

2016

CRUISE

SPRING IN THE MARY

MRCCC
ANNUAL
REPORT

INSPECT



LEAP



MARY RIVER



CATCHMENT
COORDINATING COMMITTEE

DISCOVER



EXPLORE



REFLECT



MRCCC Annual General Meeting – Thursday 27th October 2016

*The MRCCC gratefully acknowledges the support of the;
Australian Government Department of Environment,
Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads,
Queensland Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation,
Burnett Mary Regional Group,
Sunshine Coast Council,
Gympie Regional Council,
Noosa Council,
Unity Water,
Seqwater,
HQPlantations,
Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation,
Bendigo Community Bank Cooroy,
Gympie District Beef Liaison Group,
and thousands of volunteers who consistently contribute their time and resources to ongoing sustainable natural resource management in the Mary River Catchment.*

The MRCCC also acknowledges the traditional owners of the Mary River Catchment and their ancestors past and present

Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee

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Revegetation at Charles St Park, Kenilworth, July 2016



MRCCC Staff and Volunteers

Brad Wedlock – Operations Manager	BAppSc (Natural Systems & Wildlife Management) - Specialist in grazing landscapes, sustainable grazing systems, fluvial geomorphology, riparian condition assessment and flora identification, water quality monitoring and data analysis.
Eva Ford – Catchment Officer	BSc (Australian Environmental Studies) - Specialist in threatened stream frog surveys and identification, and other threatened aquatic fauna. Extensive experience with water quality monitoring and data analysis, aquatic macroinvertebrate assessment, freshwater fish assemblage and monitoring programs.
Steve Burgess – Catchment Officer, Waterwatch Coordinator	BSc (Australian Environmental Studies) & Post Grad Maths & Science Specialist in water quality monitoring and data analysis, hydrology, statistics and agricultural and water modelling. Highly experienced educator.
Dr Tanzi Smith – Catchment Officer	BEng, BSc, PhD - Specialist in threatened aquatic species and planning. Water quality monitoring and social analysis.
Caitlin Mill – Catchment Officer	BEnvSc – Aquatic ecosystem monitoring including water quality monitoring and data analysis, BioCondition monitoring and project support
Jenny Whyte – Waterwatch Coordinator to April 2016	BSc, M Env Stud, MBA. Coordination of the Waterwatch networks, data entry and management
Jess Dean – Waterwatch Coordinator from July 2016	BEnvSc – Coordination of the Waterwatch networks, data entry and management, water quality monitoring and project support
Debbie Seal – Administration and Event Coordinator	Administration, financial management, and marketing. Coordinator of the Noosa Festival of Water and support for the Gerry Cook Hatchery
Ruth Hutchison	Volunteer - Administration and Project Support
Glenbo Craig	Volunteer - Codline Editor and Project Support
Kelvin Nielsen	Volunteer - Project support
Sandra Noonan	Volunteer - Wildnet Data Entry. Administration and Project Support
Matt Tattum	Work place learning – University of the Sunshine Coast
Shaun Fisher	Work place learning – University of the Sunshine Coast
Cayla Judd	Work place learning – University of the Sunshine Coast
Tyrone Strandquist	Volunteer student – Gympie High School

MRCCC Current Projects

Implementing the Mary River Threatened Species Recovery Plan through the Federal Government funded Biodiversity Fund
Reef Water Quality Grants Program, Grazing Lands 2013-2016
Gully Management in highly erodible subcatchments of the Mary River Catchment
Community Waterwatch networks in the Upper Mary, Kenilworth, Mary Valley, Tiaro Districts and the Tinana, Munna, Widgee, Glastonbury and Wide Bay Creeks
Living with Threatened Species in the Sunshine Coast, Noosa and Gympie Regional Council areas
Reconnecting a Koala Corridor in the Goomboorian District - Australian Government National Landcare Program
Great Barrier Reef Sediment and Pesticide Monitoring for the Catchment Loads Monitoring Program
Supporting Valley Bees, Cooloola Nature and the Koala Action Group, (Gympie region)
Managing the Gerry Cook Hatchery and supporting the Mary River cod breeding program at Lake Macdonald
Supporting the Land for Wildlife Program in the Gympie and Fraser Coast regions
Noosa Festival of Water
Supporting the annual Mary River Festival
Codline newsletter



MRCCC Delegates 2015 - 2016

Interest Sector	Name	Title
Beef	Mick Seeney	Delegate
Grazing Lands	Graeme Elphinstone	Delegate
Dairying	Rob Priebe	Deputy Chair
DEHP	Vacant	
QDAF	Vacant	
QDNRM	Vacant	
Education	Sue Gibson	Delegate
Environment	Casey Murtagh	Delegate
Fishing	Steve Poole	Delegate
Forestry	Ernie Rider	Delegate
General Community Lower	Ross Smith	Delegate
General Community Middle	Ray Zerner	Delegate
General Community Upper	Dave Sands	Delegate
General Community Western	Peter Hughes	Delegate
Gympie Field Naturalists	Berry Doak	Delegate
Horticulture small crops	Bree Grima	Delegate
Horticulture tree crops	Brice Kaddatz	Delegate
Irrigation	Vacant	
Landcare, Lower Mary	Carol Neilson	Delegate
Landcare, Upper Mary	Phil Moran	Delegate
Landholder/Project Participant	Elke Watson	Delegate
Landholder/Project Participant	Bob Hood	Delegate
Land for Wildlife	Annette Bourke	Secretary
Life Member	Margaret Thompson	Treasurer
Life Member	Jim Buchanan	Delegate
Fraser Coast Council	Cr James Hanson	Delegate
Gympie Regional Council	Cr Darryl Dodt	Delegate
Noosa Council	Jan Maddin	Delegate
Sunshine Coast Council	Denise Lindon	Delegate
Seqwater	Tim Packer	Delegate
Special Member	Nai Nai Bird	Delegate
Special Member	Glenda Pickersgill	Delegate
Sugar	Chris Coutts-Smith	Delegate
Waterwatch	Ian Mackay	Chairman
Waterwatch	Garth Jacobson	Delegate



Chairman's Report

It is with great pleasure that I present my report for 2016, just part of a mosaic of reports which chronicle beautifully what has been a good year for this organisation.

With the move and the building process behind us, we have been settling into our new home at 25 Stewart Terrace. Back in May, we had the official opening, and what a proud day it was. Confidence in our organisation has been reflected in donations to our Public Fund and it is these that have enabled us to finally realise the aspiration of past committee members, to have our own premises. After just on 21 years leading a somewhat nomadic existence in various locations around Gympie (the last being described by the Gympie Times as "a derelict Council building"), it is wonderful to really have a "home".

On a sadder note, this year marked the passing of our inaugural Chairman Graham Smith. Graham worked tirelessly and with great vision in the early days of setting up this organisation and he shall always be remembered fondly.

Our organisation is a rich interweaving of our staff, our voluntary delegates, our volunteer waterwatchers, project participants and of course our strong ties with Landcare groups throughout the catchment. Graeme Elphinstone reminded us of a quote by the late Les Kropp at the time of the formation of MRCCC. He predicted that, with the wide spread of interest sectors, the result would be an organisation that would be "crippled with inertia". I'm pleased to say that Les Kropp was quite wrong; indeed one of our strengths is the diversity among our delegates, not just geographical but representing many different backgrounds as well.

We have had some changes on the staff front with Eva going overseas on 12 months leave, Jenny moving over to Gympie Landcare and Steve Burgess winding back his involvement due to family commitments. Caitlin Mill who came to us on uni work placement a year or two back took up a full-time position and was followed this year by Jess Dean who has capably filled the role of Waterwatch coordinator. We are fortunate in the calibre and dedication of our staff, indeed this is one of our greatest strengths. Just last month Steve Burgess was awarded the prestigious Bob Hawke National Landcare Award. In reading through details that supported the nomination, one couldn't help being impressed by the spread of his involvement over so many areas. The full copy of the nomination which is included in this report, demonstrates Steve's incredible commitment to the Landcare ethic and to sharing his extensive knowledge and experience as widely as possible.

The Gerry Cook hatchery at Lake Macdonald had a very successful year last year and looks set for another. We are delighted at the expertise and dedication of Steve Poole, ably assisted by Darren Knowles, in coaxing our resident Mary River Cod to breed and spawn. Last year some 2000 fingerlings were released. The Open day in October 2015 was well-attended and even made national television. We are pleased to be gradually receiving offers of supporting funding for the hatchery and are optimistic of its long-term future. As I prepare this report we are in the middle of our second Mary River Month, a crammed- full calendar of events across the catchment, leading up to the Mary River Festival in Kandanga on November 12.



Ian Mackay immortalised in a lino cut from Gympie artist and Land for Wildlife property participant, Nonie Metzler



Warren Truss and Jim Buchanan officially open the MRCCC Resource Centre in March 2016.

Image courtesy Bevly Hughes



A highlight last year was the inaugural “Spring in the Mary” photo competition which elicited 74 entries. This year’s competition has attracted some great sponsors and winners will be announced at the festival. Mary River Month also saw the return of the Catchment Crawl, a two day marathon water testing experience from one end of the catchment to the other.

We are in the final year of funding from the Biodiversity Fund. The benefits of being part of a program that has funding allocated over a five year period are enormous, allowing much better planning and implementation.

The Mary River Threatened Species Recovery Plan edges closer to the public comment phase. Despite the process being so protracted, we have used the draft plan and its recommendations for some time. Many of the recommended actions provide benefits not just for the threatened species, not just for river health as a whole but prove beneficial in reducing sediment load to the reef. It’s a win all around and when you figure in the way that off-stream watering and the like improves the resilience of agricultural pursuits, you can understand why we’re so passionate and why landholder support for both Biodiversity projects and Reef Projects has been so high. In the latter we have been indeed fortunate to have the extension team of Graeme Elphinstone and Brad Wedlock, the result being that our expressions of interest in reef projects have always been over-subscribed. And on that note it is fitting to mention that 2016 was the final year of the Reef Water Quality Grant program, which the MRCCC has delivered in one form or another since 2010. Negotiations are continuing in relation to delivery of the Reef Trust Phase 3 Program in the Mary River Catchment.

We are pleased to have been involved with Gympie Regional Council as it works towards a new Environment Strategy. We remain optimistic that it may include the re-adoption of Land for Wildlife in the region. MRCCC works over several local government regions and it’s always impressive to be involved with the Sunshine Coast Council Land for Wildlife and Bushcare schemes and we would welcome a re-invigoration of the already -existing Land for Wildlife network in both Gympie and Fraser Coast regions.

At the time of writing, the bright yellow flowers of Cat’s Claw Creeper are evident through the catchment, particularly, but not solely, along watercourses. We commend the work of Gympie Landcare and the Greater Mary Association in rearing and releasing biocontrols for both Cat’s Claw and Madeira Vine and note that this has been a good year for the establishment of biocontrol populations in the field.

Our organisation is in a healthy financial position, not by chance but rather by good planning. We thank our staff for their dedicated work over and beyond their project commitments and their willingness to ever be alert for new possibilities. Our involvement in the federal government Reef Trust Gully program is a good example of this.

I’d like to thank our “extended family” of delegates for the wisdom, goodwill and experience they bring to our meetings and particularly may I single out our executive, Deputy Chair Rob Priebe, Treasurer Margaret Thompson and Secretary Annette Bourke for their dedication and support.

There have been so many events and initiatives in this past year that my report can only but briefly capture a few. Our MRCCC Annual report, of which this my report is but a tiny portion, provides more detail.

It seems that we are often asked to explain just what does MRCCC does. I feel there is no better answer than to provide a copy of our annual report so that our actions over the past twelve months can speak for themselves.

A big thank you to all involved. It has been a privilege to work with you all and I look forward to the year ahead.

Ian Mackay, Chairman, MRCCC



Vale Graham Smith

With Graham’s passing, the Mary Catchment has lost one of its longest serving and most passionate advocates for the principles of both Landcare and Catchment Management.

A beef producer from Upper Kandanga, Graham travelled the world and had an inspiring career. As well as being the inaugural Chair of the MRCCC in 1995, Graham was also a former Chair of the Gympie & District Landcare Group.

Graham was an inspirational community leader who was able to unite the diverse interest sectors across the Mary Catchment to the Integrated Catchment Management cause, spearhead the practical roll-out of Landcare and Catchment Management programs, and then ensure that they worked together with the common goal of delivering the best possible catchment outcomes. Graham was a catchment management pioneer in many ways; his achievements for the fledgling MRCCC include:

- State of the River surveys
- A riverbank erosion research project
- A study into the future use and availability of water in the Mary Catchment and Sunshine Coast



- A submission to the Senate Select Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs on the subject of Landcare Policies and Programs in Australia (this included Catchment Management Groups)
- A study of rural residential development in the Mary
- Supporting the Kenilworth river bank stabilisation project
- Bus trips around the catchment
- Championing and assisting with development of a Recovery plan for the endangered Mary River cod
- Pioneering the Voluntary river bank restoration scheme
- Instigating the first and second Mayor's Forum which then involved 13 local government authorities
- Collaborating with the development of the Mary Catchment Strategy and Business Plan
- The inaugural Mary River Congress



In his second year as Chair, Graham observed that the range and complexity of issues being considered would 'cross a Rabbi's eyes' (from Fiddler on the Roof). By the time of his 3rd year as MRCCC Chairman, twelve sub-committees were in operation, and the growing list of major events included the Newbury workshop at Conondale, the 3rd Mary River Congress at Maryborough, drafting a Riparian Zone policy and Local Government Planning clause, and the Sand and Gravel Reference Panel.

Graham later reflected in his writings as to why he, of all the talented people on the Committee, was chosen by his peers to be the inaugural Chair of this (then new) wonderful community NRM organisation. He thought it probably was because his past Landcare leadership presented the best compromise and the least threatening option. He pondered that someone from Landcare would be seen as being a bit green, and someone who had spent most of their life in farming would be seen as being supportive of Primary Industry.

Graham once reflected that he probably always had the Landcare ethic in his blood, as one side of his family in Ireland had been in continuous farming occupation of their farming land for over 500 years, and the other side had just sold their farm after 300 years of occupation. And both these farms had been managed sustainably and were still highly productive.

More recently, one of Graham's favourite crusades was the prevention of wildfires, and he wrote extensively on the subject of land management strategies and policies to prevent wildfires, both in Australia and overseas. Graham's legacy of caring for the land in the Mary Catchment continues to live on through the current catchment management project outcomes of the MRCCC.

Extract from Graeme Elphinstone's tribute to Graham Smith as presented to the MRCCC General Meeting in February 2016.



Vale Mal Thompson

I liked Mal. He was soft and hard all at once, with a ready joke that was usually rude! I liked his big, exploding farmer's hands, his crooked smile and his lop-sided swagger. And I liked his banter with Marg, like a naughty boy trying his hand over and over and over again; never deterred, always hopeful for a bite or more!

Mostly my encounters with Mal were brief, at MRCCC meetings, where he would patiently be waiting to whisk his dear partner in life back to the farm. I was also fortunate to visit that crazy farm a couple of times and see Marg and Mal in their element; the place where their intertwined roots grew deep and where their door was open wide.

I reckon Mal had a complete disregard for his own use-by-date, and that he took on his recent physical ailments with immovable hope and a determination to be milking, mucking out and seeing another baby human or buffalo born before he was taken off the shelf.

