



Yarra Yarra Catchment Management Group

Newsletter – December 2003

Welcome to the first edition of our monthly newsletter where we, the Yarra Yarra Catchment Management Group (YYCMG), can tell you about our roles and any projects that we have been working on.

This month we have included an introduction to the various members of our team, where they are located, and what their roles are. We hope this gives you a better understanding of what the YYCMG is all about.

Who Are We?

The Yarra Yarra Catchment Management Group (YYCMG) is a working group concerned with the natural resources in the region. The Yarra Yarra is one of four sub-regions in the Northern Agricultural Region. The other regions are Greenough, Moore River and West Midlands (see diagram below). The Northern Agricultural Region is coordinated by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC). The main

office of the YYCMG is located in Perenjori, with a branch office in Kalannie. We are interested in any issues that the community has, concerned with natural resources and any projects that they may think would be challenging for us. Below is an outline of the people who work for the group and their previous experience:

Dene Solomon – Local NRM Officer (full time)

Dene is the only full time member of the YYCMG, and works out of the office in Perenjori. Dene has lived in the Perenjori Shire for over 30 years, and is currently a Perenjori Shire Councillor. Dene is also a qualified surveyor, and has extensive experience in project planning and management.

Melanie Stevens – Local NRM Officer (part time)

Melanie is originally from New Zealand, where she studied environmental science and natural resource management, and subsequently worked in research and policy planning for local government. Melanie moved to Kalannie in 2001 and was previously employed as the Telecentre Coordinator. Melanie now works part time for YYCMG out of the Kalannie office.

Peter Whale – Local NRM Officer (part time)

Peter lives in Three Springs and divides his time between the Department of Agriculture and YYCMG. Peter has extensive experience in working with farmers, LCD's catchment groups and CALM, in the South West and the Northern Agricultural Region as both a land conservation officer and a private consultant.

Strategy Development

YYCMG Strategy

The YYCMG developed a strategy and action plan in March 1997. The purpose of this strategy was to determine actions that would provide a sustainable future for our lifestyle, economic viability and natural environment. The strategy is applied on a whole of region basis, constantly involving all the community in the process of communications, decision making, planning and implementation. The YYCMG have been working towards the goals and target set in this strategy for the last seven years. A copy of the strategy can be viewed on the YYCMG website www.yarrayarracatchment.asn.au.



NACC Strategy

The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council are currently developing a strategy to encompass the whole Northern Agricultural Region. As a result, all NRM Officers in the sub regions are being asked to collect information from community members regarding their thoughts on what should be prioritised in the strategy. The strategy will;

1. Identify NRM concerns
2. Consider appropriate responses to manage these concerns Set NRM priorities and achievable targets for the region
3. Lead to the development of an investment plan outlining how targets will be achieved

Accreditation by State and Commonwealth Governments will allow the Strategy to attract funding from NAP and NHT2 and enable NACC to investigate a variety of other funding sources to better manage NRM in the Northern Agricultural Region.

Some of you may have noticed a couple of YYCMG employees conducting questionnaires about natural resource management (NRM) issues and your aims for the future of the region. We hope that everyone will **provide us with feedback**, to help in future projects and to attract more funding to the region.

If you haven't already been contacted, please take the time to fill in the attached survey over your complimentary cup of tea and return to us ASAP. Your response is vital and we really appreciate your help in this matter.

Yarra Yarra News

NRMO Workshop – Dongara

On the 25th and 26th of November all the NRMO's (Natural Resource Management Officers) from the Northern Agricultural Region headed to Dongara for a workshop on the strategy. The purpose was to compare the responses we have had from members of the community so far, and decide what is the best way to ensure we have had input from everyone as to what are the most important issues threatening our environment. It looks like there will be quite a few activities scheduled in the next few months to encourage community involvement, so stay tuned for some exciting events!

Regional Organisation of Councils

On the 16th of May this year Representatives from the Yarra Yarra and the Seven shires that have land within the Yarra Yarra boundaries met in Dalwallinu to discuss the forming of an alliance between these groups to oversee the management of the Natural Resources in the Yarra Yarra Catchment Basin. It was resolved that the Minister for Local

Govt. should be approached with the view of the Shires forming a Regional Organisation of Councils with the Yarra Yarra acting as an implementation or management committee. A working group has been appointed and an establishment document is being prepared.

We believe that the Statutory body so formed will allow the community to have more ownership of the management of Catchment affairs and will allow them to have the ability to make decisions relating to drainage and other matters involving natural resources. It will also ensure that there will be ongoing funding to maintain an office and staff for the Yarra Yarra.

The Minister for the environment Dr. Judy Edwards has shown considerable interest in the development of our administration plans and has also shown interest in our regional drainage proposal. To this end the Minister invited the Yarra Yarra to deliver a presentation to The Cabinet Standing Committee on NRM and Salinity. This presentation was well received and some funding options have been suggested.

Partnership Opportunity

Senior drainage research scientist with CSIRO Dr. Tom Hatton has invited us to consider partnering CSIRO, The Department of Environment and the Department of Agriculture on a venture to investigate new Governance and Drainage initiatives in the Wheat belt.

Jibberding Update

After much anticipation things are finally underway at Jibberding (20km east of Wubin). Eleven km of deep drainage is being carried out in the lower catchment. Work is currently in progress and looks to be completed by the end of December.

Gordon Reid – Drilling Program

In July 2003 we received a grant of \$66,000 from the Gordon Reid Foundation. The grant will be used to assist the community of the Yarra Yarra Catchment Basin to establish a series of composite bore fields incorporating investigative soil pits along arterial drainage lines discharging into the central lake system.

