BREMER CATCHMENT ASSOCIATION INC.

around the bremer

August 2019

Special points of interest:

Our next Meeting in 2019 is on 15th August

Everyone welcome

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Are you prepared for the fire season?

President's Corner by Mark Edginton

Some of you may have seen some signs in the catchment warning people not to eat fish caught in certain areas of some waterways in the Bremer River Catchment, due to contamination by PFAS.

What is PFAS? PFAS stands for per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances. They have been used for a variety of purposes, but the use which has been most implicated in the contamination of groundwater and watercourses in SEQ is fire-fighting foam. It has been used by the RAAF at its base at Amberley, as well as by the Qld Fire Service.
At present, the Queensland Government is advising people not to eat fish from the following areas:
Bremer River in areas adjacent to RAAF Base Amberley and downstream to Cribb Park, Ipswich

Warrill Creek adjacent to RAAF Base Amberley

Swanbank Lake and Oaky Creek

Bundamba Creek downstream of the Centenary Highway

This is based on advice provided by Queensland Health following review of test results for fish caught during the investigations.

Catch-and-release fishing is still OK. However, remember if you catch the pest fish tilapia, it must not be release back into the water. Please dispose of it humanely.

According to Queensland Health it is safe to eat fish south of Cribb Park "provided consumption is limited to two to three serves of fish per week obtained from different sources." This last recommendation is a general recommendation about eating fish generally, to avoid excessive exposure to mercury.

So, what is the problem with PFAS? According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), "Some, but not all, studies in humans with PFAS exposure have shown that certain PFAS may:

- affect growth, learning, and behaviour of infants and older children
- lower a woman's chance of getting pregnant
- interfere with the body's natural hormones
- increase cholesterol levels
- affect the immune system
- increase the risk of cancer"

So please heed the advice of Queensland Health and ATSDR, and avoid eating fish from the proscribed areas. For further information see the links below.

https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/pollution/management/disasters/investigation-pfas/sites/ipswich

https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects.html

https://www.qt.com.au/news/fresh-warnings-over-contaminated-fish-caught-creek/3500945/

Erratum: In my last President's Corner I wrote that New York City's catchment management-based solution for improving potable water quality saved 300 to 500 billion dollars a year, compared to a typical hard engineering solution. That should have read 300 to 500 *million* dollars a year. The initial saving of 6 to 8 billion dollars was correct.

Quick ways for identifying common pasture species

I am sure there are many more pasture species. At several Field Days, I heard the question:" what variety is this one?"
Here are just some samples of some pasture species.
By Bill Steentsma

Black Spear grass

Love grass

1. Black speargrass	Barbed seeds with awns up to 70 mm long that twist when wet (hygroscopic); bases of stems flattened.
2.Forest blue-grass	Bases of stems rounded; seed-head branched and and purple in colour; leaves and stems have characteristic smell when crushed.
3. Scented top	Similar to forest bluegrass; only; seeds at the end of seed-head branches whereas forest bluegrass has seeds all along seed-head branches; seed-head has characteristic sweet smell when crushed (thus name).
4. Pitted blue-grass	Hairless leaves and stems, seeds with "pit" at base as if pricked with a pin; no hairs on stem joints.
5. Queensland bluegrass	Similar to pitted bluegrass only leaves and stems often silky, hairy; stem joints always with a ring of hairs.
6. Queensland wiregrass	As with all wiregrasses, seeds barbed and with tree awns; stems tough and wiry; poor quality grasses.
7. Barbed - wire grass	Seed-head like barbed-wire; leaves have characteristics tur-pentine smell when crushed.
8. Small or slender Chloris	As per name, small and slender grass; many species, seed-head with 5 to 8 long branches that branch from the one (same) point.
9. Love grass	Small, slender grass; many species, one often grows in lawns and called elastic grass (hard to mow); low quality grasses.
10. slender rat's tail grass	Slender grass; long, slender, tapering seed-head.
11. Tam-bookie grass	Tall, robust plant, not to be confused with grader grass seed-head of Tambookie grass less dense, less crowded.
12. Glycine pea	Common native legume; leaces usually long and slender; slender, sprawling plant.
13. Yellow buttons	Broadleaf weed, occurs more often on sandy soils wher grasses aren't strong; leaves and stems pale green; small yel-low flowers.
14. Veined verbena	Sometimes called purpletop; has stems that are square in cross section as distinct from another similar plant, blue heliotrope, that has rounded stems.
	Managing the Pasture