Mal will be missed a great deal by me, my family and the family of MRCCC. I will miss seeing his face at the sidelines of my next MRCCC meeting, with its wry grin and soft eyes, and his readiness to bring a bit of laughter to the scene with a joke or story. Thanks Mal.

Eva Ford



MRCCC's new Waterwatch Coordinator

After studying a Bachelor of Environmental Science for 4 years at the University of the Sunshine Coast and completing work placement with MRCCC, I gained full time employment at the start of July 2016. I am thoroughly enjoying my position. The MRCCC staff and Waterwatch volunteers have been very welcoming and I hope to meet all volunteers and keep the program running efficiently.



Caitlin Mill and Jess Dean collecting data during the 2016 Catchment Crawl.

Mary Catchment Waterwatch – Jess Dean

The monthly data collected by Waterwatch volunteers provides the MRCCC with detailed information of baseline water quality throughout the catchment. Over the past year there have been 73 individuals, families and businesses collecting data in 8 distinct network groups with 1389 samples taken – 59% more samples were obtained compared to the previous year. Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped out with this program over the last year: the efforts of landholders, local businesses, councils and other organisations who support the program financially and in kind is greatly appreciated. Thank you also to Ian Mackay from Moy Pocket and Garth Jacobsen from Tiaro who have represented the Waterwatch Sector on the MRCCC for the past year, and have assisted with the logistics and promotion of the Waterwatch program.

In addition to physical and chemical data, Waterwatch volunteers record observations of Mary River aquatic fauna species, e.g. turtle sightings, water weeds and general river flow conditions. This information is recorded in the MRCCC Waterwatch database and information is provided for other MRCCC initiatives.

In October 2016 the MRCCC held a Catchment Crawl with participants travelling from the headwaters to the river mouth over 2 days (report page 11). Numerous Waterwatch volunteers assisted staff to collect data at various sites throughout the Catchment Crawl. Regular Waterwatch

volunteer, Kevin Jackson, performed a separate Community Catchment Crawl on the upper Tinana Creek catchment in the Goomborian area, seven sites were visited and core water quality parameters were collected by Kevin and the local community members that assisted him.

Waterwatch Network	Waterways Monitored
Upper Mary	Skene Creek, Scrub Creek, Chinaman's Creek, Little Yabba Creek, Booloumba Creek, Lobster Creek, Obi Obi Creek and Bridge Creek
Kenilworth	Coonoon Gibber, Mary River, Oakey Creek, Walli Creek, Coolabine Creek, Belli Creek and Cedar Creek
Eastern Catchments	Sandy Creek, Tinana Creek, Yards Creek, Big Sandy Creek, Ulirrah Creek, Coondoo Creek, Tagigan Creek, Tinana Creek, Ross Creek and Hines Creek
Gympie to Curra	Deep Creek, Pie Creek, Mary River, Six Mile Creek, Scrubby Creek, Reedy Lagoons Catchment, Glastonbury Creek
Imbil to Amamoor	Kandanga Creek, Three Mile Creek, Araucaria Creek, Yabba Creek, Caseys Creek, Derrier Creek, Amamoor Creek, Diamondfield Creek and Lewis Creek
Widgee & Wide Bay	Widgee Creek, Station Creek, Wonga Creek, Wide Bay Creek, Mary River, Gap Creek, Fat Hen Creek and Wide Bay Creek
Tiaro	Munna Creek, Mary River, Gutchy Creek, Tanyalba Creek, Deep Creek, Ooramera Creek, Goora Creek, Spring Creek, Fay Smith Wetlands, Ululah Lagoon and Saltwater Creek
Munna	Munna Creek, Boompa Creek, Ramsey Creek Lagoon, Sandy Creek, Eel Creek, Dry Creek, Teebar Creek, Chinamans Gully and Calgoa Creek

Financial support for the program comes from Gympie Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Council. Community sampling is supplemented by data HQPlantations collects from the Toolara and Imbil forestry areas and QP&WS collects from Conondale National Park.

These areas include tributaries with quite unusual characteristics and covering large sections of the catchment. The information HQP and QP&WS staff provide helps MRCCC gain a holistic picture of the Mary River catchment.



This year saw the departure of Jenny Whyte from the MRCCC. Jenny is now the Gympie & District Landcare Group's Coordinator. Jenny coordinated the Waterwatch Program on a part time basis for 7 years, ensuring that the rotation and calibration of Waterwatch kits went smoothly, and her hard work is greatly appreciated by the MRCCC.

Steve Burgess has reduced his hours with MRCCC to focus on his horticulture enterprise. Steve is a fantastic asset to the MRCCC with his extensive background knowledge of the catchment, and specifically his statistical analysis and data crunching for the Waterwatch reports.

Retiring Waterwatchers recognised for their long term commitment to the program are Scott and Lyn Woolbank and Sue and John Bailey, both from the Upper Mary Network. Scott collected data from 5 sites for 14 years and holds the record for the most number of samples collected of all time. Sue and John Bailey collected data from 2 sites for 14 years. Recognition and appreciation also goes to Cathy and Rob Kerle, Brian Thomas, Errol Janke and the Crossley family from the Widgee Wide Bay Network and Des King from the Kenilworth Network, for completing 10 years of Waterwatching this year.

The logistics of moving water testing kits in and out of Gympie, and between diverse locations, on a reliable schedule would be a challenge, without the support of many local individuals and businesses. The MRCCC is grateful for the assistance of Sauers Garden Produce Gympie and Cooroy, B & H Rural, Tiara, Goomboorian Matilda Petrol Station, Ross Creek Store, Widgee Store, Amamoor Store, Barung Landcare, Mapleton Realty, Conondale Store and the Kenilworth Garage for holding and transporting kits for volunteers to collect.

There will always be additional locations to be monitored and retiring volunteers to replace. There is a need for more volunteers in the Upper Mary Network. If you have easy access to a section of the Mary River or one of its many tributaries and are able to contribute 1 hour a month there will be space for you.

Waterwatch Statistics

- 73 individuals, families and businesses volunteering time to support water quality monitoring in the Mary River Catchment
- 1389 water samples collected throughout the catchment
- 108 sites sampled at least once during the past year



Mary's top Waterwatchers	No. of samples recorded
Scott and Lyn Woolbank, Conondale	366
Ian Mackay, Moy Pocket	290
John and Sue Bailey, Montville	196
Crossley Family, Lower Wonga	186
QPWS Kenilworth Staff	180
Cath and Col Robinson, Amamoor	175
Bob and Lorraine Hood, Gympie	165
Cam and Lisa Hughes, Teebar	157
Bob Fredman, Gildora	144
Des King and Colleen Ryan, Moy Pocket	142



Top left: Top waterwatchers of all time – Scott and Lyn Woolbank (Image courtesy of Viv Bochow). Centre: The Crossley family with Peter and Bevly Hughes and Shaun Fisher during the 2016 Catchment Crawl. Top right: Jess Dean and Ian Mackay meet with Kathleen Dennis and Mary-Ann Law, Kenilworth



Waterwatch Volunteers 2015-2016

Widgee and Wide Bay Waterwatch Network Errol Janke Charlie McIntosh (commenced July 2016) Gillian and Yvonne Crossley Anette Bambling Keith and Christine Bagnall Stephen Horseman Mick and Yvonne Bambling Brian Thomas	Imbil to Amamoor Waterwatch Network HQP – Dan O’Regan & Angela Gleeson Renee Brown and James Warner Leslie and Craig Hanson Noo Dye Cath and Colin Robinson Will Kingham Bob Fredman Kylie Carr (commenced July 2016) Tanzi Smith
Tiaro Waterwatch Network Vicki and Rob O’Farrell Issac Schmidt Harry Jamieson Garth Jacobsen John Williams Bronwen Long Owen and Lynda Thompson Brian and Lyn Thompson Ross Smith Ron Black Cecile Espigole Bill Price	Upper Mary Waterwatch Network Eric Anderson Roger Westcott Jo-anne Ferrier QPWS – Bronwyn McAdam Matt Bateman (commenced July 2016) Jenna Brown (commenced July 2016) Scott and Lyn Woolbank (retired December 2015) Sue and John Bailey (retired February 2016) Kacey Walker (retired July 2016) Christopher Lee (retired July 2016) Sue Rae (retired September 2016)
Kenilworth Waterwatch Network Kathleen and Steve Dennis Ian Mackay Mary Ann and Don Law Geoff and Marie Farr Graeme White Nina Cox Des King and Colleen Ryan Carsten Villesen David Lade Tony Gordon Matt Baxter (retired September 2016)	Munna Waterwatch Network Ian and Jill Harvey Malcolm Beresford Ross and Michelle Kinbacher Spencer and Leslie Innes Cam and Lisa Hughes Dione Williams Kev and Helen Rogers Brett and Tammy Marsh Neville and Joy Turner Iain Lewis
Gympie to Curra Waterwatch Network Bob and Lorraine Hood Phil Herrington Joolie Gibbs Becky Watson Dan Carney (commenced October 2016) Annette Bourke Wendy McPherson Bruce McCulloch Alan and Tracey Petersen Rob Kerle	Eastern Catchments Waterwatch Network HQP – Colleen Hair HQP – Garry Gosling Howard Kirby Kevin Jackson David Wilson Les and Inga Giegler



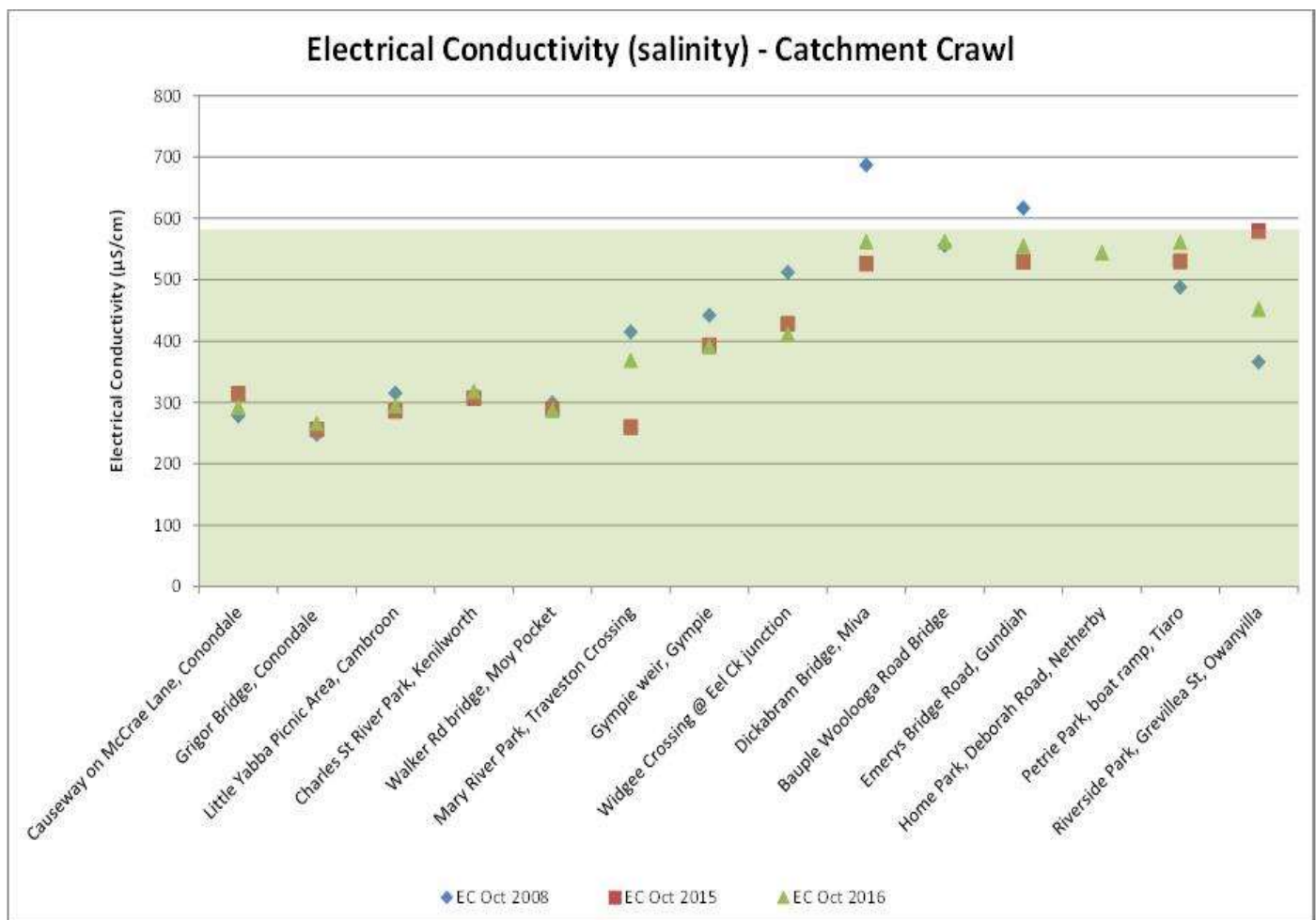
2016 Catchment Crawl

During the Mary River Month celebrations, the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee once again conducted a Catchment Crawl in October 2016. The Catchment Crawls are designed to provide a 'snap shot' of water quality along the Mary River. Water quality parameters are measured in an effort to gain insight in to trends associated with cumulative effects and any other changes along the catchment.

For the 2016 Catchment Crawl, 14 freshwater sites were sampled along the main Mary River trunk, from its headwaters in the Conondale Ranges, downstream to the Mary River barrage. Seven sites on tributaries of the Mary River were also tested. Many Waterwatch volunteers dropped by and assisted the Catchment Crawl team when sampling occurred near their Waterwatch monitoring location.

In addition to measuring the standard water quality parameters (pH, electrical conductivity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, turbidity) the MRCCC in collaboration with the Great Barrier Reef Catchment Loads Monitoring Program, tested some chemical parameters of the samples including nitrogen and phosphorus levels. E.coli (faecal coliforms) were also sampled at each Mary River site to gain further insight into the water quality of the Mary River.

A snapshot of the electrical conductivity results are shown below.