Water level and water quality readings from bore holes will be used to ground truth the Rapid Catchment Appraisal just completed by the Department of Agriculture. Soil data extracted from the pits and the drilling process will be used to establish design criteria and best practise standards for earth works, salt land pasture establishment, revegetation and other rehabilitation activities to be applied to proposed projects along the valley floors.

A series of cased bores will be used for ongoing monitoring of the established water tables. This is a "whole of Catchment project" covering 1,000,000 hectares. The overall

benefit will be the protection of all infrastructure in the lower reaches of the catchment including towns, roads, communications lake verges, other vegetation remnants and established wild life corridors. To date we have completed 140 bore holes in the Darling Creek Catchment.

Rehabilitation of Wind Eroded Areas

In July 2003 the YYCMG received funding through the "Envirofunds" scheme to rehabilitate areas of land that have been chronically affected by wind erosion. As a starting point we have produced maps / satellite imagery of the Yarra Yarra Region that show the worst affected areas. These maps are located in the Perenjori office and are available for you to view. If you have any areas of land that have been badly affected by wind erosion, and want to discuss the availability of funding for rehabilitation, please contact us.

Envirofunds – Applications close 30/1/04

The Australian Government Envirofund was launched on 3 April 2002. It is the community component of the \$2.7 billion Natural Heritage Trust and has invested \$30 million since its inception to support local on-ground actions.

Through the Envirofund community groups and individuals can apply for grants of up to \$30,000 to tackle local environmental and natural resource management problems. A typical Envirofund project includes tree planting, fencing, weeding and seed collecting. They also include training and education activities to help community groups improve their knowledge about the environment and sustainable agriculture.

The Australian Government Envirofund is delivered in two funding rounds a year. The closing date for the second round for 2003-04 is Friday, January 30, 2004. More information about the Australian Government Envirofund and an application form and guide for the next round of funding, is available by telephoning 1800 065 823 or visiting the website www.nht.gov.au

FREE Native Seed Collection Workshops

Throughout December Greening Australia WA is again providing a number of FREE workshops, this time on Native Seed Collection. The workshops are a short course on the techniques used in treatment and propagation. The course is for one day and begins at 10am with lunch provided and finish in the early afternoon around 2pm. The following workshops will be held: 10th December - Mingenew Irwin Group Office, Mingenew; 11th December - C.Y. Connor TAFE, Moora; 18th December - Billinu Aboriginal Community, Cataby; 9th/14th December - Morawa (still to be confirmed) If you are interested in attending one of these courses or want more information please call Andre Garnaut at the Greening Australia WA office (Geraldton) on 9921 8788.

Feedback on Drought Policy in Australia

A nationwide review of drought policy has been announced, giving stakeholders across Australia the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation process. The review will focus upon drought preparedness, drought relief measures and the effectiveness of all governments (Australian and State) in delivering Exceptional Circumstances assistance. For more information contact: droughtpanel@daff.gov.au

Tax Change Provides Greater Conservation Incentives

Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, and Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer, Senator Helen Coonan, announced in October the Australian Government's proposed amendment to taxation law to provide a concession to landowners entering a conservation covenant with State, Territory and local government agencies.

Previously, landowners were unable to benefit from an income tax deduction for conservation covenants with state or local government agencies.

2004 National Salinity Prize

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality have once again joined Engineers Australia, to offer the prize of \$30,000 to be awarded in May 2004. The award is for a new technology or other practical outcome to address the issue of salinity. Further Information -John Bright Tel: 0407 234 490 Email: jbright@ieaust.org.au

Westpac Operation Backyard offer extended.

Westpac Operation Backyard provides Westpac staff with the opportunity to work with their local communities on environmental projects, including Landcare projects. All projects approved through the program have been eligible to receive 100% of the cost of the environmental materials and this offer has been extended until 16 January 2004. To receive a copy of the funding guidelines email community@westpac.com.au



Recycling

Did you know that many towns in the Yarra Yarra have recycling stations? I.e. the Kalannie Primary School takes aluminium cans for recycling. Contact your local Shire office for details of recycling stations in your town.

Mapping Service

Please take advantage of the mapping service that YYCMG offers. We are able to provide maps up to A1 (610mm x 850mm) including colour aerial photos, contours, lakes, streamlines, roads, cadastre and much more.

YYCMG welcomes new ideas or phone calls in relation to projects or concerns of the community about Natural Resource Management (NRM) issues. Please contact us with your thoughts and ideas.

Natural Resource Management (NRM) Questionnaire

NRM issues include:

- Loss of productive land from salinity
- Using land so that it is profitable now and into the future (sustainable management).
- Managing Water resources – providing alternative uses for problem waters.
- Protection, managing and improving native vegetation and native fauna and their habitats.

1. Can you tell me 3 people who would be interested in becoming involved in NRM?

2. What do you see as the most important issues threatening our environment? List in order of priority.

3. In social situations, what topic is most commonly raised in discussion on environmental issues?

4. What aspects of your community do you value most?

5. What do you value about your property / land?

6. What are the things that will prevent your / others involvement in helping solve NRM concerns?

7. What would make it easier for you to get involved in NRM? Eg; regulations, knowledge, money, neighbours etc

8. Where do you want your community to be in 10-15 years time?

9. What do you want your landscape to be like in 10-15 years time?

10. In just a few words could you state your vision for the region?

CONTACT DETAILS – Optional

We want to be able to involve you in the next stage of this process (eg. to send you further information of events and funding opportunities) and would like to record your name and contact details. Your contribution will be grouped with others and will NOT appear with your name attached.

Name:	Group:
Address:	Tel:
	Fax:
	Email: