support for his plan to make the Mary River the most active catchment in the country by the Year 2000.

The scheme, entitled Mary Action 2000, was launched at the recent annual general meeting of the committee held by the river at Gunabul Homestead.

The meeting placed a vote of confidence in the co-ordinating committee's executive with the positions of chair, deputy chair and secretary being filled by the incumbents.

Well-known Gympie dairy farmer David Burnett was welcomed to the executive committee as treasurer.



MARY RIVER ACTION: Executive members of the Mary River Catchment Co-ordinating Committee which met at Gunabul for the annual general meeting are (from left) deputy chairman Geoff Wellington, secretary Margaret Thompson, treasurer David Burnett and chairman Peter Buchanan.

The farm forestry sector, represented by Graeme Hughes, was admitted to full membership of the committee, a move which recognises the important role this fledgling industry will have in improving the health of the catchment.

Increasing recognition of the role of catchment

management to the Great Sandy Strait led to the Urangan Fisheries nominating Elaine Lewthwaite to represent the interests of commercial fisheries on the committee.

The community in the lower end of the catchment will have the opportunity to nominate for a new position created at the meeting with

the successful delegate to represent the interests of people from Tiara north.

Expressions of interest in this position will be called for later this month.

Anyone interested in finding out more about Mary Action 2000 can contact Brian Stockwell on Ph: 5482 1522.

COAST

LWRRDC Cost Benefit Analysis – In 1998, the MRCCC commissioned consultants to: "Measure the effects of on farm enterprise profitability, and the overall costs and benefits, of riparian restoration." Nine case studies covering beef and dairy farmers participating in the VRRGS showed broad financial justification of riparian restoration with 3 farms having a benefit/cost ratio greater than one.

LWRRDC Riparian Landholder Attitude Survey - Alliance Resource Economics were contracted to undertake a study that

focused on the identification and analysis of the awareness and understanding possessed by riparian landholders regarding the role and function of riparian lands within the Mary River Catchment. Almost 200 responses provided a useful insight into the factors influencing uptake and the motivations which drove people to manage riparian zones and floodplains.

Strategy Working Groups – A key element of the inclusive approach utilised in the implementation of the Catchment Strategy was the formulation of eight implementation working groups and the holding of targeted forums for different sectors/issues. The working groups each covered one of the 8 key action areas identified in the strategy and aimed to achieve an increased commitment to strategy implementation. Participation in the working group framework was diverse with a total of 64 representatives from 10 industry groups, 13 community groups, 6 councils, and 5 government departments.



Above: Dairy Effluent grants provided funds for off stream watering points and effluent ponds, enabling effluent to be sustainably managed

Dairy Effluent Assistance Grants - The MRCCC commenced this grant scheme which resulted in approximately 33% of all dairy farms in the catchment upgrading their management systems to comply with the latest environmental codes. This ensured that effluent from around 6000 dairy cattle was sustainably managed. The reused effluent equated to the reduction of nutrients potentially entering waterways of 55 tonnes Urea, 66 tonnes Super and 162 tonnes Muriate of Potash.

1998 Mary Water Summit – The Mary Water Summit aimed to improve the sustainable management of water resources and plan future water supply options involving all major Councils in the catchment. A total of 45 people including Mayors, Councillors, engineers, committee members, and relevant government officers attended, achieving broad support for limiting access to new water pending a Water Allocation Management Plan.

Quilting the Catchment Forum – Approximately 50 Community Nature Conservation Group Reps, Council Planners, Environment Officers and state government officers attended this forum which aimed to facilitate cooperative mechanisms and increase linkages and

action between shires to conserve areas of remnant vegetation and improve management of these areas (eg environmental weeds strategies) in conjunction with a range of community groups.

Rural Sector Forum – 'Fostering Sustainable Production' – This forum involved 40 representatives from Dairy, Beef, Sugar, Horticulture, Tree Crops and Farm Forestry industries. The forum identified current activities to enhance sustainable management in rural production activities and increase promotion of these through industry sectors and development of Best Management Practice. .

Landcare Forums - Commencing in 1998 three forums were held over a 12 month period aiming to increase communication between 8 Landcare and Catchment Care Groups in the catchment. This helped groups learn from each other and increase cooperative effort in the implementation of Catchment Strategy actions. Themes included "Open Channels-Healthy Flows" & "Consolidating Consortiums". In addition a bus load of key industry, departmental, community and Council representatives took to the field as part of the Committee's plan to meet with Local Landcare Groups in the Lower Mary.



One of the first Mary River Riffle Projects

Soil Acidity Management Plan - In association with the DPI and DNR, the MRCCC facilitated the first ever Soil Acidity Management Plan in Queensland which was also understood to be the first catchment-based SAMP in Australia.