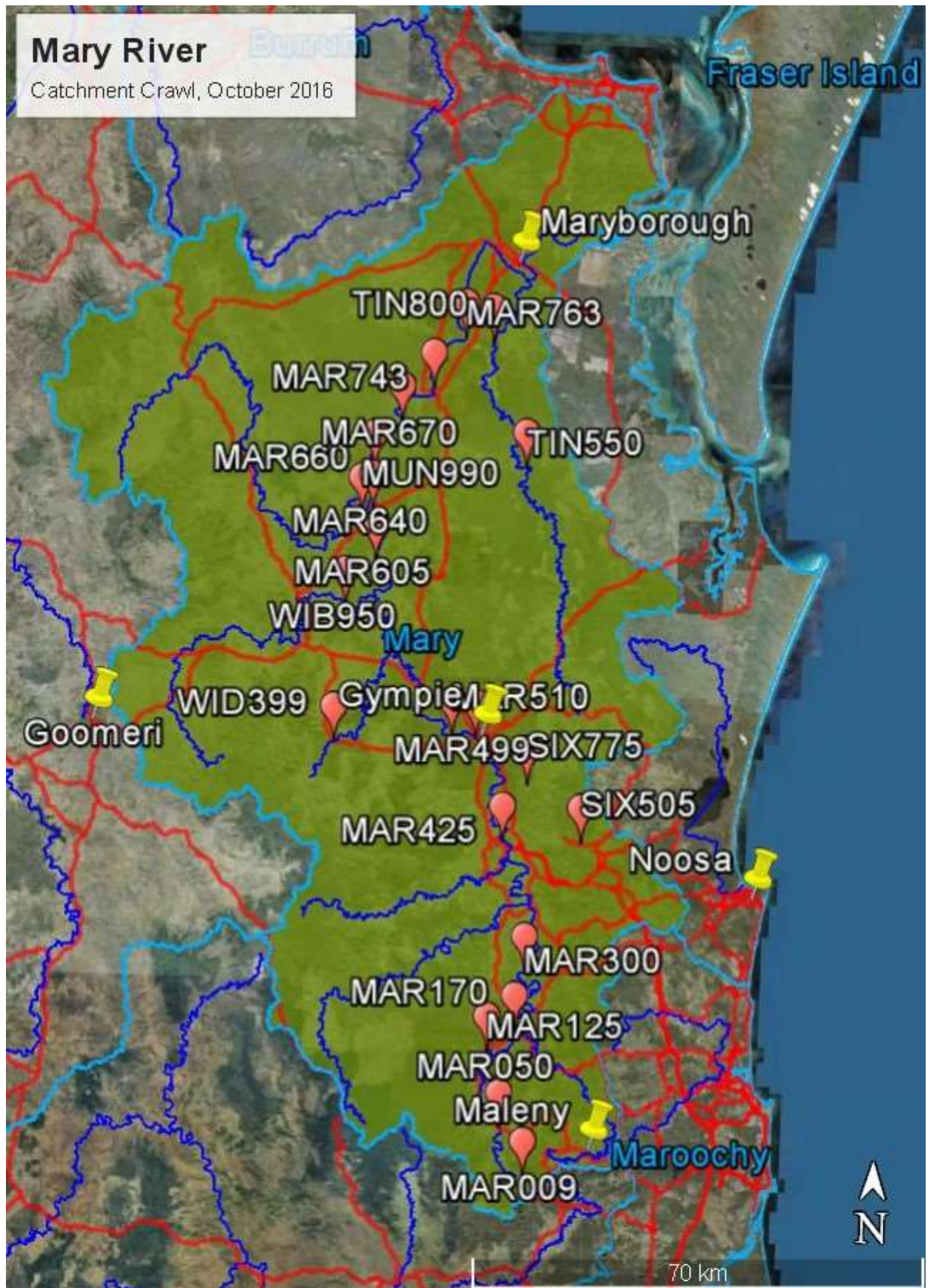
Caitlin wrangles the flow meter at Home Park on the Mary River while Matt Tattam looks on

Electrical Conductivity (EC) is a measure of the water's ability to conduct electricity. The EC value is derived from the amount of dissolved salt content in the water. Salt levels also tend to accumulate downstream in a catchment, which is reflected by increasing EC levels. In line with previous trends identified on Mary River Catchment Crawls, EC peaks at Gympie and remains at the higher end of the EPA guideline (< 580 µS/cm) further down the river.

In 2016, the 5 Mary River sites downstream from Gympie steadily increase to the EC guideline of 580 µS/cm EC before dropping well below the guideline level at the final testing site at Owanyilla in the Mary River barrage pondage.

A report on all the 2016 Catchment Crawl water quality results is currently being prepared.





Map of the 2016 Mary River Catchment Crawl sites



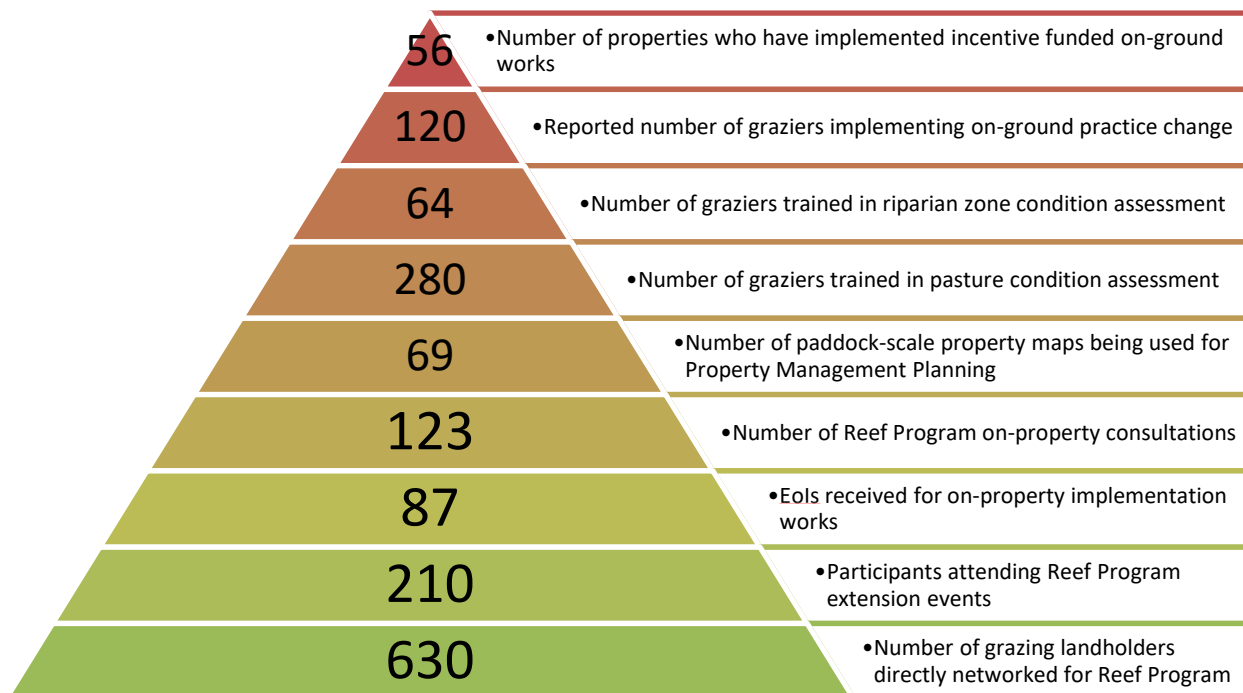
Reef Program #2, Grazing Lands in the Mary Catchment (2013-2016) – Brad Wedlock

The Reef Program is delivered as a working partnership between the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) and the Gympie District Beef Liaison Group (GDBLG). Supporting partners are the BMRG and AgForce. Funding is jointly provided by the Queensland and Australian Governments.

Reef Program #2 Primary Objective: To increase the adoption of best land management practices within the grazing industry, to reduce the amount of sediments and nutrients leaving the farms. The outcome will be improved downstream water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

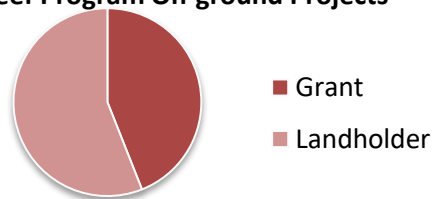
The Reef Program #2 Grazing Lands project has three main components:

1. Providing best grazing land management training to grazing landholders
2. Providing financial incentives to aid the implementation of Best Management Practice.
3. Benchmarking grazing land practices (A-B-C-D)



No. of Reef Program projects implemented	56
Total Value of these Implementation Works	\$979,586
Property Investment Multiplier Factor	1.34

Reef Program On-ground Projects



% of on-ground projects targeting one or more Reef Program outcomes	Reef Program Priority Outcomes
100	Improving downstream water quality
95	Reducing cattle camp nutrient runoff into drainage lines and waterways
98	Improved stock drinking water quality - troughs
90	Improved evenness of grazing and groundcover
17	Upgrading the reliability of supply of stock water (dry seasons)
48	Improving riparian zone condition
8	Reducing hillslope runoff – reduced loss of top soil
24	Improving grazing land condition to B condition or better
4	Rehabilitation of gully erosion
4	Improving wetland condition
2	Stabilisation of landslips



Best Management Practice change consultations with Reef Program participants (2013-2016)	Number of grazing enterprises
Benchmarking riparian zone management practice change (D to B practice assessments)	40
Benchmarking grazing land management practice change (D to B practice assessments)	24
Training in dry season forage budget calculations	91
Training in grazing land condition assessment and monitoring	49
Training in riparian zone condition assessment and monitoring	40
Training to identify 3P pasture plant distribution and management	38
Training in long term carrying capacity calculations (AEs per ha)	17
Preparation of individual property management planning maps including paddocks, roads, water infrastructure etc	69
Grazing land type on-property identification and definition	31
BMPs to improve grazing land condition	
BMPs for riparian zone grazing management	40
Wet season spelling to improve pasture condition best practice	38
BMPs for seasonal calving practice	36
Best management practice management of weedy Sporobolus grasses	32
BMPs for the use of splatter gun for Lantana control	31



Top left: Country Noosa soils workshop, Ridgewood, October 2015. Top right: Blue gum flat drainage line fenced separately to surrounding land type, Woolooga, December 2015. Bottom left: Riparian fencing, The Dawn Bottom right: Riparian electric fencing on Eel Creek, Langshaw, April 2016



Beef enterprise decision-making consultations – Reef Program (2013-2016)	Number of consultations
Property management planning	69
Atlas of Australian Soils Landscape unit interpretations	47
Legume introduction strategies	42
Pasture grass, legume and forb identification	38
Calculating adult equivalents (1AE = 450kg LW)	26
Matching pasture species to grazing land types	26
Gully stabilisation techniques	23
Long term carrying capacity (AEs per ha)	17
Soil analysis interpretation	14
Native forest management guidelines	13
Forage budgeting	11
Woody weed management strategies	10
Landslip stabilisation techniques	6

Natural resource management decision-making consultations – Reef Program (2013-2016)	Number of consultations
Cats claw vine biological control strategies	42
Riparian zone rehabilitation	42
Threatened species habitat values	23
Wildlife habitats and corridors	19
Regional ecosystem definitions	12
Riparian plant species identification	9
Community water quality monitoring (Waterwatch)	6
Wetland management strategies	4



Above: Solar pump on Eel Creek with new riparian fencing May 2016

Top right: Tank and trough located high in the landscape at Langshaw

Centre right: Off stream watering at Upper Widgee

Below right: Trough for off stream watering, Yengarie

Left: Six Mile Creek riparian condition assessment





Biodiversity Fund Report – Caitlin Mill

Restoring Riparian Resilience: Implementing the Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan

The MRCCC and the Australian Government's Environment Department have developed a recovery plan to protect five key species of the Mary River catchment. The plan outlines the habitat characteristics that are critical to their survival and actions needed to abate the threats to the following species.

1. Mary River Cod (*Maccullochella mariensis*)
2. Australian Lungfish (*Neoceratodus forsteri*)
3. Mary River Turtle (*Elusor macrurus*)
4. Giant Barred frog (*Mixophyes iteratus*)
5. Freshwater Mullet (*Trachystoma petardi*)

The MRCCC Biodiversity Fund project is called "Restoring Riparian Resilience: Implementing the Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan" is funded by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Futures Fund. The project targets riparian landholders who are protecting and restoring riparian zones that contain habitat for the endangered Mary River Cod and Turtle, Australian Lungfish and the Giant-barred Frog.

Activities of this project include riparian fencing, off-stream water supplies (tanks and troughs), riparian revegetation using native seedlings and riparian weed control including viney weed bio-control agent releases to encourage rainforest recovery. An important outcome of this project is to increase community awareness of the threatened aquatic species and their habitat, and to provide community support for improving riparian zone resilience.

The project is targeting several demonstration reaches along the Mary River and tributaries containing threatened species habitat from Conondale to Maryborough:

	Demonstration Reach	Mary River Cod	Mary River Turtle	Australian Lungfish	Giant-barred Frog	Freshwater Mullet
1	Mary River, Goomong	✓	✓	✓		Likely
2	Mary River, Moy Pocket (including Oak Creek)	✓	✓	✓		Likely
3	Belli/Cedar Creeks	✓			✓	
4	Blackfellow's Creek, Ridgewood	✓			✓	
5	Mary River, Kenilworth	✓	✓	✓		Likely
6	Mary River, Conondale/Cambroon (including Chinaman's Creek)	✓	✓	✓	✓	Likely
7	Mary River, Tiara	✓	✓	✓		Likely
8	Mary River, Netherby	✓	✓	✓		Likely
9	Cooroora Creek, Pomona	✓			✓	
10	Munna Creek	✓	Likely	✓		Likely
11	Mary River, Maryborough					Likely
12	Widgee Creek	✓	✓	✓	Likely	Likely
13	Kandanga Creek	✓		Likely		Likely
14	Glastonbury Creek	✓		✓		
15	Upper Tinana Creek	✓	✓	✓	✓	Likely
16	Six Mile/Pinbarren Creeks	✓		✓	✓	
17	Mary River, Lagoon Pocket	✓	✓	✓		Likely
18	Yabba Creek	✓	✓	✓	✓	Likely
19	Walli Creek	Likely	Likely		Likely	
20	Obi Obi Creek	✓	✓	✓		Likely
21	Mary River, Gympie	✓	✓	✓		Likely
22	Wide Bay Creek	✓	✓	✓		
23	Amamoor Creek	✓	✓	✓		Likely

The infographic on the next page summarises the achievements of the 2015-2016 financial year.

**REVEGETATION**

- 25,875 seedlings
- 7.3 ha revegetation
- 3.7 ha regeneration

FENCING

- 7.4 km restoration fencing
- 148 ha off-stream watering
- 40 ha restoration

WEED CONTROL

- 34 ha phys/chem control
- 80 ha surveillance

“RESTORING RIPARIAN RESILIENCE

Implementing the Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan”

2015-16 Financial Year

BIO CONTROLS

- 7,275 Tingids
- 4,200 Tingid infected plants
- 22,762 Jewel beetles
- 6,490 Madeira beetles

141 PROJECT SITES

- 129 properties engaged
- 75 new properties

**REHABILITATION
IN THREATENED
SPECIES HABITAT**

\$ 552,000

including landholder contributions

An MRCCC project funded by the Australian Government Clean Energy Futures Fund | 2011-17

Photo credit: Jillian Turner

Biodiversity Fund project highlights

Kandanga Creek property cluster

Landholders on Kandanga Creek and tributaries including Three Mile Creek have been very active this year with 10 properties engaged in on-ground work to rehabilitate their riparian zones. All properties have constructed riparian fencing and off-stream watering facilities with 2.5km of fencing completed in the Kandanga Creek sub-catchment during 2015/16 financial year. More than 3000 native riparian seedlings were planted across these properties in the last year and seedling growth rates have been very good to date. These on-ground projects are building corridors for threatened species and linking properties in critical habitat areas. This cluster also includes the Alternative Herbicide Trial Project

Charles Street River Park, Kenilworth

A series of heavy rainfall events from 2011 to 2015 led to extensive erosion of the riverbank at Charles Street River Park, Kenilworth. The Kenilworth water supply offtake was affected due to significant loss of river sand which aids filtering. The bank was re-profiled and hundreds of timber piles were driven into the river bed and banks along 200m of riverbank. More than 6000 trees were planted to provide long-term protection against erosion and provide habitat for threatened species. A small flood event occurred in May 2016 and as designed, debris accumulated around the pile fields at the toe of the bank. This project was completed in partnership with the Sunshine Coast Council, the Burnett Mary Regional Group, Seqwater, Alluvium Consulting and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.



Top: Aquatic threatened species habitat and rehabilitation field day, The Palms, August 2016

Below: Revegetation at Charles St Park, Kenilworth



Engaging with the community

The MRCCC engages with the community through field days, training sessions, meetings, mentoring and media releases. Many of our engagement activities are focused on raising awareness of the threatened aquatic species found in the Mary River catchment. Through the Biodiversity Fund project, the MRCCC has organised or been involved in 32 engagement events during the 15/16 financial year. More than 1000 people attended these events, with more than 750 new people attending.

One activity undertaken involved the Gympie Council Green Army team who participated in a training event that included a Giant barred frog survey, water quality monitoring and Cat's claw vine control including biocontrol releases. The team found more than 15 Giant barred frogs during the survey, including juveniles, on a property on Tagigan Creek. These results are very significant because the Giant barred frog were not previously known to be at this location.

The MRCCC were involved in threatened aquatic species awareness training with HQPlantations staff, Widgee State School, Belli/Cedar Catchment Care Group, Bellbunya Sustainable Village, and at events including the Mary River Festival, Noosa Festival of Water, Tiaro Farming and Lifestyle field day, Mary River Cod Hatchery open day and many more.

Biocontrol releases continue to increase throughout the catchment

Cats Claw (*Dolichandra unguis-cati*) and Madeira vine (*Anredera cordifolia*) continue to be a major threat to the health of the Mary River. Biological controls have been used to help control these difficult weeds for many years now, with local group Gympie and District Landcare pioneering this work for more than a decade.

Through the MRCCC's "Restoring Riparian Resilience: Implementing the Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan" project, a significant number of releases of biocontrols have occurred in the last two years. The graph shows the increase over the past two financial years. This increase has been possible because of the ability of Gympie and District Landcare to significantly raise their production levels in the last 12 months. We also continue to release Jewel Beetles (*Hylaeogena jureceki*) and tingids (*Carvalhotingis visenda*) supplied by the Greater Mary Association (GMA) facility in Tiaro. Without the commitment of these two organisations to the breeding of biocontrols none of the releases would be possible.

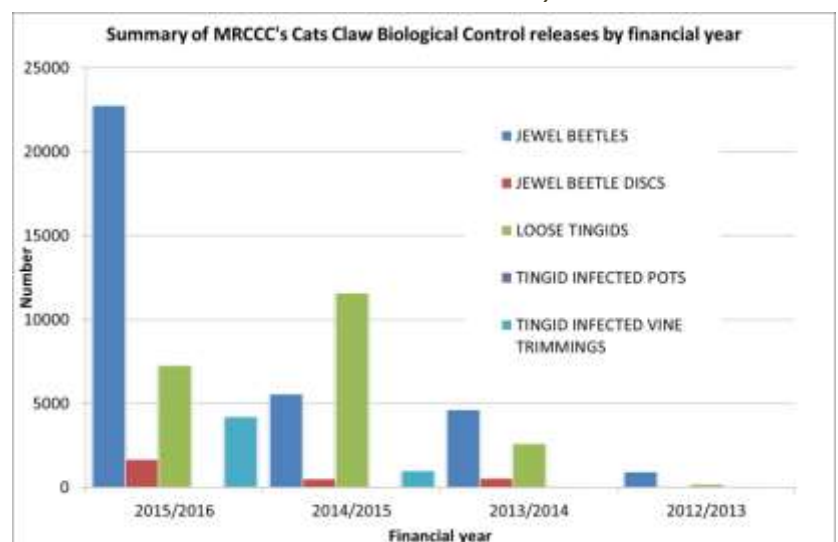
In the last 12 months releases have occurred at 70 new locations. Some sites are showing very positive outcomes with the jewel beetles becoming well established and tingids showing signs of defoliating whole areas of Cats Claw ground cover.

The MRCCC goal continues to be to get as many biological controls out into Cats Claw infestations as possible. We are looking for signs that the infestation with the biological controls is reducing the localised spread of Cats Claw and also inhibiting the flowering and seeding. Anecdotal reports are coming in of these impacts. These images show examples of where tingids have defoliated areas of ground level Cats Claw.

Our recommendation is that landholders continue to physically and/or chemically control the Cats Claw. Protecting canopy trees is the highest priority. The past year was the MRCCC's biggest year for releasing Madeira vine beetles with 760 beetles released. This year numbers have already exceeded last year. These beetles, which also supplied by Gympie Landcare are also showing some promise. One example is at Obi Crossing No 2 where there is now a well established population after 50 beetles were released in 2012.



Tingid damage to a dense carpet of Cats Claw on the Mary River, Tiaro. Image courtesy of the Greater Mary Association Inc.



This graph shows the increase in numbers of biological controls released through MRCCC's Restoring Riparian Resilience project over the last 3 years





Living with Threatened Species – Eva Ford

Frog wrap-up

The biodiversity monitoring program continued for another year in the upper and middle catchment with support from the Sunshine Coast Council, Noosa Council and the Gympie Regional Council. Our long-term frog monitoring sites (Cedar, Belli, Six Mile and Cooroora Creeks) have now been surveyed for 10 years and it is with excitement that we embark on analysis of the data.

Frog surveys of various locations throughout the catchment continue as they have for 12 years, providing a great opportunity for landholders and volunteers to experience the creeks at night and learn about the fauna that utilise these sensitive ecosystems. These spot surveys also provide new information about frog species locations, abundance and habitat requirements. In the 2015/2016 season we obtained new records of the vulnerable Cascade treefrog in the western catchments of Coonoon Gibber, Derriers and Mitchell Creeks as well as Pencil and Baxter creeks; tributaries of Obi Obi Creek.

We also had the opportunity to visit Happy Valley on Fraser Island with Fraser Coast Council staff and the bush regenerator group, K'Gari Urban Biodiversity Project. Here we were treated to a rare encounter with the near threatened Cooloola sedgefrog. This group has set up a long-term monitoring site at Happy Valley as a result of the training from the workshop and survey.

2015/16 frog survey season outcomes	Number
Monitoring sites	4
Monitoring visits	12
Incidental surveys	28
Volunteers and landholders involved	46
Surveys in the Sunshine Coast Council area	22
Surveys in the Noosa Council area	9
Surveys in the Gympie Council area	8
Surveys in the Fraser Coast Council area	1
Frog records	422
Threatened frog records (4 species)	141
New locations for threatened frog species	17



Above left: Survey at Happy Valley with the K'Gari Urban Biodiversity Project, at Happy Valley.

Centre: Jackson Frauenfelder (Griffith Uni Honours student) at Belli Creek.

Above right: Litoria pearsoniana (Cascade treefrog – vulnerable) at Derriers Creek near Imbil.

MRCCC Student Workplace learning program



Above left: Cayla Judd fish surveying on Glastonbury Creek. Centre: Jess Dean planting along Belli Creek.

Above right: Jess and Cayla releasing Mary River cod fingerlings into Belli Creek

Each year the MRCCC offers a placement to the University of the Sunshine Coast for one or more students to undertake a Workplace Learning module. Through this program the students are given many and varied tasks as they join with staff in field, office and lab activities. We like to have them along to our regular MRCCC and other meetings so that they can observe and learn from the interactions between community groups, agencies business enterprises, educational organisations, regional bodies amongst others. Jessica Dean and Cayla Judd joined us for their 96 hour workplace learning unit at the end of 2015.

Both were final year Environmental Science students and both contributed hugely to the MRCCC team. Summer is always a busy time so for us it is most beneficial to have extra hands and 'switched -on' minds to help out.



For Jess and Cayla we were able to show them what it is like to do fish and frog surveys, bio-condition assessments, water testing equipment calibration and use, landholder visits, release Mary River cod fingerlings, be part of a weeding team and do some essential office and reporting tasks.

This year was the first time we had a student feedback survey in place for them to fill out. While their responses reflected a period of intense learning and positive experience, they were honest in their suggestions for ways we can improve our service to future environmental workers.

In August 2016 we welcomed Matt Tattam and Shaun Fisher, also final year Environmental Science Students at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Matt and Shaun assisted with a range of tasks, including field visits for the Reef Gully Erosion Control program and the annual Catchment Crawl. Both will continue working for the MRCCC one day per week until December 2016.

The Sunshine Coast hinterland

The upper Mary in the Sunshine Coast hinterland has seen a great deal of activity over the past year thanks to support for waterway and biodiversity monitoring and protection from the Sunshine Coast Council and the Australian Government Biodiversity Fund project; 'Restoring Riparian Resilience: Implementing the Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan'.

The Sunshine Coast Council has an outstanding Environmental Levy system that delivers projects and support throughout the Council area. The Environment Levy Partnership Program supports the MRCCC to maintain an extension presence in the area and assist landholders to develop projects that will protect and enhance the condition of waterways and the riparian vegetation. Projects help to improve land management, install riparian fencing, control environmental weeds that threaten the resilience of native vegetation, encourage natural regeneration of riparian zones and revegetate where necessary. Assistance for these projects is available through the annual Landholder Environment Grants and through the MRCCC Biodiversity Fund program. These two programs have been complementary for the past 5 years and together give rise to larger and more effective on-ground projects.

Waterway	Properties	Projects			Amount approved	BF co-funding	In-kind contribution
		Revegetation	Environmental weed control	Fencing			
Belli/Cedar	3	3	3	1	8876	12590	53380
Mary	2	1	1	1	6278	1500	10208
Oakey	2	2	2	1	6936	12300	22290
Obi Obi	1	1	1		2295	2394	3170
Mary/Obi	2		2		8877	4200	11970
Walli	1	1	1		1624	1623	2992
Total					34,866	34,607	104,010

This year we have been involved in the planning phase of the Sunshine Council's Mary River Restoration project that will focus significant resources onto properties along the Mary River itself in the Kenilworth area. We have been working with many of the landholders in this area so the extra injection of interest and funds is very welcome to move recovery along a bit quicker. The program is mostly interested in revegetation that will complement previous revegetation and weed control projects as well as the Charles Street Park bank restoration project of 2015.

Sunshine Coast Council also acquires land of significant conservation value and we have enjoyed contributing to the knowledge of Council Bushcare volunteers who come annually to work at the Kirbys Road Environmental Reserve on a tributary of Obi Obi Creek.

We get to share information about the ecological values of the Obi sub-catchment, water quality parameters and their measurement, biodiversity and threatened species and their habitat requirements, riparian assessment, macroinvertebrates; their function in the aquatic environment and their use as water quality indicators.

Belli/Cedar Catchment Care Community

Through the Sunshine Coast Council Environment Levy Partnership Program we have been able to continue supporting the Belli/Cedar Catchment Care Community for its second year. It now has 50 landholders on its contact list who are invited to events along with family, friends, staff and visitors. During the year we have helped landholders with riparian weed control, released young Mary River cod into Belli Creek, planted trees to widen the riparian vegetation at Belli Creek Crossing



Right: Bushcare group learning about the frogs of the Obi Obi Creek



Number 2, and learnt about easily and cheaply detecting wildlife using sensor cameras and audio equipment – including mobile phones.

In December 2015 the group hosted a well-attended community meeting with a welcome and address by local landholder, Peter Wellington MP. The meeting attracted 50 landholders from the Belli Park and Gheerulla districts who were treated to several short presentations from the Sunshine Coast Detection Dogs for Conservation Unit, Noosa and District Landcare, Sunshine Coast Council Conservation Officer, Hinterland Bush Links, fellow landholder from Eumundi Beef - Susan Roger, Country Noosa and the MRCCC. Great connections were made and new landholders came on board with activities offered by the various groups presenting.



Above left: Peter Wellington MP addresses the Belli Community. Centre: Lending a hand to landholders doing riparian weed control along Belli Creek. Above right: Inspecting an old revegetation site at Belli Creek Crossing No. 3

Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan – Tanzi Smith

We are now in the fifth year of the journey that has been the Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan. In the last twelve months the draft Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery plan made one small step forward when the Queensland State Government returned it back to the Commonwealth in May 2016 after having the plan to review for approximately 12 months. The Department of Environment staff in Canberra went swiftly through the State Government comments and also asked the MRCCC to review the plan as of July 2016. It was our hope that the plan would be presented to the September Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) meeting, but this was not to be. The subsequent TSSC meeting in December is the next opportunity for the plan to progress to the next step. If it is submitted to that meeting and the Committee are happy with the content, the plan will then go out for two months of public comment.

Despite the issues we are experiencing with the progress of this plan we are still able to use the work that went into creating the plan and we have provided draft copies to Noosa Council and Gympie Council to assist in aspects of planning work they are undertaking. In addition, the MRCCC's Restoring Riparian Resilience Project is focussed on the five species that are central to the plan: the endangered Mary River turtle (*Elusor macrurus*), endangered Mary River cod (*Maccullochella mariensis*), vulnerable Australian lungfish (*Neoceratodus forsteri*), endangered Giant Barred frog (*Mixophyes iteratus*) and Freshwater Mullet (*Trachystoma petardi*). Through this project private landholders throughout the catchment are supporting work to improve the habitat of these species. The success of the Mary River cod breeding program at the Gerry Cook Hatchery in 2015 and 2016 and the collaboration that is occurring through the Hatchery Steering Committee is also contributing to achieving the actions identified in the plan as are many ongoing research projects.

In 2014 MRCCC submitted a nomination for the Freshwater Mullet to be listed as a threatened species under our National laws. A decision about whether the Freshwater Mullet will be listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* will be made by 30 September 2017. The fish is currently on the Final Priority Assessment List with a recommendation from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee that it be listed as vulnerable. The Committee will gather any new information that comes to light in the next twelve months to help finalise their decision.

The MRCCC has also been asked to contribute to a book on threatened species recovery planning in Australia which the National Environmental Science Program Threatened Species hub is publishing with the CSIRO. The book aims to identify common themes that contribute to the success of recovery plans. The MRCCC was asked to discuss both the Mary River Cod Recovery Plan, which was developed between 1994 and 1996 and the draft Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan. Preparing this chapter was a great opportunity to reflect back on the fantastic work on threatened species recovery that began over twenty years ago in the Mary River Catchment. We are very lucky to have this history to build upon and the chance to still benefit from the knowledge of many of the people who were involved in those early days, such as Bob Simpson (then DPI Fisheries Scientist), Eve Whitney (the first Mary River Cod mother) and Glenda Pickersgill (Landowner and Cod Project Officer). Success over the last twenty years has relied upon strong community involvement and ownership, commitment of key individuals who push things forward and break down barriers and the strength of connections; both between people and the threatened species. A draft of the chapter has been submitted for review. It is anticipated that the book will be published in 2017/2018.



