

Woodlands and Wildlife

Newsletter of the Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee

March 2006

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Snapshots

Two new Landcare Facilitators join the Mid Goulburn Team

New model investigated for delivery of grants and services in the Mid Goulburn IC area

The Goulburn Broken Soil Health Strategy Summary—Action Plan Workshop December 2005

Community projects abundant and thriving



Woodlands and Wildlife
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New Service Delivery

The Dryland Implementation Committees in partnership with GBCMA and DPI have been investigating options for a more efficient service delivery with a client focus.
Background:

The proposal has emerged from years of discussion and more recently a consultant based review on service delivery to landholders and Landcare Groups undertaken. It has reviewed positions held in both GBCMA, DPI and the Landcare Networks with a view of using resources more efficiently. The model presented in February to all staff and Landcare Groups directly effected, proposed that one Catchment Management Officer role within a specific geographical boundary could deliver a waterway and environmental management incentive to individual landholders along with support to Landcare groups within the area. The benefits of this model included more efficient service delivery for clients and employees (such as time, travel), stable employment conditions and a client focused less confusing model. However some of the negatives were identified as; discrepancy within employment conditions for same role, loss of specialist technicians and Landcare's loss of advocacy.

A Dryland Extension Steering Committee (DESC) was set up to take issues and discussions forward in this process.

Update:

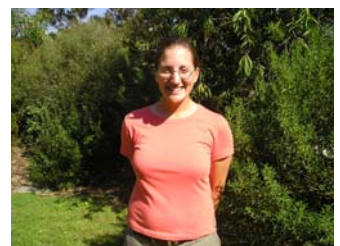
The DESC will reconvene in early April to analyse a proposal that will see the new structure trialled in 1/3 of the Mid Goulburn Broken Catchment for 2006-2007 financial year. This area is in the north of the catchment and will include Landcare groups currently serviced by Amanda McClaren (see article below) along with CMA and DPI staff members.

Welcome Sarah and Amanda to the Mid Landcare Team

As two Landcare Facilitator positions were vacated recently we welcome two new recruits to the Landcare fraternity.

Sarah Challis will be working in the south of the catchment out of the Seymour DPI with the networks of Granite Creeks Project Inc and Nagambie Landcare Inc along with individual groups Waranga Land Protection Groups and Cornella Local Area Planning. Sarah has recently completed a Bachelor of Agriculture at Dookie Campus and resides on a local Tallarook property.

Amanda McClaren will be replacing the maternity position of Andrea Montgomery & based at the University of Melbourne Dookie Campus. She will be working with the Landcare groups of Warby Ranges, South Yarrawonga, Dookie, Devenish and Peechelbar/Wilby/Boomanoomanah. Amanda resides on a property at Graytown and specialises in marketing, sales and communication.



From the
Executive Officers
Desk



Firstly, welcome aboard to Allison Long, our new Community Programs Coordinator for the Mid Goulburn Broken area. Allison will be a fantastic appointment to coordinate the disseminating of information from our Implementation Committee and partners to the community in our area.

A great amount of my time has been spent on the Lake Mokoan project. I am involved with the Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Steering Committee which has been appointed by the state government to deliver a community backed option for the decommissioned present Lake Mokoan site of over 8000 hectares. No mean feat and certainly a first in Australia. Anyhow, this committee is made up of community and agency representatives and has been meeting over the last year and is now at the stage of presenting 2 to 3 options to the community. Sally Simson the Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee Chair is also Chair of the Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Steering Committee.

Our aim is to refine these options to one to present to the Minister for the Environment certainly well before the end of this year. Please refer to our website on www.lakemokoan.com for any further information.

Our Implementation Committee is presently looking to replace Ken Whan who has resigned from our committee. Please contact me on 57611673 if you are interested and I would be happy to talk at length to you about our role and the requirements of committee members.