Management involves manipulating the pasture to give desirable species a com-petitive advantage. An example is the use of improved pasture in the Moreton Region. Once soil fertility levels are raised, improved pastures have the capacity for greater growth than native pastures. They will smother native species, as long as the pastures are not overgrazed.

WEEDS, WEEDS AND MORE WEEDS. by Jocelyn Clarkson, a BCA Member

On my recent holiday into coastal New South Wales I was horrified to see the huge invasion of rampant weeds everywhere in the environment.

It didn't matter if it was a roadside stop, a park, the beach, a rainforest, a grassed area or even a garden in the middle of a main street. The mentality sadly exists that if there is a weed, just spray it. This is the easiest way to get rid of it!

Of course it does. But herbicide may also kill anything around, regardless if it is emerging or mature vegetation unless the chemical makeup is selective. Even then, how long does this plant poison remain in or on the soil and will it eventually change conditions, so no native or desirable plants can come through?

After seeing a family member die from cancer, I have become very cautious about using any herbicide, especially as I believe it is better to remove weeds before they mature. As the old saying goes, one year's seeds, 7 years weeds!

From personal experience in my bush-care site on Oxley Creek in Sherwood in Brisbane, where I have been working voluntarily for 24 years, when weeds are fully grown and have been pulled or sprayed, some can still drop their seeds onto the soil to regenerate next season, even though the parent plant has died in between.

The answer to this is to first cut off all the seed heads before digging them out, or if you really must use spray. Also remove roots where practical that are carrying soil, if you believe they may contain fallen seeds. All of this should definitely be binned.

Then if there is no chance of the dying plant putting out roots at a later date, the harmless remainder can be thrown down to act as mulch and also save going to landfill. Of course this is not a practical solution in the broad acre situation.

So maybe some of the farming fraternity have alternative environmental methods, such as cutting the weeds below the ground or ploughing them before they produce seed and leave the remaining vegetation to compost on top of the soil? Yet again, sometimes it is all a matter of critically scarce funds available to do this 'noble' way of eradication. Far be it for me to dictate to a rural property holder, who probably has a greater knowledge than myself.

Yet, if one considers if a large number of people 'invaded' a paddock or public area, firstly with proper consent and physically pulled out weeds at no cost to the owner, the positive outcome would be amazing. For this to succeed, people do need to be aware of the difference between weeds and natural, or desirable vegetation.

So an authorized organised working day would be a win, win situation for all.

Until all our 'environmental finger pointers' and those in high paid jobs get out of their comfort zone and do something positive about Australia's weed problems, climate change won't even matter, because weeds will have completely taken over.

Weeds in Pastures

Weeds on Footpath

The mentality sadly exists that if there is a weed, just spray it.

This "Article" is "Food for Thought" for our Bremer Catchment

I regard the river as a life source. It's the life blood of the community, of the earth, and it behoves us all to take care of it and to restore it. (Vera Deacon, 2008)

INTERNATIONAL RiverFoundation

Three wishes for the future - the Hunter River

In 2003, the Hunter River won the Australasia Riverprize.

Vera Deacon in *River Journeys 4* said, "If I had three wishes for the future I'd wish for the planting to continue; that Governments, the Council and industry would continue to help finance the project; and that its educative role be developed to attract more and more people to come to learn and appreciate what's taking place here in this estuary.*"*

Vera, at 93, is still an active Kooragang Wetlands volunteer, and in May of this year received the 'Key to the Islands' from her peers for 20 years of ecological restoration and a lifetime contribution to local history. Her first wish has been granted in that the volunteer planting program is still vibrant, with monthly planting days continuing: approximately 10,000 volunteer hours and thousands of plants in the ground each year with work extending to new priority sites along the river.

