

newsletter



GASCOYNE
CATCHMENTS PROJECT

Developing an ecologically sustainable,
profitable and respected pastoral industry

Issue 3.

MARCH 2009



Designing ponding banks
at Yinnetharra



Participants at the Grazing
Land Management course



Taking a break
at Warroora station

Welcome to the third edition of the Gascoyne Catchments Project newsletter.

The Gascoyne Catchments Project is funded by Rangelands NRM WA and builds on the work of three regional Land Conservation District Committees. This project was developed by these LCDCs to help contribute to "the development of an ecologically sustainable, profitable and respected pastoral industry that supports an adaptable and vibrant community".

This newsletter draws on the outcomes of the previous steering committee meeting held in Carnarvon on the 19th and 20th of February and the activities undertaken by the project committee since the November newsletter edition.

Drawing a line in the sand

The story of change in the Gascoyne catchments is due for completion by the 24th of March. The November edition of the newsletter mentioned how Jodie Caunt and Rob Richards from Clear Horizons used a new evidence based method to collect qualitative and quantitative evidence from pastoralists in the Gascoyne. This evidence is then being used in a transparent and robust way to depict change in rangeland condition over the last 20-30 years through the eyes of the pastoralists.

The approach being used is somewhat of an innovative pilot for evidence based stories and reflects the project's forward thinking approach. The evidence based story has been developed from interviews with seventeen pastoralists, scientists, rangelands workers and scientific literature. Evidence from interview transcripts is being cross-referenced with other scientific and quantitative evidence to provide an objective and compelling read.

The story is divided into two key time periods - 1950's to 1980 and the 1980's to 2008 based on a timeline that was developed during the pastoralist interviews. In particular qualitative and quantitative evidence is used to support

the story of recent change for the period of 1980's to 2008 around several key questions that the project aimed to answer including:

- How have pastoralist's attitudes towards the relationship between healthy rangelands and economic sustainability changed?
- What changes have pastoralists made to property management to contribute to improved rangeland condition?
- To what extent has country re-vegetated and diversity increased?
- Has pasture response to rainfall improved in the last 20 years?

Most of the evidence work involving the recording, summary and synthesis of over thirty individual items of evidence has been completed. The softer more flowing story will provide an easy reading 8-10 page story that the project team can use for promotion, communication, to attract new or additional funding support or simply to raise awareness of the Gascoyne Catchments Project. This will be completed by the 20th of March.

Future Funding

Rangelands NRM and the Department of Agriculture and Food are applying for funding to continue the ESRM project within the Gascoyne region through the Australian Governments Caring for our Country program. Two projects are being submitted that target the surrounding pastoral and catchment areas of Lake MacLeod and the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. This will mean that the property planning, pastoral self assessment tool and incentives components of the Gascoyne Catchments Project will be funded under Caring for Our Country if the applications are successful.

Research and development components of the Gascoyne Catchments Project are being sought via both industry and Government investment. If anybody has any project ideas we would welcome your input.

Incentives funding

The ESRM team and Jodie have rolled out fourteen property action plans for the Gascoyne Catchments Project area to date with another seven due to be completed by the end of May. Stations with completed plans were eligible to apply for the first round of incentives funding which closed on the 13th of February. Six funding applications were received which all focused on important works to help restore the ecological health and productive capacity of our rangelands. Activities included - fencing sensitive land systems, feral animal control, and mechanical landscape rehabilitation works to improve water infiltration.

The second round of funding for this financial year closes on the 29th of May. Once your property action plan is completed you can submit your proposal at your earliest convenience to be reviewed by the steering committee. Please note that due to the amount of potential project applications the funding amount per station has been capped at \$40,476 ex GST which must be matched by the property either through in-kind or cash.

The Monitoring

Jodie Caunt has been very busy over the past four months with the three major components of monitoring and evaluation for the project. Firstly she has been focusing on the continued development of the self assessment and reporting tool. In order to establish the best tool for the Gascoyne catchment Jodie has looked at other tools which are used around the nation.

Jodie presented the preliminary model of the self assessment tool at the steering committee meeting. The tool is made up of short term and long term objectives. The short term focus is on the species composition, pasture utilisation, soils health and productivity and livestock performance. The long term focus is looking at integrating with the PLB's shift towards a contemporary Rangeland Condition Assessment approach and meeting the statutory obligations as a pastoral lessee. The template so far is aimed at being a simplistic, time efficient, tick box system.

Jodie will be meeting with the steering committee to discuss the monitoring tool

in the Upper Gascoyne LCDC area on the 27th of March and the Lyndon LCDC area on the 10th of April. These meetings are to finalise the useability of the template which will then be presented to the broader pastoral community at the Upper Gascoyne LCDC field day at Yinnetharra station on the 20th of April

The final two components of Jodie's work have been the reassessment of Pasture Monitoring Sites (PMS) and integrating the monitoring and PMS into the Property Action Plans with the ESRM team. Five properties have had all their property PMS reassessed with an additional 16 properties keen to also have theirs completed. The reassessment of the PMS involves the collation of data from the current assessment and the historical assessment and presenting the findings in a table and graph format which is then printed into individual property files.

In her travels Jodie has also been gathering data for a regional representation of species change throughout the catchments and established 12 new PMS in project areas through the catchments.

events

20th April 2009

Upper Gascoyne LCDC field day

Location: Yinnetharra station

28th - 29th April 2009

KLR marketing school

Location: Carnarvon

30th April 2009

Carnarvon Pastoral Cattle

Industry Forum

Location: Carnarvon

5th June 2009

Steering Committee meeting

Location: Carnarvon

4th - 9th May 2009

**Australia's National Beef
Exposition**

Location: Rockhampton, QLD

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ESRM



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