1999

- *Community Meetings held following 1 in 100 year flood*
- *Maryborough - Tiaro Land Resource Assessment*
- *Catchment Resource Centre moved to Dairyfarmers Complex*
- *Researchers Forum*
- *Landcare Forum*
- *Lake Macdonald Catchment Care Group formed in conjunction with Noosa Council*
- *VRRGS project finalised*
- *QLD Rivercare Award*
- *Mayors Forum - Kenilworth*
- *MRCCC Website established*
- *Mary Catchment Atlas and Land-use Study produced*
- *Land Management Practice Working Group Formed*
- *LWRRDC funded Large Woody Debris Workshop at Kenilworth by Scott Babekeiff (Canadian Geomorphologist)*
- *Managing Water Quality/Quantity Working Group*

The announcement of the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee as the winner of the Rivercare Award at the biennial Queensland Landcare Awards in July '99 provided a great boost to its members, according to MRCCC Chair, Peter Buchanan. "A lot of people on the committee and within the community have volunteered hundreds of hours of their time to achieve a wide range of on-ground environmental outcomes which have been recognised in these awards."



Swirling flood waters were 21 metres above normal river levels in some parts of the Mary River in 1999.

The February 1999 Floods were the largest recorded this century for most parts of the Mary River Catchment. A survey of over 100 landholders involved in the Riverbank Grants scheme was undertaken to identify the extent of damage to fences, revegetation and extent of erosion at a sample of 33% of project sites. Of those surveyed, 42% sustained no erosion to their project while 34% said their site was much better than unprotected sites.

Mary River Catchment Researcher's Forum - Research, Reachout, Restore

In May '99, the MRCCC held a forum for researchers in the Mary Catchment. The agenda featured 25 speakers from a number of major universities and government departments, including Dr Ian Rutherford from Monash University who was also the project leader of the waterway management division of the Cooperative Research Centre for Catchment Hydrology. The forum attracted 130 government, catchment management and Landcare representatives as well as university students from around South

East Queensland. The agenda covered issues as diverse as how frogs can be used to assess catchment health, tracking radio tagged lungfish, counting bugs in streams and measuring nutrients moving through the soil of dairy farms.

Kenilworth Mayor's Forum – In May, Mayors from Hervey Bay to Maroochy met at Kenilworth to discuss planning for the future of the Mary River Catchment. Issues discussed included how catchment management provisions could be included in revised Planning Schemes being developed under the state government's new guidelines to protect and improve the health of the river. The concept of a Mary River Rehabilitation Plan was born at this meeting.

Catchment Community Meetings - Living On The Flood Plain

Residents of the Conondale, Imbil, Gympie and Lower Mary districts were given an opportunity to tell their flood stories at a round of meetings to collect both recent and historical information from people who live along the Mary River and its tributaries. The committee's aim was to record anecdotes from landholders about a range of catchment factors including the effects of flooding, the health of creek bank vegetation and changes in water courses over time.



The Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee 1999



Lake Macdonald Catchment Care Group meeting at Noosa

Formation of the Lake Macdonald Catchment Care Group

- In conjunction with Noosa Landcare and Noosa Council, the MRCCC initiated the formation of a Lake Macdonald Catchment Care group. The aim was to improve the downstream water quality from this sub-catchment, address major aquatic weed problems, reduce water treatment costs and improve

environmental values, through community based activities and incentives. This group has now harnessed over \$1million of funds to this effort and inspired state, national and international endeavours.

Kenilworth River Restoration Training Course and 3 Farmers And A Foreigner

In November 99, Kenilworth was the Queensland base for a river restoration training course run by international river restoration specialist, Scott Babakeiff, a "Fluvial Geomorphologist" from British Columbia. To commence the training course, a community meeting was organised to allow local people interested in the river and the Obi Obi Creek to find out about the latest restoration techniques. The course resulted in the MRCCC leading the nation in the use of large woody debris as a restoration technique.



River Restoration Training Course participants

Final Report, LWWRDC– Demonstration and

Evaluation Project was completed after months of physical evaluation of tree growth in demonstration plots and the effects of riffle and fish way restoration projects on the stability stream banks and beds.

2000

- *Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan devolved grant scheme commenced with funding from local government and the Natural Heritage Trust*
- *Waterwatch Community Network commenced*
- *Tiaro - Gundiah Land Resource Assessment*
- *Landcare Forum*
- *Rivers of the Range Congress*
- *WWF Mapping finished*
- *DNR Rivercare Officer appointed*
- *Rolling Rehabilitation Fund put to the Mayors Forum - Noosa*
- *Catchment Coordinator position not renewed*
- *Final Report & evaluation completed of the VRRGS project*
- *Future Directions Workshop*
- *Olympic Landcare Projects*
- *Managing Water Quality Workshop*
- *Legislation & Procedures Working Group formed*
- *WWF Cod Recovery Officer moved into Catchment Centre*

Noosa Shire hosted the 2000 Mayor's forum. Cr Bob Abbott set the scene with a welcome entitled "We are the Champions". This encouraged Mayors to provide inspiration and leadership to achieve sustainability in the catchment. The first draft of the Mary River Rehabilitation Plan was officially launched. Discussion also focussed on effective facilitation of future water planning, managing environmental weeds invading the catchment, and initiatives to achieve real ICM in IPA Planning Schemes.