Great Barrier Reef Catchment Loads Monitoring program expands to Fishermans Pocket –



Catchment loads sampling teams at Fishermans Pocket receiving refresher training from DSITI Scientist Rae Huggins



Catchment loads samplers at the Mary River Resource Centre with DSITI scientists Rohan Wallace and Rae Huggins

Tanzi Smith

For almost three years the MRCCC has been assisting the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation (DSITI) with measuring actual loads of sediment, nutrients and pesticides that the Mary River catchment contributes to the Great Barrier Reef. Our role has been to coordinate two sampling teams who take monthly samples and event samples at both Home Park near Tiaro and the Tinana Barrage near Maryborough. The sample teams have done an excellent job in their role and have received acknowledgement from the State Government scientists for their precision and reliability. The data collected as a result of this work is used to calibrate models that estimate pollutant loads and how these loads would be affected by changes in landuse and other variations.

In 2016, the State Government has committed to increase investment in monitoring of pollutant loads and has made plans to install new sampling sites throughout the Great Barrier Reef catchments. One of the new sampling sites is at Fishermans Pocket just downstream of Gympie. This is the first of the new sites to be installed and it is operational as of early October. The MRCCC has been asked to assist with the sampling of this site and we have set up a new sampling team to take their first samples in October. Samples from this site will be tested for sediments and nutrients and will be collected once a month and during events.

In order to be able to take samples for the program, the new sampling team undertook one and half days of detailed training. In total seven new samplers were trained to provide back up for all three sites. Members of the existing sampling

teams from Home Park and Tinana and also Tanzi and Caitlin from the MRCCC went through refresher training.

Thanks to our existing samplers: Emma-Kate Currie and Frank Ekin (Tinana), Ross Smith and Garry Brischke (Home Park) and to our newly trained samplers Jess Dean, Matt Tattam, Shaun Fisher and Becky Watson (Gympie), Sarah Brischke (Tinana) and Steve Veenstra (Home Park).

Did you know that the Reef Plan 2015 Report Card was just released? <http://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/measuring-success/report-cards/2015/>

The Table below summarises how the Burnett Mary region is doing compared to reductions in catchment loads achieved across all Greater Barrier Reef catchments. Mary River specific data was not able to be obtained at the time of writing. The progress is assessed relative to targets that have been set by the Queensland Government. It shows that compared to other regions, the progress in our region has been better on Dissolved inorganic nitrogen and either worse or equivalent to the Reef wide score in all other pollutants.

Pollutants	Great Barrier Reef Wide Score	Burnett Mary Region Score
Sediment	C	E
Particulate phosphorus	A	C
Particulate nitrogen	C	E
Dissolved inorganic nitrogen	E	B
Pesticides	C	C

Source: <http://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/measuring-success/report-cards/2015/assets/gbr-2015report-card-detailed-results.pdf>





Inaugural Mary River Month 2015 a success

In 2015, the MRCCC hosted the inaugural Mary River Month between World Rivers Day at the end of September and the Mary River Festival on the 14th November. The purpose of Mary River Month was to raise awareness of the importance and connectivity of the Mary River and Great Sandy Strait and to provide people with hands on experiences regarding what it takes to make these important ecosystems healthy.

During Mary River Month 2015 the MRCCC ran seventeen activities and sixteen other events were run by sixteen other groups and organisations. Highlights included the return of the Mary River Catchment Crawl, the Let's talk Women's Business workshop with Butchulla Wonamutta Elder Auntie Nai Nai Bird and the Upper and Lower Mary River Heritage Bus Trips. The Spring in the Mary photo competition was well received with 72 photos being entered from all over the catchment.

Mary River Month also generated some new volunteers for the MRCCC. A Mary River Month Facebook page was created which had 85 likes by the conclusion of the period and an increase in likes on the MRCCC Facebook page occurred in parallel. We also attracted some new Waterwatch volunteers and had many people who are new to the MRCCC participate in events. The bus trips were especially important in this respect.

Linking with events organised by other groups helped to create a buzz around the concept and create a sense of connection and collaboration. Importantly we had collaboration from groups from Hervey Bay to Maleny. This is a great strength that we can build upon.

At the time of the 2016 AGM, Mary River Month 2016 is underway and has involved a similar number of activities and events as in 2015. This year's Mary River Month culminates with the Mary River Festival in Kandanga on Saturday 12th November 2016 from midday to 8pm.

Teachers and students "Get to know the Mary River" Ed Studio

Thanks to the efforts of Sue Gibson, Principal of Barambah Environmental Education Centre and Education Sector Delegate on the MRCCC and Robyn Yates, Tinana State School there is now an online resource for all public primary and high school teachers in Queensland to help them include the Mary River and Great Sandy Strait in their classroom. The MRCCC has assisted with the creation of the resource, providing content, images and fact sheets. Teachers who attended the launch of Ed Studio in Maryborough in June 2016 were given free copies of the MRCCC's historical film, "In Retrospect: The Mary River", the MRCCC's book, "Something about Mary" and our "Riparian Health is River Health" brochure.

Situated in the Department of Education and Training's Learning Place <http://education.qld.gov.au/learningplace> the "Get to know the Mary River" Ed Studio is tailored to provide relevant materials and resources based on subject and year level. Resources are currently available under the subjects of English, Humanities and Social Science (HASS), History, Geography, Science, In Flood and Endangered. Sue and Robyn invite other teachers to share content they may have already developed related to the Mary River so that the Ed Studio continues to grow and becomes a resource for a wide range of year levels and subjects. The Ed Studio houses a combination of new material and existing Mary River based teaching materials such as the Science Module Tiaro and District Landcare developed with local teacher and artist, Zela Bissett, on the Mary River turtle and the Marvellous Mangrove modules promoted by the Burnett Mary Regional Group.

A launch of the EdStudio will occur in Gympie in 2017. All interested teachers will be invited to attend. In the meantime, all State Primary and High school teachers in the catchment are encouraged to access the Ed Studio via the Department of Education and Training Intranet, use it and contribute to it.

A huge thank you to Robyn and Sue for putting so much work into the Ed Studio and creating what we hope will be a bridge between the classroom and catchment management.



Get to know the Mary River

Access Key: S460157555

Local resources for schools in the Mary River Catchment area.

Studio owners are Robyn YATES, Zela BISSETT, Sue-Ellen GIBSON, Natalie ASCOUGH, Sandra MORRIS

This studio is open to staff with open participation

<https://staff.learningplace.eq.edu.au/lp/pages/default.aspx?pid=1492578>



Creating Connections through Reconnecting a Koala Corridor in the Goomboorian District Tanzi Smith with Kevin and Robyn Jackson

"Creating Connections" began as an idea from Kevin and Robyn Jackson who recognised that there was a heightened awareness of the natural environment by local people due to coal exploration in the upper Tinana Creek catchment area in 2015. There was an additional level of awareness caused by the formation of groups such as the Cooloola Community Action Group and the Koala Action Group at around the same time, both of which demonstrated that people were interested in taking some kind of action to preserve the beautiful natural heritage of the Tinana/Coondoo catchments.

As the Australian Government's 20 Million Trees Program was calling for submissions in late 2015 it seemed like a great idea to get together some of these interested locals and a community meeting was organised to discuss possibilities. The idea proposed at the first public meeting at the Goomboorian Hall was to look at re-establishing riparian corridors and improving/extending existing corridors or creating a mosaic of these that would also enhance and re-establish wildlife habitats and corridors between Wolvi and Neerdie and from the Goomboorian Mountains to the Como Scarp.



*Above: Trees at Bev and Peter's place only
four months after planting*

It was recognised that much of the upper Tinana/Coondoo Creek catchment is "Endangered Lowlands Rainforest of Sub Tropical Australia - Riparian vegetation" of federal, state and regional significance that contains endangered, vulnerable and rare fauna and flora. Also the Eastern Mary River catchment did not appear to have a very high profile, considering the beautiful natural area it encompasses. The higher banks of the riparian areas of Tinana Creek are generally Blue Gum flats which are of major significance locally as Koala habitat together with Tallowwood and Grey Gum on higher areas.

Through comments from individuals, both at this meeting and generally, and from their own local knowledge, Kevin and Robyn were aware that this area is home to a relatively significant healthy koala population, giant barred frogs, lots of platypus, possible lungfish, many echidnas and the Mary River cod; quite apart from numerous bird species of interest. It was felt that building corridors or a mosaic of plantings would benefit all wildlife in the area but specifically the koala population who were using a

combination of the road verges and the creeks to move around their territories.

This project concept, developed from the community meeting and other discussions, was seen as a 3 way project incorporating:

1. Community Engagement;
2. Riparian revegetation to improve quality of the waterways for everyone and for all wildlife (this included doing work on invasive weeds such as Cat's Claw Creeper in the areas worked on): and
3. Connectivity for Wildlife/Koala Corridor connectivity.

Also discussed initially was the possibility of planting some endangered, vulnerable or rare trees or plants, particularly along the creek banks but it became clear that this depends largely on the availability of seeds. This, together with the lack of local koala tree seed meant that seed collection became one of the main focuses of discussion at our public tree plantings.

Based on the groundwork and concept developed by community members led by the Jacksons, the MRCCC submitted an application to the 20 Million Trees Program titled "Reconnecting a Koala landscape in the Goomboorian District". Just before Christmas 2015 MRCCC was notified that the project application was successful. A total of \$100,000 from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme was secured to plant 10,000 trees across 15 properties by June 2018. An additional amount of \$9,900 from the Gympie Regional Council has also been put toward maintenance of the trees. The project officially commenced in March 2016.

The project was kicked off with a public meeting on the 13th March 2016 involving a walk through Messmate Park led by Gympie and District Landcare Bushcare volunteers, followed by a presentation at the Silky Oak Tea Gardens about the Gympie Regional Council koala mapping work. The name "Creating Connections" was adopted for the project to illustrate the project aims of creating connections for koalas and other wildlife, and creating connections between the people and communities of the Goomboorian, Kia Ora, Neerdie and Wolvi districts. To further this aim, we are holding community tree plantings to encourage participation of the community and to support the landholders who have committed areas of their property to koala conservation. These planting events also provide a chance for people to learn more about revegetation methods, about the importance of this area for koalas and the significance of Tinana Creek and its tributaries for threatened aquatic species such as the Mary River cod and Mary River turtle.



The first trees planted as part of this project were planted by Bev Parry and Peter Wilson at their property on Tinana Creek, Goomboorian. Their planting has been very successful (see photo of 4 month old trees) and has grown from an initial 200 trees to 900 trees, including a community planting on 3 November 2016.

Around the same time as Bev and Peter were planting on their place, the first community tree planting occurred at property on Tagigan Rd on 14 May 2016. Twenty two people attended and 120 trees were planted. Dr Romane Cristescu from the University of Sunshine Coast and the koala scat detection dogs, Maya and Baxter were there. Romane, Maya and Baxter gave a demonstration of scat detection, finding scat from actual koalas on the property. In fact, on that day, Baxter officially passed his test to become a bona fide koala scat detection dog.

Rick Sizer from Gympie and District Landcare set up the tree planting and gave an excellent talk about planting for koalas on private property and then guided a walk around the property, identifying trees and other plants. People thoroughly enjoyed the day. Thank you to Meg and Craig Walacavage for hosting us on their property, and for looking after these and the further 500 trees that will be planted on their property.

The second planting on the 11th August was held on a weekday and we were joined by the Year 5/6 class from Kia Ora School. The property was on Wilsons Pocket Rd in an area where the landowners Marilyn and Greg Harrison frequently see koalas. The kids were like planting machines and it was such a pleasure to spend the morning with them. We got through the allocated trees in no time. The MRCCC's Work Placement student Matt Tattam helped the kids make seed ball bombs containing lomandra seeds which they then threw into a steep gully that has been eroding.

Rick Sizer from Gympie and District Landcare again gave a talk, this time focussed on seed collection methods. We were very lucky to see a koala about 150m from where we were planting. That was a highlight and a reminder of why we are doing this project, which will plant 2000 trees on the Harrison's place. Thank you very much to Greg and Marilyn for hosting us and for your enthusiasm for the project.

In total, sites for over 11,000 trees have been identified across eight different properties. Most of these trees will be sourced from and planted by Gympie and District Landcare crews by the end of 2017. Using the detailed mapping work commissioned by the Gympie Regional Council we are able to target properties where rehabilitation work has been identified as valuable for koalas. There are many such properties in the Goomboorian/Kia Ora/Wolvi districts and more and more sightings in this area show how important this area is for koalas.

Also, through our project activities people are meeting each other and forming new connections that we hope will contribute to strengthening the social fabric of the districts where the project is taking place.

This project shows the importance of the commitment and initiative of individual members of the community and community groups for catchment management and threatened species recovery. Robyn and Kevin have provided an example of how to get people involved and create a new positive project for their community. MRCCC is proud to be able to support them and their community in their efforts.

If you'd like to get involved and keep up to date with the progress of this project, please like our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Creating-Connections-1547291235569745/>



Dr Romane Cristescu, University of Sunshine Coast with koala scat detection dogs Baxter and Maya



Matt Tattam (R) and Rick Sizer (L) helping Kia Ora School Year 5/6 kids making lomandra seed bombs





The Gerry Cook Hatchery and Mary River Cod Breeding Program



*Top: 16+ full troughs at the Gerry Cook Hatchery
Centre: Thousands of Mary River cod eggs
Below: Thousands of Mary River cod fingerlings*

The past year at the Lake Macdonald based Gerry Cook Hatchery has been both challenging and rewarding, resulting in positive steps towards re-establishing Mary River cod populations within the Mary River Catchment where cod were once widespread and abundant. The MRCCC is now over-seeing the management of the Gerry Cook Hatchery in collaboration with a Steering Group which includes representatives of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, (DAF), Noosa Council, Seqwater, Recreational Fish Stocking Groups and the MRCCC. There were a number of hurdles that needed to be overcome for the breeding program to continue. These included;

- negotiating a lease with Seqwater over the land and hatchery buildings
- obtaining a permit for the collection and holding of suitable broodstock to augment the two pairs at the hatchery with the aim of increasing the genetic diversity of fingerlings
- sourcing funding to support a best practice breeding program
- developing and fine tuning a 5 year strategy to guide the operation of the hatchery and the release of fingerlings for both conservation and recreational fishing stocking purposes.

In 2015, with Steve Poole at the helm and assistance from former hatchery technician Darren Knowles, around 11,000 healthy fingerlings were bred and released. The work was carried out on a voluntary basis with limited funding for fish food. Around a quarter of the fingerlings bred were released for conservation stocking within the Mary River Catchment where the cod is a no take species. The remainder were released into specified impoundments in south east Queensland for recreational fish stocking purposes, where it is legal to be in possession of one Mary River cod. As the Mary River cod is a fish prized by anglers, recreational fish stocking is aimed at taking pressure away from wild populations.

At the end of June 2016, eight adult broodstock, four males and four females were transferred into the external ponds at the hatchery. A rise in water temperature at the end of August triggered the first spawn which resulted in some 20,000 eggs being produced. Three subsequent spawnings filled the hatchery with eggs and fingerlings for the first time in many years. Fingerling releases have commenced with around 2000 fingerlings already released. Conservation releases primarily target locations where cod were once found.

Three "Open days" have been held at the hatchery over the past year. The first in November 2015 attracted around 100 people from throughout south east Queensland. The next Open day coincided with the Noosa Festival of Water in June 2016 and an estimated 400 people visited the hatchery!



The most recent Open Day was held in October 2016 attracting 50 people, mostly locals, many of whom were not aware that the hatchery existed, and did not know about the Mary River cod. These Open days help to educate the wider community not only about the cod, but also about the Mary River catchment and the factors which have led to the cod being listed as endangered.