All the best to you all.
Phil Stevenson

phils@gbcma.vic.gov.au

Phil Stevenson

PPA Regional Update

A general update on movements on the ground through DPI at the moment. The Pest Plant and Animal Catchment Management Officers (CMO) positions for Seymour, Broadford, Echuca and Alexandra have been filled. Therefore the positions to be based at Benalla and Mansfield have yet to be announced with the suggested timeframe being June 2006. This effectively means there are no PPA staff in the Mid Goulburn Broken Catchment at this point in time. As a direct result of the lack resources there are also no REP programs that focus on priority weeds functioning in the Mid Goulburn. This is of huge concern to the Implementation Committee and the community. However the GBCMA are putting processes in place to involve the community more in the REP program for 2006/2007.

The 1080 program although off to a shaky start with information reaching the community regarding the new delivery model only recently provided, has had positive feedback.

The link between community initiatives and DPI has been successful with the local Rabbit Field Days being held around Avenel and Gooram in March. (Colin Tingay pictured right)



BLACKBERRY RUST RELEASE FOR THE GOULBURN BROKEN

The Department of Sustainability and Environment has recently launched the initiative to utilize the blackberry rust fungus as a biological control of blackberries on public land.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment was successful in obtaining four release sites from the Expression of Interest Process held in December late last year. Within the Mid Baddaginnie Creek and Warrenbayne Creek are the areas displaying most suitable growing conditions for the rust such as temperature, shade, density of infestation and humidity. There are also releases planned for the Seymour and Mansfield areas within the Goulburn Broken. Reports from discussions with the project manager from DPI Frankston suggest that the rust will spread rapidly and once established groups/individuals will be able to manually spread to other infestations. For more information contact Franz Mahrs on (03) 97850111

Envirofund Now Open!!!!

Envirofunds are open to groups and individuals for natural resource management projects up to \$50,000. Applications close 28th April 2006 For Applications and Information www.nht.gov.au/envirofund Or Katie Brown 57360103



AUSTRALIAN Government
envirofund

FUNDING

The Regent Honey Eater Project Update

Schools Help Threatened Species

A small group of students at Benalla West Primary School have made a wonderful contribution to conservation, by making 40 new nest boxes for threatened species.

Each Wednesday afternoon for several months, the students have worked under the expert guidance of local carpenters Keith Forrester and Paul Tolliday, learning new wood-working skills and creating vital homes for local wildlife.



WE NEED YOU FOR NEST BOX MONITORING

The annual monitoring of over 170 nest boxes at Lurg looking at Sugar Gliders and Squirrel Gliders . This will be happening on APRIL —29th & 30th meeting at 9.30 am Sat & Sun Dept Sustainability & Environment, Benalla.. For Info contact Ray Thomas on 57611515.

Farewell to Ken Whan

The Mid IC regretfully announce the resignation of Ken Whan who has been an invaluable committee member for the past three years. Ken has been actively involved in many programs such as the Goulburn Broken Soil Health Strategy Steering Committee, Goulburn Broken Irrigation Steering Committee, Dryland Salinity Options Steering Committee and the Goulburn Broken Landcare Facilitators Steering Committee. Ken was Vice Chairman and worked tirelessly to ensure community input was fed into decision making processes.



The IC thank Ken for his major contribution and the very best for the future.

*The International Landcare Conference will be held in Melbourne from the 8th-11th October 2006 .
www.interantionallandcare2006.com.au*



Balanced Productive Soils Project Update

The four demonstration sites have had their lime applied and are awaiting the fertiliser application

Calender of Events for 2006

May— 'Economics of fertiliser— how to get the Best Bang for your Buck!' Evening Presentations

July – Field trips to leading properties in the Mid Goulburn

October—Field Days at Demonstration Sites focusing on soil biota and grazing management.

This project has received it's second year funding from the NLP program.



For more information contact Bill Willet on 57666206.

Dog collars 'take the lead' in communicating biodiversity and productive farming messages .

Based around a free dog collar printed with **BARK UP THE RIGHT TREE** visit: www.landwaterwool.gov.au the project encourages woolgrowers to be a 'top dog' in hill country management.

The following key findings are outlined in a printed foldout attached to each dog collar:

- =**Deferred grazing of hill country** over summer months can improve stocking rates and profits as well as reduce bare hills over summer.
- =**Whole farm planning** can allow wool profits and native vegetation management to be improved on different parts of the farm at the same time by either: **correcting soil nutrient deficiencies**, or **intensive rotational grazing** on the most productive areas of the farm, allowing other more marginal parts of the farm to be managed for native vegetation.
- =**Establishing stock shelter through natural regeneration** is relatively cheap and can increase farm profits in the long run.
- =**Establishing stock shelter through natural regeneration.**

For more information call Jim Moll Ph; 57611619

LANDCARE BRIEFS

- Celebrating 20 years of Landcare in the Catchment this year. Events will be held in August.
- Community Salinity Grants will be modified and known as Community Education Grants and applications will be called for in August.
- Two presentations will be held at International Landcare Conference from the Mid Goulburn Broken Catchment.

NOXIOUS WEED REVIEW

For the first time in around 20 years the Victorian Noxious Weeds List is being reviewed. As part of this review the next stage enables community members to nominate weeds, not already on the list, which they feel should be declared noxious. The call for nominations in the Goulburn Broken Catchment will be from mid April to mid May where individuals or groups can apply.

Mid Goulburn Broken Team Protecting the Bush Stone-Curlews.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment is one of the remaining strongholds for Bush Stone-curlew conservation in Victoria. While Bush Stone-Curlew are classified as threatened in Victoria, the Goulburn Broken Catchment has a high number of recent curlew recordings, particularly in the northern half of the catchment. The curlew is one of a number of woodland birds that has declined substantially in abundance and distribution since European settlement. Its decline has been linked to the spread of exotic predators, particularly the Red Fox and the conversion of large areas of native vegetation to intensive agricultural practises and urban landscapes. In 2004 the Bush Stone-Curlew Task Force was formed in the Goulburn Broken Catchment with the main aim of improving communication and co-ordination of actions needed for Bush Stone-Curlew conservation. The project has gone from strength to strength within the two years. A project officer, Lisa Lynch-Johnston, has been employed by the Department of Primary Industries, in partnership with the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, and is working with schools, Landcare groups and landholders to highlight the treats and status of the curlew in the region. An integrated fox control program has been co-ordinated by Broken-Boosey Conservation Management Network Co-ordinator Tony Kubeil from the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority to protect the curlew. Fox proof fencing sites around known curlew ranges have been developed in the Goulburn Broken Catchment with an incentive program allowing two sites per year to be funded. Maintaining curlew populations requires not only a coordinated, regular fox-control program, but also a requirement for landholders not to 'tidy up'. Fallen timber is crucial for curlews as habitat for roosting and for camouflage. Recently at the Curlew Summit 2006 held at Rutherglen Tony Kubeil gave a fox control presentation, where he identified the barriers of effective landscape scale fox baiting and how the project has overcome them to see a significant reduction in fox numbers. The Mid Goulburn team attended to learn the latest developments on breeding curlews in captivity, monitoring techniques and population densities across south eastern Australia.



Pictured Left (from left); Lanie Pearce member of Broken-Boosey Conservation Management Network, Joel Pike DPI, Tony Kubeil Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Lisa Lynch-Johnston and Kate Stothers DPI.

After that the nominations will be assessed and ranked by staff from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, based on the weed's regional distribution, rate and method of spread, plus several other risk and management factors.



For further details watch local papers, or contact Katie Brown, Regional Landcare Co-ordinator on 5736 0103.