A major initiative was achieved at the Noosa Mayors Forum with acceptance of the concept for a rolling fund for river rehabilitation, of which MRCCC would be the custodians. The proposal involved a cash contribution from each shire levied at 0.03 cents/kilolitre of water extracted from the Mary River. Maroochy, Noosa, Cooloola, Kilkivan, Hervey Bay and Caloundra Councils were the first shires to contribute to this fund, which, when combined with Rivercare Grant funds from the Natural Heritage Trust, enabled landholders to access grant funds for riparian restoration projects in each shire

Olympic Landcare Community Tree Plantings - The MRCCC



Olympic Landcare "Power Plant" adjacent to Lake Macdonald

joined with smaller Landcare and Catchment Care groups in the catchment to organise 4 Olympic Landcare Tree Plantings throughout the catchment (Kenilworth, Belli, Cooroy and Maryborough). Each of these was dedicated to an Olympian.



Right: Polly's Island Olympic Landcare Project 2000

Future Directions Workshop– A review spanning several months identified amongst other things the following high priority roles for the MRCCC:

- Advocating to state and federal government the need for the principles, strategies and processes required for achievement of integrated catchment management outcomes to be intrinsic elements of relevant legislation and policies;
- Facilitating the process of government and community working together to plan for good natural resource management and to develop strategies to address issues;
- Intervention in circumstances where legislation/policy is contrary to the interests of the catchment,
- Listen to the concerns, aspirations and ideas of smaller natural resource management groups in the catchment and provide a united voice to government and institutions;
- Advise and influence what natural resource management actions are undertaken in the catchment; and;
- Deliver financial incentive packages to industry and landholders to improve resource management practices that achieve broader public benefits.

Rivers of the Range Congress – Approximately 300 people were involved in a series of school performances at Maleny on the theme ‘Voices from our Future’ to which a panel of parliamentarians and councillors responded. This was followed by a day of environmental education activities including sessions entitled Swimming Hole Design 101, A Fine Time with Slime, Millennium Bugs, Frogs in your Backyard, Catchment Critters, Turtle Hurdles, Mush Pots, Fish that talk, Soils that Smoke.

Mary River Cod Recovery Project

In 2000, the MRCCC shared office space in the former Dairy Farmers Butter Factory Office with the World Wide Fund for Nature’s Mary Cod Recovery Project Officer, Phil Trendell. During 2000, a variety of activities aimed at improving Community Awareness of the plight of the Mary River Cod were undertaken including displays, presentations and articles in local newsletters and media releases. Phil was also employed as the MRCCC’s part time Waterwatch Officer, providing opportunities to demonstrate how the Mary River Cod and other freshwater animals are affected by poor water quality and why it is important to have a healthy waterway. The WWF Project also provided funding to landholders to undertake rehabilitation and protection of riparian areas in areas of known Cod habitat.

Some of these sites were also included in the DPI re-stocking program including sites on Scrubby Creek, Diamondfield Creek and North Deep Creek where habitat is very suitable but where no cod have been recorded in recent times. Priority Sites included Upper Tinana Creek, expansion of work around the Yellowbelly hole on Six-Mile Creek and a two other locations along the Mary River where cod holes are located. WWF also helped participate in the LWD project on Obi Obi Creek and assisted the landholder upstream to fence off and revegetate the banks.



Above: WWF Cod Recovery Project Officer and MRCCC Waterwatch Officer, Phil Trendell, releases Mary River Cod into Six Mile Creek

2001

- *Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan finished – Project launched at River Heads*
- *Watercourse Management Manual & Catchment Atlas finalised*
- *Curra - Gundiah Land Resource Assessment*
- *Obi Obi Creek Large Woody Debris project*
- *Landcare Forum*
- *Mary Cod Recovery plan endorsed by Environment Australia*
- *Mary River Turtle Recovery Project commenced*
- *QLD Catchment – Landcare Award*
- *Major educational project at Highfield, Six Mile Creek*
- *Mayors Forum – Tiaro*
- *Extractive Industry inspection of sites*
- *Joint EPA/MRCCC community turbidity monitoring commenced*

The Hon Warren Truss, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Hervey Bay Mayor, Ted Sorensen launched the Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan at the mouth of the Mary at River Heads in July 2001. Auntie Olga Miller, Elder of the Butchalla people told a story on the mouth of the Mary and Susan Rivers, and students from Yarralea State School gave presentations on how they would like to see the estuary of the Mary River managed. A range of industries and primary producers in the Mary donated local produce including prime beef, seafood, cheese, milk, vegetables and even local wine, which highlighted the quality and diversity of the produce of the catchment.