The search for funding to support a professional operation at the hatchery has resulted in funding support for the 2016 breeding season being provided by Seqwater, Unity Water, HQPlantations, the Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation, the Burnett Mary Regional Group and the Ewen Maddock, Lake Macdonald, Lake Borumba, Brisbane Valley and Maroon Moogerah Fish Stocking Associations. Funds were also raised through the raffle of a pearl necklace which was donated to the MRCCC. The raffle raised \$1100 and was won by Steve Baines, who was thrilled to have won such a valuable prize. Thank you also to Hooked on Angling and Outdoors who donated fishing gear for the second prize in the raffle.

In September/October 2016 an online "Pozible" crowd funding campaign was established by Dallas Frazier, Environmental Consultant and friend of the MRCCC and the Mary River cod. The campaign needed to raise \$5000 in a 28 day period and although the campaign started slowly, by the final day almost \$6000 was raised from more than 60 contributors. The campaign has demonstrated the incredible level of interest in the Mary River cod.

Funding received to date has provided for Steve Poole's full time employment for the duration of the breeding season, with sufficient funding remaining to cover the cost of fingerling and broodstock food, and to cover some maintenance costs at the hatchery.

The Sunshine Coast Council has also provided a grant to the MRCCC to support research being undertaken by Griffith University to develop a specific genetic marker for the Mary River cod. This research has potential multiple benefits for the cod and the restocking program, enabling the ability to assess the efficacy of the current cod breeding and stocking activities and establishing detailed genetic knowledge from which future management of the species and its habitat can be monitored and assessed.



*Top: Darren Knowles speaks about the Mary River cod breeding process at the Hatchery
Centre: Members of the Belli/Cedar Catchment Care Community releasing fingerlings at Belli Creek
Below: The Gerry Cook Hatchery at Lake Macdonald*





Noosa Festival of Water

The 12th annual Noosa Festival of Water, hosted by the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee, took place on Sunday 26th June at the Noosa Botanic Gardens on the shores of Lake Macdonald in Cooroy.

Fine winter weather and the beautiful garden and lake setting provided a wonderful backdrop for the day's events, which started with the Lake Macdonald Catch and Release Bass Fishing Competition over at Mary River Cod Park. Run by the volunteers from the Lake Macdonald Fish Stocking group and sponsored by Hooked on Angling and Outdoors, the competition attracted 33 entries from as far afield as Maryborough and Brisbane. A record number of juniors entered the competition this year, providing an avenue for educating young people about sustainable fishing. Another interesting aspect of the competition is the use of electric motors only. The competition start at 6.30am is blissfully silent as all the boats depart! Winners were announced in the Amphitheatre later in the day with Joel Sommerville winning the junior comp, while Matt Smith took out the honours in the adult section.



Top: Ed van der Kruk counts down to start the Lake Macdonald Catch and Release Bass Fishing Competition from Mary River Cod Park.

Below: The magnificent Amphitheatre in the Noosa Botanic Gardens

The Festival started at 10am with Noosa Mayor, Tony Wellington introducing the Noosa Pipe Band in the Macdonald tartan who pipe into the Amphitheatre. With a focus on promoting local entertainment, the Festival welcomed Keith Gall, the very talented girls from Phenix Band and the fantastic energy and sound of Sommer Rd. Lyndon Davis and the Gubbi Gubbi dancers fascinated crowds with their indigenous stories and dance and Festival favourite Martin Finland from Geckoes Wildlife rounded out the program captivating children and adults with his dynamic presentation of native creatures, including a very cuddly wombat.

The Festival provided opportunities for kids to learn to fish with the Lake

Borumba Fish Stocking Group. Kids could also dabble in the arts with Vanessa and Ruth in the Creative Kids marquee, have their face painted and have a go on the free jumping castle. Kids and adults were all able to experience kayaking and standup paddleboarding on Lake Macdonald, hear and see Alan Burnett's very popular snake and reptile show, meet the Dingoes from the Fraser Coast Wildlife Sanctuary and learn more about our region through an array of displays and information stalls, including water testing by the MRCCC.

The Noosa Water Taxi offered free trips across Lake Macdonald - definitely one of the most popular activities of the day. Over at Mary River Cod park, Festival patrons were able to visit the Gerry Cook Hatchery where Darren Knowles helped people learn about the breeding program for the endangered Mary River cod, and people were able to say hello to Geraldine, long term hatchery resident and cod mother to many thousands of Mary River cod fingerlings!

Noosa Council have identified the Noosa Festival of Water as one of their annual signature events and will partially support staging the Festival for the next three years. Festival sponsors and supporters include Noosa Landcare and the Green Army volunteers, Hooked on Angling and Outdoors, the Bendigo Community Bank, Cooroy, Seqwater and Queensland Water and Landcarers. Jacky and staff at the Noosa Botanic Gardens provide a magnificent venue for the Festival each year.

The success of the Noosa Festival of Water is primarily due to the massive in-kind contribution of so many volunteers who help to stage the Festival every year. "Like" the Noosa Festival of Water on Facebook to stay up to date with plans for the 13th annual Noosa Festival of Water, Sunday 25th June 2017.





Land for Wildlife in the Wide Bay Region 2015-2016 – Annette Bourke

The MRCCC is providing some continuity for Land for Wildlife property participants with limited financial support from Gympie Regional Council. Functions (workshops and property visits) have been well supported.

In October 2015, a River Walk was held at Petrie Park, Tiaro in conjunction with the Greater Mary Association. Attended by about 20 people, the group learned about turtles and walked through the GMA Koala Corridor.

In December 2015 a walk and talk with an emphasis on plant propagation was held at Marc and Kerri Anne Russell's Wolvi property. Various propagation techniques were discussed and the treatments of different types of seed, with supporting information sheets, were identified. A walk around the Russell property led to an appreciation of the work done for revegetation and protection of species. Kerri Anne provided us with a delicious morning tea which featured bush tucker.

Clean-up Australia Day in March 2016 saw a small but intrepid group venture to the Six Mile Creek Rest Area on the Bruce Highway to clean up litter and also attack Cat's Claw creeper which exhibits its rampant growth in this riparian zone.

In May this year a full contingent of 35 visited 3 amazing properties near Montville. Two groups of owners shared their journeys of revegetating their properties, where tens of thousands of trees have been planted. Sunshine Coast Council's Environment Officer, Danielle Crawford and Marc Russell, Conservation Partnerships Officer, explained the support given to land owners through the Land for Wildlife program and the Sunshine Coast Council Environment Levy. The results were there for all to see. A third property featured local vegetation, remarkable scenery and showcased the owner's commitment to maintaining this special property.

In June 2016, the MRCCC hosted a workshop at Gunalda which included a presentation from Butchulla Elder Nai Nai Bird on bush tucker plants endemic to our region. This was followed by a field walk led by Graeme Elphinstone at the Scotchy Pocket property of Alan and Tracey Petersen where participants investigated various types of grasses and forbs and their worth to the grazing industry. After lunch, Marc Russell undertook the daunting task of improving participants' eucalypt identification skills.

Over the weekend of 8/9 October this year, long-time Land for Wildlife member, Nonie Metzler, allowed access to her property to coincide with "Studio Trails" visits, an initiative of the Gympie Regional Gallery. Nonie, a keen and experienced artist, displayed her art work in an innovative way by making use of the many tracks on her Jones Hill property.

Also in October 2016, Ian and Sally Mackay hosted a tour of their property at Moy Pocket for the Gympie Field Naturalists and Land for Wildlife members. Residents of the area for many years, the Mackays have undertaken extensive revegetation of their original property and have now embarked on restoration of land acquired after the Traveston Crossing dam property sell off, including beautiful river flats that they hope to bring back to life.

Gympie Regional Council funding facilitated the availability of the workshops/visits in May and June, as well as covering some of the cost of maintaining the Land for Wildlife mailing lists, and keeping participants informed of coming events.

A very detailed application for funding from the Gympie Council Environment Levy was submitted to fast track the employment of a Bush Care/ Environment Officer to support, among many other things, members of the Land for Wildlife programme. Although the application was unsuccessful, negotiations are ongoing. Watch this space!!

The Land for Wildlife Program provides education, worthwhile experiences, comradery, incentive and good will to members. In 2017, I encourage current members to reignite your enthusiasm and get involved once more. The MRCCC aims to continue the quarterly workshops and field days and we will be distributing a survey/questionnaire to find out what Land for Wildlife people want from this program. I urge you to participate.



*Top: Ian Mackay addresses Land for Wildlife and GMA people at Petrie Park, Tiaro
Centre: Nai Nai Bird talks bush tucker in Gundiah*

Bottom: Alan Petersen gives directions to the field walk on his Scotchy Pocket property





Policy and project submissions 2015-2016

Reef Trust #2 Gully Erosion Control Programme	Nov 2015
Gympie Regional Council Environment Strategy - Threatened Species Project	April 2016
Review of revised draft Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan	July 2016
Queensland Government Climate Action Plan submission	Aug 2016

Representations

Community Cabinet meeting, Bundaberg	Oct 2015
Informal vine weeds control group of natural resource managers (government and non-government)	Oct 2015
White throated snapping turtle recovery team	Nov 2015
Gympie Regional Council Environmental Forum	Dec 2015
BMRG Reef Trust #3 stakeholder group meeting	Jan 2016
Australian Water Partnership, Canberra	Feb 2016
Meeting with Threatened Species Commissioner advisor	Feb 2016
Meeting with EPBC Compliance Staff in relation to the Colton Mine	Feb 2016
Meeting with Biodiversity Fund Australian Government Case Manager	Feb 2016
Lake Macdonald spillway upgrade, Seqwater community reference group	Mar 2016
Reef Trust Gully Erosion Control Program Delegation	Apr 2016
Gympie Council Environmental Strategy Workshops	May 2016
Input to the listing of priority threatened species for Gympie Regional Council Koala Plan	May 2016
Great Sandy Strait Land Managers Meeting	May 2016
Sunshine Coast Rivers Initiative, Sunshine Coast Council	June 2016
Launch of the Get to Know the Mary River Ed Studio for State Government teachers	June 2016
Paddock to Reef Great Barrier Reef monitoring program	July 2016
Upper Mary Cats Claw Vine forum, Sunshine Coast Council	Sept 2016

Workshops, Festivals & Field-days

Land for Wildlife field day, Mary River, Tiaro. GMA Koala Corridor and Biocontrols	Oct 2015
Kirby's Road Environmental Reserve Bushcare working bee – water quality, riparian assessment and frog Giant barred frog in Obi Obi Creek	Oct 2015
Belli/Cedar Catchment Care Community at Rodger's property (riparian weed control) and visit to old revegetation site at Belli Crossing Number 3.	Oct 2015
Catchment Crawl, water testing at 19 locations along the Mary River and tributaries	Oct 2015
River Listening Tour – Conondale, Kenilworth, Gympie, Tiaro, Maryborough, Golden Gate	Oct 2015
Interpreting soil analysis for sub-tropical pastures workshop with Country Noosa, Ridgewood	Oct 2015
Gerry Cook Hatchery, Lake Macdonald Open Day – Mary River Cod breeding program	Nov 2015
Happy Valley, Fraser Island Frog workshop and survey of beach wetlands	Nov 2015
Mary River Festival, Kandanga	Nov 2015
Paper Making Workshop with Zela Bissett at MRCCC	Dec 2015
Land for Wildlife property visit, Wolvi. Plant propagation and field walk	Dec 2015
Belli/Cedar Catchment Care Community tree plant at Belli Creek Crossing Number 2 and Mary River cod fingerling releases at Belli Creek Crossing Number 2 and Belli Creek at Susan Roger's property.	Dec 2015
Australian Water Partnership, Canberra	Feb 2016
Creating Connections Community Meeting and Messmate Park Tour	Mar 2016
Land for Wildlife/Clean Up Australia Day – Six Mile Creek Rest Area, Bruce Highway	Mar 2016
Forage budgeting & importance of legumes in pastures field walk with Country Noosa, Kin Kin	May 2016
Land for Wildlife bus trip and property visits, Mapleton	May 2016
Creating Connections Community Tree Plantings, Goomboorian	May 2016
Land for Wildlife workshop and field day, Gundiah and Scotchy Pocket	June 2016
Belli/Cedar Catchment Care Community gathering at Bellbunya – Detection of fauna using cameras and	June 2016



acoustic devices	
12 th Annual Noosa Festival of Water, Lake Macdonald	June 2016
Lake Macdonald Catch and Release Bass Fishing Competition	June 2016
Koala and habitat rehabilitation workshop – University of Sunshine Coast workshop hosted at MRCCC	June 2016
Biodiversity Fund – Gympie Landcare riparian habitats field-walk, Mary River, The Palms	Aug 2016
Creating Connections Community Tree Plantings, Goomboorian	Aug 2016

Training, Schools and kids activities

Higher Ground Outdoor Education Centre, Tuchekoi – threatened species of the Mary River and environmental weeds learning for Grade 9s from Redeemer College Brisbane.	Oct 2015
Higher Ground Outdoor Education environmental education session at Tuchekoi – threatened species of the Mary River and environmental weeds for Grade 9s from Redeemer College Brisbane.	Nov 2015
Green Army frog hygiene induction at the Gympie Weir.	Nov 2015
Green Army frog survey and Cat's Claw control, Tagigan Creek	Mar 2016
Create your own river activity at Little Kids Day Out, Gympie	Apr 2016
Green Army threatened species awareness and riparian condition assessment, Gympie Weir	June 2016
Higher Ground Outdoor Education Centre, Tuchekoi, Kenilworth and Mary Valley campuses	July 2016
Kia Ora School participation in Koala corridor tree planting	Aug 2016
Green Army Waterwatch training, Deep Creek and Imbil	Aug 2016

Conferences and presentations at seminars

Mary Valley Country Harvest Summer School, Kandanga	Feb 2016
8 th Australian Stream Management Conference, Katoomba. Abstract	June 2016
Mary Valley Country Harvest Market Garden course, Kandanga	Sept 2016

MRCCC Research Project Collaboration

Project Title	Researcher, Institution	MRCCC Role
Assessing user knowledge, and values, of certain marine habitats in the Great Sandy Strait	Katie Walters, Griffith University	Assisted with scoping of the project and gave access to our library
Relationships in Community based Natural Resource Management	Sarah Martin, University of Queensland	Interviewed by researcher
Mary River Turtle Population Study	Marilyn Connell, Charles Darwin University (previously University of New England)	Assistance with fieldwork, provision of water testing equipment, use of office
Mary River Cod genetics – developing a panel of genotyping markers for Mary River cod	Daniel Schmidt, Griffith University	Submitted the funding application to Sunshine Coast Council (successful) and contributing financially to the research
Australian Research Council Linkage Grant application titled “Advancing the Cost Effective techniques for large-scale koala health mapping” (unsuccessful)	Dr Celine Frere and Dr Romane Cristescu, University of Sunshine Coast	MRCCC provided a letter of support and was to be a project partner
Koala monitoring	Dr Romane Cristescu, University of Sunshine Coast	Dr Cristescu has been a guest speaker and visited several MRCCC project sites



Left: Shawn Jarvey, Tanzi Smith and Nonie Metzler with young rivercarers at the Little Kids Day Out, April 2016. Right: Shaun Fisher water testing during the Catchment Crawl



Koala Action Group Gympie region

Koala Action Group (KAG) meetings and activities have continued over the past year, since the group's first meeting in February 2015. The group meets 4-6 weekly, is auspiced by the MRCCC and has a Coordinator who, as a retiree, is able to dedicate time to this role.