MGB Projects 2006

NLP Community Support Grants

Nutrient cycling, soil health and water quality—fixing a leaky system (dung beetle project)

Ph: Bertram Lobert 57908 606

2nd year Balanced Productive Soils Project
Ph: Bill Willet 57666 206

Envirofunds Drought Round

Establishment of Bingara Temporary Feed Lot at 9 Mile Creek

Fencing to Protect Waterways and Erosion Control at Creightons Creek Euroa

Rehabilitation of Tunnel Erosion Slopes at Caniambo

For further information contact Envirofund Co-ordinator Katie Brown: 57360 103

NLP Innovations Grants

Pig 'benchmark' a new idea Euroa

For further information contact NLP co-ordinator: Allison Long 57611 540

SALTWATCH 2006

Saltwatch week will be held from 8th—12th May. There will be a 'Salty Sports Day' held at Swanpool on the 11th May which Bill Sykes Member for Benalla will be launching the day which will host 100 students from across the catchment. Classroom presentations will be run with the majority of the schools in the Mid Goulburn.

Woodlands & Wildlife



Mokoan discussions continue...

The Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Steering Committee (LMFLUSC) has been meeting to develop a vision, strategy and plan for the future land use of the reclaimed site following the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan.

Information Bulletin No. 3 (November 2005) described five land use concepts, identified that the primary study area had been divided into a set of precincts and identified a set of preliminary land use options for each of these precincts.

Stage Two

Stage Two of the Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Strategy is well advanced. Stage Two involves three main steps:

- the development of preliminary land use options (completed)
- the refinement of these options down to more detailed land use options (where we are currently)
- the development of a preferred land use plan

Land use options to be / not to be considered further

These comments were received at the Community Meeting held in Benalla in November and in written submissions.

The analysis of the community response provides the following broad assessment of the preliminary land use options:

- the restoration of the wetland was strongly supported
- the wetland research/education facilities were consistently supported.
- the non-commercial aspects of wetland eco-tourism gained the highest level of support. This included bird hides, interpretive signage, etc. The café and accommodation were not as well received
- there was limited support overall for grazing and cropping (in each precinct more people were against than for)
- there was limited support for commercial plantation forestry (but better support than for agriculture and more evenly divided between those for and against)
- recreation overall and where suggested (i.e. in the specific precincts) was the activity/land use that gained the highest level of support

Following a review of the response of the community and further technical assessment it was identified that the following land uses did not warrant further assessment (i.e. they were considered either not compatible and/or unsuitable):

Transport/freight hub
Alternative energy production
Industrial development
Car rallies/ power boat regattas
Rock processing

The limited support overall for grazing and cropping and commercial plantation forestry appeared to be because respondents considered them to be incompatible with the protection of ecological values. Further analysis and advice from the ecological specialist indicated that these uses had the potential to enhance ecological values, particularly in regard to the control and spread of invasive weed species and the provision of additional habitat if appropriately managed. The further assessment of these uses is therefore warranted.

For a copy of the complete information bulletin ph: Phil Stevenson 57611673 or visit www.lakemokoan.com

Broken River Progress.....

Over 257 landholders have been identified along the Broken River. Of these, 117 have diversion licenses to irrigate.

Many of these irrigators have been surveyed by PSI-Delta, which are consultants specialising in the commercial aspects of water and environmental projects, to build up a picture on irrigation practices along the Broken Creek and Broken River. Jim Castles from the GBCMA is following up with these irrigators to see if they are interested in improving their on-farm water use efficiency with many incentives on offer including; outfall grants, whole farm plans, recycled water dams and the installation of automatic irrigation systems. In addition, Jim is also offering waterway grants and environmental management incentives as part of a pilot trial of the proposed service delivery model in the Mid IC.

In conjunction, five Waterways Vegetation Officers of the GBCMA have been contacting non-irrigation properties along the Broken River, to-date 57 property frontages have been inspected. The waterway grant incentives offered by the Vegetation Officers provide subsidy for fencing, revegetation and off stream watering points. From the 57 inspections approximately 37% of landholders have agreed to participate in some grant work with an additional 37% of landholders possibly interested in taking up a grant at a later stage. Further inspections will be taking place over the next few months, with the aim of consulting all landowner along the Broken River.