The implementation edition of the Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan was completed in 2001. The overall purpose of the plan is to prioritise rehabilitation effort on a reach-by-reach basis. The Plan identifies the processes leading to the current condition of the river and tributaries. Importantly it outlines key strategies that are required to be implemented by the Mary River catchment community in order to halt the continued degradation of our waterways. The long-term objective of the plan is to protect waterways of conservation value, while rehabilitating and restoring degraded reaches in a more strategic and cost-effective manner than has occurred in the past, to achieve a shared vision of the future. The innovative Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan was the first of its kind in Queensland, and one of the major factors in the MRCCC winning the 2001 Queensland Landcare Catchment Award.



Above: The 2001 award winning Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee



Above: The Hon Warren Truss, MRCCC Chair Jim Buchanan, Ashton Berry and Hervey Bay Mayor, Ted Sorensen, launch the Good Shin Marv at River Heads in July 2001.

Right: The first recipients of Rivercare Grants through the MRTRP Program with Federal Member for Fairfax, Alex Somlyay (far right) at a cheque handover ceremony at the Lake Macdonald amphitheatre, 2001



National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

Following the Federal Government's endorsement of a National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the Chairs of the Burnett Catchment Care Association (BCCA) and the (MRCCC) convened a meeting of community representatives at Kilkivan in May 2001 to gauge community feedback on forming a Regional Management Committee in the Burnett Mary under the NAPSQ. Two meetings were subsequently held in Gympie and Childers. At the Childers forum, a steering committee was formed to finalise the Regional Body, which ultimately consisted of three local government representatives, three community/conservation representatives and three industry representatives. The Steering Committee also determined that the Regional Body would have an independent Chair. The formation of the Burnett Mary Regional Group for Natural Resource Management foreshadowed withdrawal of state agency support for the MRCCC. By the end of 2000, ICM Coordinator, Brian Stockwell was no longer primarily responsible for coordinating the activities of the MRCCC.

Obi Obi Creek Large Woody Debris Project - A reach mid-way along Obi Obi Creek was identified



Above: Brad Wedlock in front of a large root wad destined to become future Cod habitat

to trial the installation of large woody debris (LWD). The reach chosen had reasonable riparian vegetation, instream habitat and a small amount of LWD. The site was a 4 metre high and 15 metres long sheer eroding bank. The method chosen was bank revetment, which consisted of 6 large lateral logs with rootballs and two large parallel logs. The logs were secured with a combination of ballast rocks and anchors. There were also two large hollowed logs installed instream, which were deemed suitable for cod spawning. In conjunction with the LWD addition project there was an intensive weed removal (mainly Madeira vine) and revegetation project. The reach was surveyed and monitored to assess the pre and post treatment environmental conditions. Cod fingerlings were subsequently released at this site, and local landholders have

since contacted the MRCCC to advise that the Cod appear to have returned to this section of Obi Obi Creek.

Community Waterwatch Networks - In 2001, the MRCCC approached riparian landholders with a view to establishing Community Waterwatch Networks in partnership with EPA with the aim of collecting baseline water quality data from all over the Mary River Catchment. Volunteers throughout the catchment were trained to monitor water quality data, with an emphasis on movement of sediment throughout the river and its tributaries. The start of the Community Monitoring Networks highlighted the need for a comprehensive quality control program for Waterwatch, as well as more equipment to enable the networks to expand into new areas.

2002

- *Catchment Strategy Review*
- *Lower Obi Obi Ck Rehabilitation Plan commenced*
- *Landcare Forum*
- *Mary Turtle Forum held*
- *Mary WRP Community Forums commenced*
- *Mayors Forum – Maryborough*
- *Friends of Kilcoy Creek project initiated*
- *Threatened Species Network “Living with threatened Species in the Kenilworth area” project commenced*
- *Hey Slow Down booklet reprint*
- *Large Woody Debris project in conjunction with Maroochy Shire*
- *Commencement of Lake Macdonald projects*
- *National Water Week Catchment Crawl*

Community Waterwatch Networks - As the MRCCC continued to expand the Community Waterwatch networks, the challenge for Waterwatch Volunteers in 2002 was finding enough water to sample. Many Creeks were dry and the mighty Mary slowed to a trickle with only irrigation water released from Lakes Borumba, Baroon and the Obi Obi Creek. Numerous fish kills were reported and water restrictions posted. Nevertheless, or perhaps as a result of the lack of water, the Mary River Waterwatch Network had a very successful year, continuing to collaborate with EPA to gather turbidity readings throughout the catchment.

The Lake Macdonald Catchment Care Group (LMCCG) was formed in April 1999. The Group's foundation issue was and still is the Cabomba weed problem in Lake Macdonald. After 6 years of intense research by members of LMCCG, no native underwater plants were found in Lake Macdonald. Cabomba had established a virtual monoculture. In 2002, the group was successful in receiving funding through the Weeds of National Significance Program to undertake two projects aimed at improving community awareness of the Cabomba weed and propagating local aquatic plants for replanting areas of the lake. Lake Macdonald feeds into Six Mile Creek near Cooroy and is the water storage facility for Noosa Shire. Noosa Shire Council purchased a mechanical harvester designed to remove the plant canopy, including the stem tips at the water surface, thus reducing potential spread downstream. The lake and its tributaries are habitat for the Mary River Cod and the Purple Spotted Gudgeon. The habitat alterations caused by the prolific growth of Cabomba a significant risk to the populations of these species in the lake.



