

ON THE FARM - THE GOOD DIRT

OCTOBER EDITION

FARMER INTEREST DRIVES ACTIVITY

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) Beyond SoilCare project has now been running for 12 months, thanks to funding from the Commonwealth Government's Caring for Our Country program. During this time we have helped farmers with soil testing and held a number of soil test interpretation workshops. These workshops have been well attended with positive feedback, including "that it has been the most informative workshop I have attended".

Perhaps one of the most significant things to have come from the workshops though, has been people's intent to go home and trial some of the things they have learnt. This has led to partnerships between Beyond SoilCare, DPI and Landcare groups, supporting a number of farmer-led demonstration sites around the catchment.

The first is the Strathbogie Alternative Fertilisers Trial. The trial was established in 2010 by the Strathbogie Tableland Landcare Group with financial assistance from Granite Creeks Project Inc. and Gecko CLaN. Farmers who have attended field days at the trial site have also participated in soil testing and interpretation, water and wire planning and a soil pit day.

The South West Goulburn Landcare Network and Paul Fleming have established a trial at Broadford with Brenton Byerlee of Soil Management Systems. The trial will investigate the effect of applying gypsum and foliar sprays on nutrient availability and microbial activity. Their first paddock walk was held on 28th September where participants were encouraged to take a shovel with them whenever they were around the farm to get familiar with their

soils and how they change with the seasons.

The Upper Broken River Landcare Group and Mick and Rowena Ellis were inspired by the Strathbogie trial site and are establishing their own trial at Maindample. They will look at how chook and pig manure, EcoMin, Seasol, Gypsum and Single Super compare in improving soil health and pasture production. These products were chosen by



David Freeman uses his home-made penetrometer to test for compaction at Habbies Howe, while owner Scott McKay points out results of his hill country management strategies at a farm tour on 31st March.

participating farmers as they are variously used in the local area.

After the soil test interpretation workshop held at Costerfield in August, Alan and Lindsay Harris and Graytown-Costerfield Landcare Group are establishing a lime trial to demonstrate the effects

of lime on pH and plant productivity. They will test different rates of lime and the use of compost with lime as a biological catalyst to speed up the chemical reaction. The Costerfield area has a history of Single Super use, but lime has not been widely used. With pH levels around 4.5 (in CaCl₂), farmers are now eager to manage low pH and high aluminium levels to allow plants to take best advantage of previous applications of Super.

Other farmer driven Beyond SoilCare activities include a bus tour of farms at Seymour and Highlands to look at grazing management for steep hill country, a planned bus trip to meet with Rob Fenton at the National Environment Centre farm and planned soil pits to look at subsoil constraints for farmers managing sodic soils. The Yea River Catchment Landcare Group is investigating developing a series of soil biology seminars using interactive web tools to access international experts at minimum cost. We are also working with production groups and consultants to develop a number of Goulburn Broken specific soil management tools, including a lime and fertiliser decision process and visual soil assessment. While some of these tools already exist, revision can be helpful in assisting farmers to continue to make improved financial, efficiency and environmental decisions.

The Beyond SoilCare project is issue-based. It supports activities according to interest and feedback from participants. All farmers and landholders are welcome to be involved through working with their Landcare or producer groups to tell us what they need to know in order to implement practices that maintain or improve the health and productivity of their soils. Regular project and resource updates can be found on the Land Health page under Land and Biodiversity at www.gbcma.vic.gov.au.

WHAT'S ON

Soil test interpretation workshop with Cath Botta, Ruffy. 2nd Nov, 12-4pm.
HCCC & Beyond SoilCare. Simone Ulstrup
hughes.creek1@gmail.com

Soil recovery after fire with Cath Botta, Broadford. 3rd Nov, 10.30am-1.00pm.
SWG Landcare. Sonia Sharkey 5734 6312
Swg_landcare@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au

Declan McDonald presentation with Gecko CLaN. 7th Nov.
Melanie Addinsall Landcare1@iinet.net.au

Soil test interpretation workshop with Jim Shovelton, Creightons Creek. 9th Nov, 9.30am-12.30pm.

Creightons Creek Landcare & Beyond SoilCare.
Rhiannon Apted 5736 0108
rhiannona@gbcma.vic.gov.au

Soil test interpretation workshop with Don Cook, Goorambat. 14th Nov, 8-11am.
Goorambat Prime Lamb Group & Beyond SoilCare.
Greg Bekker 5761 1631 Greg.bekker@dpi.vic.gov.au
Strathbogie Alternative Fertiliser Trial field day and paddock walk, Strathbogie. 23rd Nov.
Kerri Robson Landcare2@iinet.net.au

FURTHER INFO

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COUNTRY