Threatened Species Network Funding

The Threatened Species Network (TSN) Community Grants Program is now open.

The grants provide funding for community organisations to conduct on-ground work for the ongoing health of our natural environment, specifically targeting the needs of **nationally** threatened species and ecological communities. Activities include habitat restoration, weeding, feral animal control, population surveys and monitoring, fencing, and fire management. If you are considering an application and would like support, **please** discuss it with Rolf Weber (DSE Tat - 5833-5222), Steve Smith (DSE Alex - 5772-0221).

Regional Soil Health Strategy Launched—Benalla

The education of landowners and the general public was the motivation for a soil health pamphlet launched on December 8 2005.

The draft publication - *Goulburn Broken Health Summary: Action Plan* - was released during a workshop at Raffety's Receptions in Benalla.

Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee Executive Officer and workshop organiser Phil Stevenson said soil health was one of the key environmental issues the region faced.

"During the past 150 years, soil health in the catchment has rapidly deteriorated," Mr Stevenson said.

"While this can be a natural process, farming practices and human impact have accelerated erosion, salinity, sodicity, acidity, soil structure decline, reduced soil biodiversity and lowered soil resilience.

"The Goulburn Broken Catchment's current production value is about \$7.8 million each year, but as soil health declines, so does the capacity for production."

The summary - produced by the Goulburn Broken Soil Health Steering Committee - outlines soil health issues, the extent of the decline in soil health and strategies to reduce the rate of further degradation.

And those who attended the workshop were called on to help establish a program for implementing the strategy during the next two or three years.

Mr Stevenson said the next step in the project was to investigate the needs of those who manage the land when it comes to soil health.

"This would mean establishing how much knowledge is already out there and what tools the landholders need to increase the learning curve," he said.

"We have established best management practices, but this will need refining.

"And finally, the aim is to set up communication networks with a clear path on delivering an educational and pro-active message."



Phil Stevenson, Sheep Pen Creek Landcare Group members Robert and Jacci Campbell, Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee member Ken Whan, and Molyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group member Rick Felton and Bill Willett.

Article: Impress Publicity

IC VACANCY

- Due to the resignation of Ken Whan there is a position vacant within the Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee.
- **The prime function** of the Committee is to develop and oversee the implementation of an annual integrated natural resource management program in the Mid Goulburn Broken, developed by the CMA and government agencies and authorities, that reflects the relevant priorities of the Regional Catchment Strategy and those of the wider regional community.
- **The Committee** regulates its own proceedings subject to conditions established by the Board of the Authority and has certain key responsibilities. It now oversees a \$6 million natural resource management works program.
- If you're interested in becoming a member of this progressive team call: Phil Stevenson Executive Officer: 57611673.

Mid Goulburn Broken Waterways Working Group

The Mid Goulburn Waterway Working Group was out and about in Mansfield on the 9th February. The group who comprise of Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) works staff and community representatives meet quarterly to discuss and have input into GBCMA works plans and discuss waterway issues. The meeting venue prevailed as an initiative of the Upper Broken Landcare Group and an invitation to all landholders along the upper reaches of the Broken River was extended. The group took to the field and visited local resident Gerard Comerford who has revegetated a site along the Broken in which the GBCMA supported through their incentive scheme. Next stop, was Bridge Creek where the local Upper Broken Landcare Group has added understorey and unveiled the 'Neil Stevenson Memorial Reserve' fittingly named after the well respected member of the community. The group also visited the Blue Range Creek public reserve where Geoff Brennan GBCMA Works Supervisor, described the difficulties of blackberry control in unforgiving terrain such as along stream sides. The Waterway Working Group is very active with their community consultation and is often meeting in various parts of the catchment to interact and take on board waterway issues facing the community. For more information please contact Tony Kubeil GBCMA on 57611557 or www.gbcma.vic.gov.au

Upcoming Dates for the Mid IC

Lake Mokoan Community Meetings
11th April

IC Meetings

May 3rd and June 14th

Waterways Working Group Meeting
10th May