Above: Cooroy Primary School students at Lake Macdonald planting native aquatic plants

pose



Above: EPA's Sara Johnson training Waterwatch volunteers at the Kilkivan showgrounds

Review of Strategic Directions - A Strategy Review Group consisting of industry, community, Council and state government representatives was set up to initiate the review process. This group broadly scoped the current situation and past performance of the MRCCC and the implementation of its Strategy. It was resolved from this series of meetings to consolidate and refocus the group's role and strategy on those elements which have been successful in the past, and emerging priorities within the current natural resource management environment. In order to analyse current and emerging priorities in more detail a series of "expert-experience panels" were set up to refocus the Strategy to ensure its relevance in the preparation of a Regional Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality & Local Government IPA Schemes. This processes culminated with a 'Citizen's Jury' of community and industry leaders and the publication of the Draft Strategic Directions Report in 2002.

Cooroy Mountain - Upper Six Mile Creek Rivercare Project - This collaborative project involved many different community groups and organisations, including the MRCCC, Noosa Landcare, Noosa Council, WWF, the Lake Macdonald Catchment Care Group, the Gerry Cook Fish Hatchery, local schools and landholders, Sean and Lee Rothsey. The project established over 15 kilometres of streambank fencing and planted 25,000 native riparian seedlings along Six Mile Creek from Beauty



Above: Noosaville Primary School students learn about macroinvertebrates from the MRCCC's Waterwatch Coordinator, Phil Berrill at Highfield on the Six Mile Creek

Falls near the foothills of Mt Cooroy almost to Lake Macdonald. This section of creek has numerous snags, large woody debris, pools and riffles to support Mary River Cod and consequently 500 fingerlings were released at this site. The project generated significant television and newspaper coverage, further enhancing awareness of riparian zone issues in the wider community. The Director General of the Environment Protection Agency has also visited the project.

A Water Resource Plan for the Mary Basin - During May 2002, the Hon Stephen Robertson MP, Minister for Natural Resource & Mines signed the information report draft Water Resource Plan for the Mary Basin. Over many years, the MRCCC had voiced its concern about the inter-basin transfer of water, mainly to supply an ever increasing coastal population. A number of MRCCC Delegates were representatives on some of the thirteen Sector Representative Groups, as well as contributing to information compiled by a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) led by Dr Sandra Brizga, which had been working over the last six months to assess current conditions and Environmental Values of the Mary Basin (including Hervey Bay).

Partnership projects – During 2002, the MRCCC worked in partnership with landcare groups and local government through the Rivercare Grants program. Rivercare Grants were provided to the Lake Macdonald Catchment Care Group for projects on Six Mile Creek, the Noosa & District Landcare Group for a major project near Cooroy Mountain, Barung Landcare for a project on Obi Obi Creek, the Tiaro & District Landcare Group for projects aimed at protecting Mary River Turtle nesting sites, the Gympie & District Landcare Group for a major project on the lower Six Mile Creek and the Lower Mary Landcare Group. Rivercare Coordinator, Brad Wedlock, also took a leading role in negotiations with Noosa, Cooloola, Maroochy, and Caloundra Shire Councils.

2003

- *Old Catchment/Landcare Award*
- *Old Rivercare Award Monitoring and Evaluation Report for Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan produced*
- *Cabomba Mapping Project commenced*
- *Cabomba Re-use Project commenced*
- *Kilcoy Creek Rivercare Project Commenced*
- *Secretariat for 2003 State Landcare Conference held in Gympie*
- *Establishment of Kenilworth Croakers threatened species project*
- *Establishment of 7 community Waterwatch networks involving over 60 volunteers monitoring 100 sites*
- *Development of Waterwatch Quality Assurance system*
- *Mayors Forum, Caloundra*
- *Continued representation on stakeholder sectors for Mary Water Resource Plan*
- *May – Salinity Catchment Crawl*
- *October – National Water Week Catchment Crawl*
- *Bundaberg Rum Bush Fund projects targeting water quality and threatened species*
- *Lower Obi Obi Creek Rehabilitation Plan*
- *2 Landcare Forums*

The Friends of Kilcoy Creek Rivercare Project on Kilcoy Creek is strategically positioned at the headwaters of the Mary River in the Conondale Ranges. It is prime habitat for the Mary River Cod, and an undescribed species of Spiny Crayfish. Locals have seen the rare Spiny Crayfish crossing the road. DPI Fisheries have released Mary River Cod in this creek, and some properties involved with the project were Land for Wildlife registered. The most significant factor of this project is the enthusiasm of the landholders involved with the project, particularly Scott Woolbank, who initiated meetings with several neighbouring landholders, which led to the formation of the 'Friends of Kilcoy Creek' (FOKC) group.