Mission

The Koala Action Group Gympie region seeks to ensure the conservation of the vulnerable koala and koala habitat through activities and actions that enhance their protection and sustainability, and that promote our community's commitment to the preservation of our precious wildlife for future generations.

The group's objectives are to:

1. Collect information and data on the Gympie region's koala populations;
2. Foster public awareness of koalas, the pressures they face, and what we can do to help them;
3. Initiate activities that promote koala conservation.

The koala sighting form developed by the Koala Action group continues to be widely disseminated and has resulted in over 250 sightings being added to the Wildnet database, which is used to inform koala and vegetation mapping, environmental assessments for infrastructure and other developments. The form can be accessed on the MRCCC's website at mrccc.org.au/koala-action-group or residents can email koala sighting details to koalas@mrccc.org.au. The data collected contributed to Gympie Regional Council's 2015 koala mapping project and draft Koala Conservation Plan, which should be available for community consultation in coming months.

The Koala Action Group has become established as a voice for koalas in the region, with growing community and stakeholder engagement. The Gympie Council has supported the group with Environment Levy funding to assist in community education. Quality banners and brochures have been produced. The "Koalas of the Gympie region" brochure is now widely displayed both in the town area and in regional centres. A Kilkivan man said he picked up a brochure at the Kilkivan produce store, and proceeded to advise of his koala sighting in his locality. Information displays have been held at community events including the Little Kids Day Out, the Bee Open Day, Jones Hill School Twilight Fair and at the Mary River Festival. These allow for many a conversation with residents about their experience and knowledge of koalas currently or historically in their part of the region. Many people are keen to provide more habitat for koalas and Gympie Landcare Landcare's new koala food tree handout is proving very popular. The Koala Action Group Facebook page has close to 450 followers.



Top: KAG Coordinator, Michelle Daly with Nonie Metzler and the group's new banners

Centre: Healthy male, Traveston

Bottom: MC Robert Garland addresses 50+ participants at the Wide Bay Burnett "Koalas in Crisis" Forum held at Bauple in October 2016



'Save the Koala Month' got a great boost with Gympie Regional Gallery's "Koala Land" exhibition with a theme of how humans and koalas can live together. This resonates with a key aspect of KAG's work to promote a community commitment to practices that will give koalas a sustainable future. For this reason, KAG has written submissions on some development applications that were/are in koala habitat, to encourage a thoughtful koala-friendly design approach. KAG provided a submission to, and appearance before, the Parliamentary Committee on the Vegetation Management Act, with specific reference to the importance of high value regrowth for koalas.

The KAG has also consulted closely with Transport and Main Roads on koala impacts with Section C of the Bruce Highway and with the University of the Sunshine Coast research team, Detection Dogs for Conservation. The KAG works collaboratively with the local wildlife care and rescue group, ANARRA, to support and assist in their work as the main local first contact point for sick, injured and dead koalas, and to help with vital data-collection, points of impact, cause of death (eg getting necropsies where indicated).

A highlight for many in the group was the recent Wide Bay Burnett Koalas in Crisis Forum held in Bauple-a wonderful opportunity to hear from two leading koala researchers, Dr Alistair Melzer, and Associate Professor Jonathan Rhodes, who provided a valuable insight into gaining a greater understanding of the conservation needs of Queensland's declining koala populations. Both are on the State Government's expert panel to address these issues. Collaboration between government, key stakeholders and community will be needed if we are to conserve koalas and their habitat in the Gympie region. The KAG is ready and keen to be part of this effort at the local level. We welcome more members with a passion for koala conservation.



The Valley Bees Year

Valley Bees have been operating for over six years now and we go from strength to strength. During this time we are fortunate to be auspiced by MRCCC, for which we thank you.

Our meetings are now held at the Honeybee Farm in Kandanga, on the 2nd Sunday of each month and they are attended by between 40 and 50 members each time. Our afternoon teas and Bee-Banter have certainly become a feature of the day.

Monthly Workshops are held at Landcare (first Saturday) and Honeybee Farm (third Saturday). These are very well attended with participants coming from as far as Bundaberg and Brisbane for the regular sessions. These two venues have established impressive working and interactive displays in all three aspects of our commitment - honey bees, native stingless bees and native solitary bees. Workshops cover all three sections.

In September we held our fourth Bee Community Open Day, at the Mary Valley College in Imbil. The community responded wonderfully to make it a truly memorable day and to benefit financially by taking part. Many dollars were raised, and so much key information was swapped and spread freely. The day attracted presenters, stall holders and participants from Brisbane, USC, Toowoomba and Bundaberg. Once again, all aspects of bees were covered, with live hives, live bee splits, stalls, displays, speakers, food and music. All agreed, a truly memorable day!

We look forward to continued success with the club, and a strong on-going relationship with MRCCC.

Athol Craig, Chair, Valley Bees





Landcare and Catchment Management in the Mary River Catchment

Gympie & District Landcare Group

If you are in the Gympie Region and interested to learn more about our local native plants; to get advice on land or weed management; to strengthen habitat; or to be involved with like minded people Gympie & District Landcare Group is here for you.

The nursery at the corner of Groves Road and Old Maryborough Road Gympie is the first port of call for many. Through the combined efforts of members and volunteers the nursery received seeds, propagated and raised over 40,000 native plants this year for local revegetation projects and home gardens. Tony, Yvonne and the team at the nursery readily share advice on ways to address your property management issues.

The associated biocontrol facility mass reared insects to help landholders manage Cat's Claw Creeper and Madeira Vine. After rearing vast numbers of jewel beetles and tingids for Cat's Claw Creeper effort has shifted to the Madeira Vine Beetle. Madeira Vine is present throughout the catchment, but very little is being done to control it. All three insects are having a significant impact at field locations. Place an order and it will be filled as soon as the insects hatch.

For those who prefer to contribute in the field the Group fosters opportunities to lend a hand at tree planting (& tending), bush caring and weed control activities. This year community volunteers and members have been active at Deep Creek, Messmate Park, Kia Ora, Amamoor and Widgee. Weed control and vegetation management support is also available on a fee for service basis to landholders who need more than just a neighbourly hand.

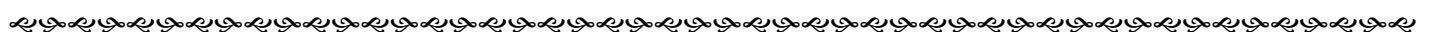
To showcase the land caring efforts of landholders and to share practical insights into land caring in the Gympie Region the Group hosted a range of presentations and field activities during 2016. This included a workshop on soils; a series of presentations on Caring for Gympie's threatened species and their habitats, supporting a Giant Rats Tail information day and hosting an Indian Myna Bird Trapping workshop.

The facilities attached to the nursery are used regularly by other community groups including "Green Army" work teams, Valley Bees and the Gympie Spinning & Weaving Club.

Top right: The Gympie Landcare nursery stocks a wide range of local native species

Centre John Williams demonstrates the process for trapping Indian Myna birds

Bottom: Community tree planting on the Mary River, Gympie town reach





Noosa & District Landcare Group

Noosa and District Landcare Group [NDLG] has had an interesting, varied and busy year. We continue to work closely with the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) particularly on the Biodiversity Fund project – “Implementing the Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan”. NDLG value our long term partnership with the MRCCC and look

forward to working together in coming years.

Our Contract Crews have been working with dedicated landholders have worked on over 90 separate sites, including Cats claw control in Tinana with MRCCC and Burnett Mary Regional Group.

Memberships are up this year, with many individual property visits conducted. In addition, NDLG has identified over 1,000 plants for members and the general public, mostly through our Resource centre in town, and increasingly by text message, with a photo!

On a local front we have hosted a diverse group at our home base, the Rural Futures Centre in Pomona. We have had a weekly Weaving group (using Cat's claw creeper amongst others!), Botanical artists, Bamboo workshops and Artists working with Qld Blue gum. Our



Noosa Landcare's contract crew working adjacent to Upper Pinbarren Creek near Cooran

Environmental workshop series, held at the RFC are always a packed house. Topics included Geology, Koalas, Fresh Water Ecology, Propagation, and Soils.

We were also quite busy coordinating 2 x Green Army teams and 2 x Skilling Queenslanders for Work teams – totalling 24 trainees and employing 3 full-time Noosa Landcare supervisors during the team operations. The four teams did some fantastic work at dozens of locations including Elanda Plains, Girraween Reserve and several sites in Kin Kin. We have also been successful in our applications to operate back to back Green Army teams through to May 2018 which will equate to a further 27 trainees joining our ranks over the next 2 years. It is pleasing to be able to work with passionate young people that care about their environment. Some of these people will help NDLG deliver on our Australian Government 20 million trees projects.

Noosa & District Landcare 20 Million Tree Projects	Project Hectares	Project Planting Targets FY16/FY17/FY18	Planted FY16
<i>Elanda Plains Wetland Revegetation</i>	4	40000	17029
<i>Subtropical Lowland Rainforest Revegetation – Kin Kin</i>	4.22	16880	6876
<i>Re-establishing Subtropical Lowland Rainforest Habitat in the Noosa Hinterland</i>	3.5	13900	3500

In addition, working with CO₂ Australia 20 Million Trees Project, NDLG, will plant 300,000 trees on 30 hectares at Elanda Plains on QPWS land. This will make our Nursery people very busy indeed! Our retail nursery opposite the pub in Pomona is getting a facelift, and Station place next door is blooming into an exceptional native display garden as well as a good lunch spot for locals.

Images courtesy of Noosa & District Landcare Group





GMA President Glenda Pitman and Treasurer Ross Smith erecting the "Juanita Johnston Koala corridor" sign, near Petrie Park, Tiaro



Juanita planting a koala food tree in the corridor in July 2013

Greater Mary Association

The Greater Mary Association's activities this year have continued to focus on the breeding of biological controls for Cats Claw, on our koala corridor project in Tiaro and on general awareness raising activities in the community.

Since establishment of the Tiaro Tunnel House in 2013, 17,710 Jewel Beetles, 2730 Jewel Beetle discs, 22,526 loose Tingids, and 38 pots infected with tingids have been released. Many of these were released by the MRCCC as part of the Restoring Riparian Resilience Biodiversity Fund project. The GMA has had a particular focus on the Munna Creek catchment with Ross and Gail Smith and Bill Wilkinson undertaking follow up visits to many sites to continue releases and assess progress of past releases. The results of these and other visits have been summarized in a report that is available from the GMA or from the MRCCC. We are seeing some good success and wide establishment of both tingids and jewel beetles. The GMA is also working with Gympie and District Landcare regarding establishment of a leaf tying moth breeding facility. The GMA members located the moth last year during a biocontrol release trip with MRCCC and have since found them at several locations during follow up visits.

In the last 12 months we were also successful in obtaining a grant from the Burnett Mary Regional Group to conduct a trial of different methods of Cats Claw control. The trial was focused on a thick carpet of Cats Claw on one of the properties that is part of our koala corridor. The methods trialled were Glyphosate, Kamba, Acetic Acid, Line trimming and flame, with a control plot. These plots were located in an area with resident tingids and jewel beetles from nearby releases. Interestingly, it seems that the acetic acid and flame treated plots are more appealing to jewel beetles for follow up colonisation. We also treated vines on two nearby large *Cassia brewsteri* trees – one with cut and paste and the other cut-only. The regrowth is much greater on the cut-only treatment but jewel beetles have also heavily infested this regrowth suggesting that there may be some benefit to combined biocontrol release and cut-only strategy.

Throughout the year we have participated in a range of local events including a parade of threatened species at the Sunrise Rotary Australia Day breakfast in Maryborough. This was organized by our President Glenda Pitman and we plan to do it again next year.

We were very sad to lose one of our long time members, and a strong advocate for the environment, Juanita Johnston, in August 2015. In recognition of Juanita's passion and her vision for a more harmonious relationship between people and nature, the GMA dedicated our koala corridor project to Juanita at a ceremony in December 2015. At our AGM on the same day we had an excellent talk by Natalie Richardson about Koala conservation and, in particular, the potential for translocation of koalas and the issues associated with that. This is particularly relevant to our koala project. It seems that the koalas that were in the area the project was started for back in 2012 may have gone. The whole koala corridor project covers an area of about 18 ha if both existing and newly planted vegetation along the riverbank is included. The planting has continued to expand beyond the original Australian Government funded Community Action Grant project with support from MRCCC's Restoring Riparian Resilience project. The trees are growing well thanks to a lot of follow up tender loving care from landholders. We hope that, in the years to come, the koalas will return. One has been spotted in recent weeks, but may have been transiting.



Tiaro Landcare

Why the rush?

This seems an apt title for a report about turtles. It could also be a cause to reflect on how we live our lives. More importantly, when working with long-lived species like turtles, change happens slowly. Turtles are 'slow' animals. Compared to other vertebrate species they take many years (possibly 15-25 years) to reach maturity and thus the population changes slowly. It is dependent on high survival rates of the juvenile and sub adults into adulthood.

Fortunately, Mary River turtles are still naturally breeding in the wild, which means we still have a chance to protect reproducing turtles in their natural habitat. During the last nesting season, Tiaro Landcare protected 60 nests from which 470 hatchlings successfully emerged.

This year we have been mindful of a comment by one of the world's leading turtle biologists, Dr Peter Pritchard. He said *"We can get carried away by the conviction that our efforts are indeed saving a species, but fail to engage in a critical appraisal of our efforts to judge whether the techniques are as beneficial as we might think"*. So, in conjunction with Charles Darwin University, we have been undertaking a population assessment of the Mary River turtle. Four reaches of the river have been surveyed to enable a comparison to be made between the populations where nest protection has been carried out and where it hasn't. These results will provide valuable insight into what effects the nest protection program has had on the population. The surveys couldn't have happened without the valued assistance of many volunteers who helped set the nets, and measured and tagged the turtles.

Through the sale of chocolate turtles and other merchandise, Tiaro Landcare provides financial support to post graduate university research projects. This year we donated \$5,000 to Australian Rivers Institute, Griffith University to support their research into the conservation genetics of the endangered Mary River turtle. They found that it has a very low mitochondrial DNA variability relative to other turtles. This research is ongoing. It is hoped to collect additional samples from Tinana Creek to determine if there is a distinct genetic subpopulation in that creek as there is for the Lungfish and Mary River Cod.

The Mary River turtle featured in two international conferences this year with oral presentations being given at the Society for Conservation Biology Oceania and the 14th Annual Symposium on the Conservation and Biology of Tortoises and Freshwater turtles in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Mary River turtle Public Fund is now registered and is eligible to receive tax deductible donations. It is our goal that \$ donated through this fund will extend what we can achieve for the turtle and its habitat, the Mary River.

Thanks to BMRG who financially and practically assisted our conservation project.

While the turtle might not be in a rush, Tiaro Landcare's Turtle conservation program continues at full-speed.