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Her second wish is also in hand due to the on-going combined efforts of Governments, Councils, industry groups, community service organisations and volunteers. Outcomes of rehabilitation projects at Kooragang Wetlands, Hexham Swamp and Tomago Wetlands have effectively restored an area identified in 1973 as the ideal ecological unit of the Hunter estuary, now protected within the Hunter Wetlands National Park. The Hunter River Management Plan, collaboratively developed by Hunter Local land Services (formerly Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority) will guide future investment in river management.

As a legacy of the Kooragang rehabilitation project, volunteers have formed Friends of the Schoolmasters House to develop and deliver information about the environmental and social history of the estuary wherever an opportunity exists, including to visitors and school groups: wish number three granted.

Ten years on and these wishes have been granted.

Taken from the recent International River Foundation Newsletter.

.Innovative Gully Erosion Control and Pasture Management

A Field Day Report by Bill Steentsma, BCA Member

BCA is very fortunate to have among their members many progressive landholders. These members have BCA objectives at heart, i.e.: Committed to the creation and economic sustainability of a healthy and enjoyable productive catchment.

Simon and Jenny Lott purchased their Mt. Forbes property with a great challenge on hand. A clearly defined eroded gully, from top to down through the middle of the farm. This was a result from a plough, marked in the 1940's, in order to detour run-off.

For Wednesday, 29th May, I accepted their invitation to join in a Field Day, *"to see the recently completed innovative weir construction designed to control historic gully erosion".*

Visitors were encouraged to discuss options and practical management practices to reduce erosion and maintain good pasture and land condition. The main topics were:

- Options for effective control of gully erosion
- Innovative weir design and construction materials
- Managing and maintaining healthy pasture
- Using zero tillage techniques to establish pasture and crops.

No doubt, this was precisely what I have been encouraging landholders during my many years within DPI and after.

Referring to the "innovative weir" and its method for gully control, it is best to have it explained by the Lott's in a later Newsletter, *Where tradition meets innovation.*

BCA is supportive of the experiments believing the benefits will be for many agricultural/grazing properties. Thank you Jenny and Simon, on behalf of all landholders in the Bremer Catchment.

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Minimum Tillage Equipment

Soil Profile Core

Future Drought Fund receives bipartisan support in Parliament

There may not be rain on the horizon for drought-stricken communities, but they can expect funding as soon as 2020.

Earlier this week, the new $5 billion Future Drought Fund was passed with bipartisan support in the House of Representatives and is now on track to pass its final hurdle in the Senate.

The Fund aims to help build drought resilience and preparedness by investing $100 million each year starting 1 July 2020.

The Future Drought Fund Bill was first introduced to Parliament in November last year off the back of Prime Minister Scott Morrison's Drought Summit in October 2018. However, the Fund was never debated in the Senate.

The National Farmers' Federation's President Fiona Simson said drought was a part of Australia's landscape and managing drought was a feature of Australian agriculture.

"With drought forecast to become more frequent and severe as a result of climate change – focussing on preparedness and resilience is critical.

"On Monday night agriculture and the many regional communities that depend on a strong farming sector were prioritised by the Australian Parliament," she said.

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How the Fund works

The process includes the Future Drought Fund Special Account, which will contain $3.9 billion once the Bill is passed. With investments it will reach a value of $5 billion.

The Agriculture Future Drought Resilience Special Account will be established where $100 million will be taken from the aforementioned account (the funds will be replenished by consistent investments) and be invested in drought preparedness and resilience in drought-stricken communities.

The first $100 million investments will be made on 1 July 2020 and the second in 2021.

Taken from the Australian Farmers Weekly

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