The MRCCC received funding on behalf of FOKC from the Australian Government Envirofund. These funds enabled landholders to undertake riparian restoration, weed removal and stream bank fencing to exclude stock. The landholders also started a Community Waterwatch Group, which is now incorporated into the upper Mary Waterwatch Network, supported by Caloundra City Council.



Above: The iconic Conondale Crayfish



Above: The endangered Cascade Treefrog

Kenilworth Croakers – Living with threatened species in the Belli/Kenilworth community.

This project received funding from WWF through the Threatened Species Network, the Australian Government Envirofund and the Maroochy Shire Council. Former QPWS Naturesearch Project

Coordinator, Eva Ford, was employed by the MRCCC to drive this project. The objective of the project was to improve awareness of threatened species and their habitat requirements, in particular the Giant barred-frog and the Cascade treefrog, by engaging local property owners in activities to conserve and rehabilitate riparian zones in potential threatened frog stream habitats on their properties. A Frog Information seminar was held at the Bellbunya Country Lodge, Belli Park which attracted 25 people from the local area. Land owners and volunteers were

invited to be a part of the newly created frog group, the Kenilworth Croakers. As the group evolved it became largely made up of property owners along Walli Creek and a Belli Creek tributary on Browns Road. The MRCCC assisted the Kenilworth Croakers to form a Waterwatch Network, which is continuing to monitor water quality at sites in their area monthly.

MRTRP Monitoring and Evaluation Report - A monitoring and evaluation report was produced in 2003, showing outcomes from the Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan devolved grant scheme. Over 3000 people were ultimately involved in activities related to this project. The summary of findings of the report were as follows: :

- Remnant Protection Works – 221 hectares (target – 200 hectares)
- Remnant Rehabilitation Works – 600 hectares
- Revegetation Works – 66 hectares (target – 50 hectares)
- Number of native riparian seedlings established – 73460 (target – 60000 seedlings)
- Distance of riparian fencing – 72,515 metres
- Area of Voluntary Management Agreements established – 719 hectares
- Area of Covenants established – 58 hectares
- Area of threatened species habitat protected – 131 hectares
- Number of head of cattle excluded from the riparian zone – 2600
- Number of off-stream watering points installed – 65
- Area of Woody Weed Control performed – 90 hectares
- In-kind Riparian Rehabilitation generated (00-02) - \$627,544
- Total Riparian Rehabilitation generated (00-02) - \$941,644



Above: Mary River bank erosion, Scotchy Pocket, 2003

Another significant outcome from the MRTRP Devolved Grants Scheme was provided by Ian Prosser, of CSIRO Land & Water, who used SEDNET modelling to determine the reduction in sediment and nutrients exported to the Great Sandy Straits as a result of on-ground works. His findings in 2003 were as follows:

Current Mary River Catchment sediment export to River Heads = 445 kilotonnes / year

Reduction of sediment through MRCCC Rivercare Grants = 26 kilotonnes / year (6% reduction)

Total Mary River Catchment Nitrogen exported to River Heads: 1541 tonnes / year

Reduction of Nitrogen through MRCCC Rivercare Grants = 53 tonnes / year

Total Mary River Catchment Phosphate exported to River Heads: 344 tonnes / year,

Reduction of Phosphate through MRCCC Rivercare Grants - 16 tonnes / year

















Community Waterwatch Networks – By the end of 2003, five Community Waterwatch Networks had been formed throughout the Mary River Catchment, incorporating 51 volunteers monitoring 63 sites monthly. The Networks are located in the following areas:

1. Munna Creek Waterwatch
2. Gympie & District Waterwatch
3. Amamoor Creek Waterwatch
4. Upper Mary Catchment Waterwatch
5. Maryborough & District Waterwatch



Above: Iain Lewis water testing on Munna Creek

2004

-  ***Winners of the National Rivercare Award***
-  ***Finalists for the National Landcare/Catchment Award***
-  ***Wonga Drought Recovery Project***
-  ***Friends of Kilcoy Creek Project finalised***
-  ***Formation of Policeman's Spur Rivercare Group***
-  ***Lower Six Mile Creek Cod Habitat Enhancement Project***
-  ***Lake Macdonald Rivercare Projects***
-  ***Continuation and expansion of Community Waterwatch Networks***
-  ***Bundaberg Rum Bush Fund Projects***
-  ***Powerlink Environmental Plan Projects***
-  ***Living with Threatened Species Project in Maroochy, Noosa, Cooloola Shires***
-  ***Mary Catchment Frog***
-  ***Forum at Belli***
-  ***Large Woody debris installations at Amamoor Creek and Obi Obi Creek***
-  ***Frog Surveys conducted at 74 sites resulting in 300 frog records***
-  ***Cabomba Mapping and Re-use programs finalised***

The MRCCC won the National Rivercare Award in September 2004, qualifying initially as the Queensland Award Winner in the same category at the Queensland Landcare Awards in 2003. The award recognises the significant achievements generated by the implementation of the Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan (MRCCC 2000), which continues to provide a prioritised framework for riparian restoration.