Marilyn Connell, Secretary, Tiaro & District Landcare Group

Email: tiarolandcare@gmail.com or visit www.maryriverturtle.com

Find us on  Mary River turtle project – Tiaro Landcare



Top: Glenda Pickersgill with a male and female Mary River Turtle

Centre: Peter and Wayne help with trapping

Below: Marilyn, Rory Keenan, Senior Reptile Keeper at Lone Pine Sanctuary and Ian Mackay at Moy Pocket



Barung Landcare

Barung ran a number of workshops again this year covering a range of topics with the intention of enabling people to make informed choices about managing their land and their lives.

Our *Gardens for Wildlife* (GfW) project was self-funded this year and with the support of GfW and Barung members we were able to run seven informative workshops for the benefit of small landholders who would not qualify for Land for Wildlife membership. Topics ranged from “Create a Garden Paradise for Wildlife” (repeated twice after the initial workshop due to public demand) presented by author and permaculturist Jenny Allen, to “Fungi, Fun & Facts” with fungi enthusiast and author, Fran Guard.

The *Maleny Wood Expo: from chainsaw to fine furniture* is an event that Barung developed to promote sustainable use of our beautiful native timbers. We celebrated the twentieth anniversary this year by reverting back to our old 3-day format which was positively received by patrons and exhibitors. We had a record number of stall-holders and visitors over the May long weekend who were looked after by more than 250 volunteers. Thankfully the ‘rain gods’ were much kinder to us (particularly to those setting up the day before the show started) than last year for which exhibitors and organisers were most grateful. The prestigious Wootha Prize exhibition (described by *Australian Wood Review* as ‘the heart of Maleny’s Wood Expo’) will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2017. It is the only themed exhibition art prize for woodworkers and wood artists in Australia; the theme next year is “Inside Out”.

Something that is at the heart of the work we are all engaged in is encouraging people to discover their ‘sense of place’, their own connection to the bit of the planet where they live, work and play. To this end we ran a “Sense of Place” workshop in the (now pulled down) kiosk at Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve. The event (funded by BMRG and the Regional Landcare Facilitator) began by setting the social context of our area with speakers covering local Indigenous (Bev Hand) and European (Harvey Bryce) history. This was followed by ecologist Greg Smyrell who introduced participants to a systems view of the landscape by illustrating the connections between past land forming processes and resulting soil types on the range which support various vegetation structures, plant species and hence lots of furry critters. Representatives from local environmental groups, Hinterland Bush Links and Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group, as well as Sunshine Coast Council discussed their work and particular interests, and invited people to join them and become involved in their various activities. The program for the day ended with a walk through the rainforest reserve guided by volunteers from the Friends of Mary Cairncross Association.



Ecologist Greg Smyrell discussing where it all began - geology



8th Australian Stream Management Conference, Katoomba, NSW**Understanding the aspirations and perspectives of Rivercarers in the Mary River catchment, Queensland.**

Abstract –Tanzi Smith

The Mary River Catchment was one of the pilot catchments for integrated catchment management in the 1990s and has experienced growth in “Rivercare” practices since this time. Gaining a better understanding of the motivations, aspirations and perspectives of landholders and volunteers who undertake this work, in some cases over decades, is important for the effectiveness of a catchment management organisation such as the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee.

A series of participatory forums have taken place in the Mary River catchment that have generated insights into what helps people get motivated and stay motivated to be “Rivercarers”. These activities were undertaken as part of the development of the Mary River Threatened Aquatic Species Recovery Plan and the “Mary River Restoration Stories: lessons from 20 years of Rivercare” project which brought people together to review the last 20 years of Rivercare. Whilst those involved in Rivercare are keen to keep learning and improving their knowledge and technical know-how, these two projects have revealed that gaining new information and skills is only one of many facets needed to keep people engaged and active in Rivercare projects.

The social dimensions of being involved in restoration projects, such as the feeling of achieving a shared goal, of being part of a support network, and of collaborating and sharing similar aspirations with others are crucial to many people’s ongoing involvement in Rivercare. Using the concepts of social capital and empowerment, a typology for engagement is proposed that could encourage more widespread engagement and corresponding stronger outcomes from Rivercare in the Mary catchment and elsewhere.

Using BioCondition Assessment in the Mary River catchment to evaluate riparian restorationAbstract - Caitlin Mill¹ and Tanzi Smith¹

Improving the health of riparian vegetation is one of the key land management actions identified to improve the health of the Great Barrier Reef, but it can involve long time lags between initial investment and ecological outcomes. Monitoring tools that can detect short-term improvements and be used, in conjunction with geomorphological understanding, to identify recovery trajectory of riparian areas can help address uncertainty created by these time lags.

This paper presents the preliminary findings of a riparian vegetation monitoring program which used the BioCondition assessment method to detect short term improvements achieved through a \$2.4 million riparian restoration project in the Mary River catchment, the southern most of the Great Barrier Reef catchments.

Forty vegetation assessments across twenty-two different sites and four different vegetation types have been conducted over the last two and half years. The sites monitored fall into two distinct categories - sites where restoration work has been undertaken within the last four years and restoration sites established 15-20 years ago.

The BioCondition assessment method was found to detect changes in ecological function over a period of twelve months. Repeat BioCondition assessments have revealed that the score of the site improves more quickly in the reaches considered to have a lower chance of natural recovery. The paper concludes with recommendations regarding the implications of these results for riparian restoration.

Mary River – Understanding processes and values to inform planning and restoration

Abstract - Reid J., Ivezich M., Odgers, T., Lindon, D. and Wedlock, B.

The Mary River is a major river system of southeast Queensland with important economic, social and environmental values. Since European settlement the river has supported a thriving agricultural industry and supplied sand/gravel to aid development of the region. Clearing of riparian vegetation and sand/gravel extraction has resulted in substantial erosion of the river causing ecological degradation and damage to agricultural land and public infrastructure. Ongoing degradation of the river threatens the endangered Mary River Turtle and Mary River Cod and municipal water supplies.

Multiple stakeholders including the local council, water authority and the local catchment group combined to develop the Mary River restoration plan which aimed to restore a key section of the Mary River near the township of Kenilworth to:

- Protect habitat for Mary River turtles and other terrestrial and aquatic fauna,
- Increase the erosion resistance of the river to protect infrastructure, and
- Protect and improve water quality and supply

The project included detailed assessment of the historic and contemporary river processes. Stakeholders were also engaged to gather an understanding of the multiple values of the river and set objectives for stream restoration planning. Based on the understanding of the processes, their likely future trajectory and the multiple values of the river a risk assessment was undertaken to develop a cost efficient stream management program. In 2015 a major project was implemented as the first stage of the broader program.





Details of the Bob Hawke Landcare Award Nomination - Steve Burgess



1.

A) How has nominee promoted the Landcare ethic?

Steve has championed the Landcare ethic all his life! From his teenage bushwalking days, through a Uni degree in Environmental Studies, and particularly over the past 20 years since moving back to Queensland and developing his own property that combines sustainable market farming, light grazing and management of a Nature Refuge.

- Through Gympie and District Landcare (from 1994) - a longtime member, past committee member, organiser of many field days and training/talks
- As a High school teacher (up to 2008 - maths, science, agriculture)– running a weekly Landcare awareness project, incorporating ideals into whole Year 8 Agriculture program. As a part-time project officer at the Mary River Catchment Resource Centre (MRCCC) (2007-2016) – coordinator of community Waterwatch program (since 2007) and general community and schools education activities
- On his own Wurraglen Nature Refuge -working with CVA and indigenous working teams.
- As a member of Mary Valley Country Harvest Growers Cooperative (MVCH) - coordinates numerous farm walks, field days and workshops on sustainable

agriculture and landcare practices.

- In the local (rural) community - encouraging residents to cooperate in feral pig and vine weed control.
- Through general environmental education services in private capacity – visiting school and tertiary student groups and adult courses (eg Hinterland Bush Links Subtropical Forest Ecology Course).

B) What commitments has the nominee made to caring for the land?

In Steve's "early years", his love of bushwalking in QLD, NSW and WA instilled a strong commitment to caring for the land and encouraging others to share these values. After graduating from Griffith University (BSc. Aust.Env.Sci) he moved to WA as an Agriculture scientist (1982-94) working on reduced tillage systems, efficient use of N and P fertilizer, carbon and nitrogen cycling, crop and pasture rotations.

As a farmer (1994 -) he established an early conservation covenant on major part of his home property, followed by conversion to Nature Refuge declaration; whilst developing and implementing sustainable agriculture principles on the remainder.

He initiated a local quality assurance program for local farms using sustainable practices, called "CareFarmed", which has now been adopted by MVCH as a peer-review statement of practices.

Steve has made many submissions to State and Federal Departments relating to conservation on private lands, and produced numerous technical submissions to the environmental impact assessment process for major projects proposed in the Mary River catchment, including the Bruce Highway upgrade, Woolooga-Cooroy powerline, Northern Pipeline Interconnector, Traveston Crossing Dam, and floodplain mining projects. He has also made detailed analysis and preparation of technical submissions relating to the Mary Basin Water Resource Plan and the draft SEQ Water





Top: Steve and Elaine at the Dagun Growers Markets which are held every Saturday afternoon from 3pm at the old Dagun Railway Station

in 2006) his main role was in raising public awareness through writing technical and environmental impact reports, State and Federal submissions, and invited to address the Senate Committee tasked with assessing impacts of the dam proposal.

When the dam was rejected, he was part of the Mary Valley Renewal Team, tasked with leading community and economic recovery.

Steve was honoured to be selected to attend Rivers for Life 3: the 3rd International Meeting of Dam-Affected People and their Allies, held in Temacapulin, Mexico (2010).

As a staff member of the MRCCC, Steve was a member of many community working groups on water management and threatened species recovery including Mary River aquatic threatened species recovery plan (recovery team and scientific advisory team), Mary Basin Water Resource Plan and Wide Bay-Burnett Water Quality Improvement Plan.

Strategy, and participated in technical panels associated with the Wide Bay Water Strategy, Wide Bay Natural Resource Management Plan, and flow-related environmental assets in the Mary Basin.

He also prepared a nomination under the EPBC Act for listing "Ecological Communities of the Pool Riffle and Sandbar system of the Mary River Floodplain".

C) What commitment to local communities and community activity re sustainable resource management, local environmental issues?

Steve has always been active in community issues and support. In the early days of the internet, he succeeded in getting a local connection through a Department of Social Security Rural Communities Project, and through which he set up an information library for farmers and a tool library.

He is a member/committee member of a community group that restored the Dagun railway station as a tourist destination, including a weekly Farmers' Market that features "CareFarmed" produce.

Steve is involved with the running of the market and in general activities promoting CareFarmed practices there and in the wider community.

He also designed and oversaw construction/maintenance of a Natural History Garden Walk adjacent to the station that demonstrates 3 distinct vegetation types in the district plus an agricultural section, which will shortly have information booths detailing the flora/fauna/geological/historical aspects of each section.

As part of the "Save The Mary River" working group (formed to contest the now-defunct Traveston Crossing Dam proposal



2.

A) How has the nominee inspired, educated and encouraged others to take action on their own properties or through a Landcare group?

As detailed above, where describing him as a Landcare Champion, Steve has a long history of sharing and encouraging sustainable land management. He is an excellent communicator at all levels and to all ages, and is the local “go-to” when arranging workshops and field days, because his presentations are always inspiring, his knowledge of sustainable land management is vast, and his explanations are very easy to understand. He demonstrates the principles and gives practical ways by which others can apply these principles to their own situation.

B) How has the nominee championed the uptake of more sustainable agricultural practices and can you demonstrate the adoption of improved practices among landholders as a consequence of this action?

Previously working in WA with Department of Agriculture, he developed a program called “NPDecide” which was widely adopted throughout the WA wheatbelt, improving the efficiency of fertilizer use, reduced leaching losses and introducing explicit consideration of soil organic nitrogen pools into fertilizer decisions. It is still being utilised now, in Australia and internationally.

More recently, his local work on cat’s claw eradication has seen increased adoption of control methods in the Mary Valley, including widespread release of biocontrol agents in the Dagun-Amamoor area.

His local project on feral pig control has seen much closer active cooperation between neighbours in the Dagun/Amamoor area. He has worked with the local Men’s Shed to design and construct portable pig traps that can be shared among farms.

As a market farmer who can demonstrate that he practices what he preaches, his promotion and discussion of the CareFarmed concept amongst small growers through MVCH has helped new growers in the Mary Valley adopt sustainable practices more easily. Since MVCH began in 2013, there has been a large increase in the number of people looking to utilise their properties for a variety of purposes, and Steve champions the importance of natural resource management and the value of retaining areas for conservation as part of property planning.



*Steve in his element – teaching kids about the natural world – barefoot.
Photo courtesy Bevly Hughes*

3.

A) What has the nominee done to pursue, introduce and shape innovative farming systems to improve productivity, profitability, sustainability, and promote the quality of natural resources?

As detailed above, Steve actively promotes sustainable practices through a variety of means. MVCH runs an annual 2-day Summer School on current local best practices (about 100 attendees) at which he generally presents workshops and hosts forums on sustainable and innovative farming systems and on incorporating natural resource management as an integral part of any property management plan. The School is then followed by monthly Farm Walks that further explore concepts raised. Steve attends each one, to facilitate discussion on the topics. Around 20-50 people attend these walks. His current stated goal is to use all that he has learned throughout his life to keep landholders in his local community working together to find productive, profitable and sustainable ways of managing their own properties,



building a viable economic and social fabric for the small towns in the Mary Valley and handing on the landscape to future generations in better condition than it is now. MVCH growers' cooperative has recently received funding through the National Landcare Programme/Sustainable Agriculture Small Grants for a project over the next 12 months that works towards a similar goal, and Steve will be a key person in the delivery of that project.

The following articles and links were not submitted with the nomination, although they provide much detail on the information provided.

CVA teams

http://www.gympietimes.com.au/news/gympie-greenies-now-help-the-mary-river-humans/74_8174/

school kids

<http://www.gympietimes.com.au/news/quality-the-big-issue-mary-river-water-report/665101/>

Dagun Info Centre and tool library page 86 of this report 1995-96

https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/06_2012/policyresearchpaper73.pdf

Independent verification for WA stuff mentioned is best done by googling "NPDecide Burgess" That work is still being cited in current papers.

Articles

<http://www.gympietimes.com.au/news/urgent-call-to-help-wipe-out-cats-claw/1289800/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-29/mary-valley-feral-pig-problem-returns/7369438>

<http://www.gympietimes.com.au/news/keep-mary-valley-action-plan-locals/1350990/>

http://www.ourwatercommons.org/sites/default/files/Australia-stopping-the-Traveston-Crossin_g-Dam.pdf

<http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/how-the-Mary-Valley-was-saved/406204/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2008/02/18/2165683.htm>

<http://www.gympietimes.com.au/news/burgess-sees-green-future/1402603/>

<http://www.ruralweekly.com.au/news/hazards-of-hilly-country-debated/2396993/>

<http://www.ruralweekly.com.au/news/equipment-just-made-for-the-job/2121121/>

<http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=528989ca-8cb6-4a59-b468-f986b8df9ff3>

http://www.frasercoastchronicle.com.au/news/nesting-season-has-started-mary-river-turtles/_2041207/

<http://www.qt.com.au/news/apn-eis-reveals-new-dam/89200/>







MARY RIVER



C A T C H M E N T

COORDINATING COMMITTEE