In recent years the focus of riparian rehabilitation has been based on a sub-catchment basis. This has facilitated the formation of neighbourhood landholder groups such as the Kenilworth Croakers, Friends of Kilcoy Creek, Wonga Drought Recovery Project, Policeman's Spur Rivercare Group and the seven Waterwatch Community Networks. Partnerships with councils have also been a key to this award, particularly Maroochy, Cooloola, Noosa, Caloundra and Maryborough.

The national award is the culmination of the past 4 years of implementing the Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan prepared by Brian Stockwell in consultation with the MRCCC in 2000.

The past 12 months has seen the Living with Threatened Species (LTS) project find its ground within the local community. Evolving to suit research gaps and the requirements of landholders, the school community and government agencies, it has become a project that can deliver expertise and advice, resources for landholders, educational activities for school students and contribute to scientific research on our threatened fauna species. Maroochy Shire Council has provided fantastic support to this program.

The project is now comprised of many sub-projects and has attempted to become more strategic in its approach especially in the area of on-ground works. The sub-projects occur in geographical areas beyond, but still including the original areas within Maroochy Shire of Kenilworth, Gheerulla and Belli Park, to take in areas within Noosa and Cooloola Shires.

Other threatened fauna species are now targeted such as the Mary River Cod. It is hoped that the project can continue to develop in other shires in the Mary River catchment.

In November 2004, a Frog Forum was held at the Bellbunya Country Lodge which attracted over 100 people from the local community and beyond. Presenters from the Queensland Museum, University of Queensland, Griffith Uni and QPWS spoke on frog decline, habitat loss and frog identification. Local landholder, Doc Eckley talked of the riparian revegetation he was restoring on his property. The Frog Forum was followed by an evening survey along and arm of Belli Creek. Endangered frog species in this area

include the Cascade Treefrog, the Giant Barred Frog and the Tusked Frog.



Figure 3: Ed Meyer at the Frog Forum



Figure 4: Green Corps replanting at Belli



Figure 5: Brad Wedlock and Brian Stockwell at the NRM Plan Forum, August 2004



Figure 6: National Water Week Catchment Crawl, involving EPA, NRM, MRCCC and Community volunteers



Figure 7: Margaret Thompson, Paul Marshall, Graeme Elphinstone and Harry Jamieson with rub shoulders with Bob Brow at the National Landcare Awards, Parliament House, Canberra



Figure 8: From left, Harry Bonanno, Elpho, Len Carlson, Jim Wilmott and Ian Jones at the NRM Plan Forum

2004

Continued

- *Cabomba Bio-control project launched with research underway in Sth America*
- *Cooloola Shire Water Education Program delivered to 13 Cooloola Primary schools*
- *Development of education brochures for Cooloola Shire Councils*
- *Kidzone Environmental Expo*
- *Fraser Coast, Cooloola and NORSROC Pest Management Planning*
- *Continued Committee representation on the WRP and CRP for the Mary Basin*
- *Mary Catchment Landcare Forum*
- *Rivercare and Water Quality regional Planning*
- *May – Salinity Catchment Crawl*
- *October – National water week catchment crawl*
- *Presentations to Tiaro, Kilcoy, Maryborough, Kilkivan and Cooloola Shires*
- *Upper Mary Field days*
- *Wonga Water Use Efficiency Field Day*
- *Secondary School Water Quality Field Trips*
- *Community Consultation for Priority Action Proposals*

In 2004, staff at the MRCCC commenced a new project with Cooloola Shire Council aimed at educating residents and visitors to the Shire about various aspects of water supply and water conservation. A series of brochures was developed together with an innovative presentation, which visited 13 Cooloola Shire Primary Schools towards the end of 2004. Capturing the whole school at Assembly and delivering a presentation with the students involvement proved very effective and reinforced a strong message for kids to “Turn off the Tap”. The impacts of inappropriate water use and poor water quality were a feature of the presentation, which was followed by a class visit where students searched for macroinvertebrates.



Figure 9: Eva Ford helps Cooloola Shire primary school students understand the impacts of poor water quality and low water levels on aquatic species



Figure 10: Kids at Chatsworth School make a rainstorm

ICM is no longer a pilot program. The MRCCC has evolved as a leader in many fields, locally, on a state wide basis and even nationally. ICM facilitated the partnership approach to catchment management for the MRCCC, who today have effective partnerships with literally thousands of stakeholders. Awareness of catchment management principles, and interest and involvement in riparian rehabilitation projects, community waterwatch, fauna surveys and educational activities, has increased. As the population has grown, so has the demand for extension services, property visits and assistance with on-ground works. The MRCCC currently employs two full time and four part time staff, giving the group increased capacity to provide these services.

MRCCC Operations Manager, Brad Wedlock, is responsible for overseeing implementation of the Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan, which incorporates a broad range of actions including rivercare and water quality improvement projects. Eva Ford is the Threatened Species Catchment Officer working with the Kenilworth Croakers and waterwatch volunteers in Maroochy Shire, as well as undertaking frog surveys throughout the catchment. Interest in Frog Surveys and in fact everything froggy has jumped exponentially since Eva's project commenced. A partnership with Powerlink is also helping landholders to manage threatened species habitat areas on their land beneath transmission lines. Dale Watson coordinates the Waterwatch networks for the upper Mary, Gympie/Amamoor, Munna and soon to be formed Widgee/Wonga areas. Dale also coordinated the installation of large woody debris at Amamoor and Obi Obi Creeks. Since 2004, Dale has also been assisting the Policeman's Spur Rivercare Group based in the Conondales with water quality improvement projects. Brad, Dale and Eva are all currently working on Rivercare and Water Quality planning for the Burnett Mary Regional Group's Priority Action Proposals. Lee Field is employed part time coordinating the Maryborough Waterwatch Network and working with schools in the Maryborough area. The MRCCC also employs a part time Administrator and part time Bookkeeper, who support the Executive and staff.

In February this year, the MRCCC submitted a proposal to the BMRG to implement a number of on-ground projects throughout the Mary Catchment, and to partially support community water quality monitoring networks in the Mary. If this proposal is successful, this will be the first federal government funds for on-ground works that the MRCCC has been able to access other than Envirofunds since 2002. Meanwhile, on-ground works and projects allied with the Mary River & tributaries Rehabilitation Plan will continue where funding is available.

The MRCCC will continue to have input into regional planning processes such as the Wide Bay 2020 Strategy and the South East Queensland Regional Strategy. Margaret Thompson and Jim Buchanan remain involved with the Community Reference Panel for the Mary Basin Water Resource Plan. Our valuable partnership with Landcare will be ongoing, with MRCCC hosting an annual landcare forum to enable groups in the region to collaborate and share ideas. Presentations to local government have also been extremely beneficial, educating Councillors and local government employees about the activities of the MRCCC, and the resultant benefits to the environment.

In 2005 the water quality monitoring Catchment Crawls will continue, perhaps with a car rally added to the program! Given adequate funding, the Waterwatch Networks will be maintained and expanded as new volunteers come on board, many of them Rivercare Grant recipients or those involved with the Living with Threatened Species (LTS) Program. From a range of sources including Waterwatch volunteers, the MRCCC now has literally tens of thousands of water quality data sets for the Mary Catchment.

Changes to the MRCCC Constitution in 2004 were designed to comply with the requirements of the Department of Environment and Heritage to enable MRCCC to be listed on the register of environmental organisations, and subsequently be eligible for deductible gift recipient status. If this application is successful, the MRCCC will be able to seek tax deductible donations from a number of philanthropic organisations for environmental repair work in the Mary Catchment.

2005 MRCCC Delegates

Interest Sector	Delegate	Position	
Beef/Grazing	Harry Jamieson	Chair	Brooweena
Dairying	Michelle Anderson	Delegate	Kin Kin
Dept of Primary Industries	Graeme Elphinstone	Delegate	Gympie
Education	Mark Cridland	Delegate	Goomeri
Environment	Des King	Delegate	Gheerulla
Extractive Industries	Mollie Gilmour	Delegate	Kenilworth
Farm forestry	Ken Matthews		
Fishing	Vince Collis	Delegate	Pomona
Gen Community Lower	Vacant		
General Community Upper	Dave Sands	Delegate	Conondale
Horticulture	Jim Buchanan	Delegate	Gympie
Landcare, Lower Mary	Paul Marshall	Vice-Chair	Gympie
Landcare, Upper Mary	Mim Coulstock	Delegate	Maleny
Local Government Lower	Cr Jenny Burton	Delegate	Tinana
Local Government Middle	Cr Peter McIntosh	Delegate	Kilkivan
Local Govt upper	Cr Ray Kelly	Delegate	Tewantin
Rural Women	Rosemary Burnett	Delegate	Sexton via Gympie
Special Member	Nai Nai Bird	Delegate	Gympie
Special Member	Margaret Thompson	Secretary	Maleny
Special Member	Lin Fairlie	Delegate	Maleny
Special Member	Angus Hutton	Delegate	Gympie
State Development			
Sugar	Peter Downs	Delegate	Maryborough
Irrigation	Brian Thomas	Delegate	Kilkivan

And in the future

By the year 2050, the community will be enjoying the benefits of sustainable agricultural, fishing and recreational activities flowing from a river system that has healthy natural forests on stable streambanks shading the length of the river and all its creeks, where pools, riffles and snags interplay, to create diverse habitat for a myriad of life forms.

The waterways, whose reflections are as clear as they were when the first explorer gazed upon them, will be as clean as has been recorded in living memory. Major linkages will exist to allow our special fish, turtle, frog and bird species to move freely between conservation reaches.

The flow of water and sediments through the rivers and creeks will sustain the physical and biological needs of the riverine system, as well as the agreed sustainable requirements of the community. The community will be able to see, understand and value the changes, be proud of their role in achieving them, and be committed to restoring the catchment for the next 50 years.



