BREMER CATCHMENT ASSOCIATION INC.

February 2022

Special points of interest:

The First Operational Meeting will be on

17-02-2022

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around the bremer

Immediate Past President's Corner Bill Steentsma

On behalf of our BCA President 2021/2022, Darren Close, who is on Leave, I wish our members and friends a Happy New Year.

Darren, in his "brand new" BCA job has been very busy with networking meeting stakeholders.

Welcome to our first bi-monthly Newsletter of the year. Main topic, we have been pursuing is the Regenerative Agriculture. Much has been talked and written about it. We decided to "take" the topic to the reader.

Many farmers have been already involved in these management principles. During my DPI time, I used to say that having a farm, is like a business. A business has a Plan. BCA will seek if there is a training possibility on this particular topic for farmers interested.

Realising that February is the month dedicated to Wetlands, is a great opportunity. Brian Pepperall has spent many hours in the Ipswich Wetlands Area. Wetlands are much more than local swamps or low lying areas near the coast.

During previous years, BCA had many great Guestspeakers. Highlights were speakers from DES on the topics "Bremer River Health" and "Weeds".

Throughout the years, BCA's bi monthly Newsletters have covered numerous interesting topics, too many to list at this point.

Happy reading

WHAT IS REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

Regenerative agriculture is a system of farming principles

In addition to a long list of incredible benefits for farmers and their crops, regenerative agriculture practices help us fight the climate crisis by pulling carbon from the atmosphere and sequestering it in the ground.

We know that to solve the climate crisis, business as usual will not cut it. Not in electricity production. Not in industry. Not in transportation. And certainly not in agriculture.
The agriculture sector is one of the biggest emitters of CO2, the greenhouse gas (GHG) most responsible for the changes we are seeing in our climate today. Together with forestry and other land use, agriculture is responsible for just under **25 percent** of all human-created GHG emissions.

But it also has a vital role to play in helping us end this crisis, and create a safe, sustainable future without carbon pollution. One where we can provide our booming world population with fresh, healthy food grown in a sustainable soil ecosystem.
Sure, it may seem like a contradiction. So don't take it from us – **take it from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**:
"Leveraging the mitigation potential in the [Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use] sector is extremely important in meeting emission reduction targets." — But how?
We've got two words for you: **regenerative agriculture**.

HOW IT WORKS

In short, regenerative agriculture is a system of farming principles and practices that seeks to rehabilitate and enhance the entire ecosystem of the farm by placing a heavy premium on soil health with attention also paid to water management, fertilizer use, and more. It is a method of farming that "improves the resources it uses, rather than destroying or depleting them," **according to the Rodale Institute**.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on looking holistically at the agro-ecosystem. Key techniques include:

- **Conservation tillage:** Ploughing and tillage dramatically erode soil and release large amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. They also can result in the kind of bare or compacted soil that creates a hostile environment for important soil microbes. By adopting low- or no-till practices, farmers minimize physical disturbance of the soil, and over time increase levels of soil organic matter, creating healthier, more resilient environments for plants to thrive, as well as keeping more and more carbon where it belongs.

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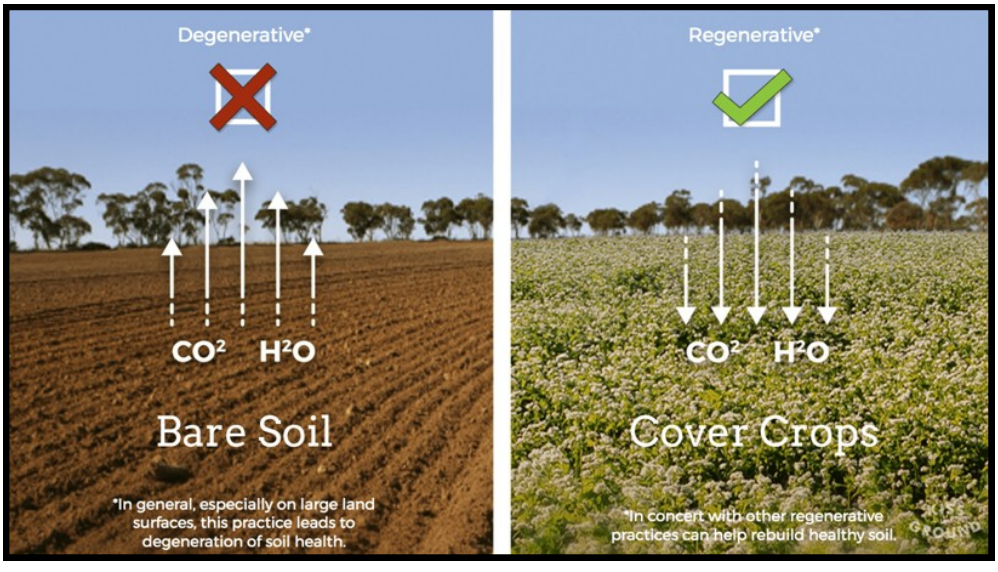
- **Diversity:** Different plants release different carbohydrates (sugars) through their roots, and various microbes feed on these carbs and return all sorts of different nutrients back to the plant and the soil. By increasing the plant diversity of their fields, farmers help create the rich, varied, and nutrient-dense soils that lead to more productive yields.

- **Rotation and cover crops:** Left exposed to the elements, soil will erode and the nutrients necessary for successful plant growth will either dry out or quite literally wash away. At the same time, planting the same plants in the same location can lead to a buildup of some nutrients and a lack of others. But by rotating crops and deploying cover crops strategically, farms and gardens can infuse soils with more and more (and more diverse) soil organic matter, often while avoiding disease and pest problems naturally. Always remember, bare soil is bad soil.

- **Mess with it less:** In addition to minimizing physical disturbance, regenerative agriculture practitioners also often seek to be cautious about chemical or biological activities that also can damage long-term soil health. Misapplication of fertilizers and other soil amendments can disrupt the natural relationship between microorganisms and plant roots.

The overriding theme:

If you take care of your soil, it will take care of you.



Farm Business Resilience Plan

A plan helps identify, assess and manage business risks such as drought and strategies and actions on how to address them. It is good practice to have a business plan.

We will need a Farm Business Resilience Plan or similar to apply for the drought assistance grants and loans. The plan, identifying activities to improve resilience, needs to be supplied with the application to the **Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA)**.

We may already have an up-to-date business plan or can complete the template using an industry specific program.

Getting started

The Farm Business Resilience Program gives access to information and training to help with the plan.

For industry checklists, plan templates and more information about training, workshops or business plan assistance, contact the organisations

- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (grazing, cropping, dairy).
- Queensland Farmers' Federation (intensive livestock industries, cotton, turf, nursery)
- Growcom (horticulture)
- CANEGROWERS (sugarcane)

Additionally, there are other programs and service providers, such as Agforce's AgCarE, natural resource management bodies and agricultural consultants that can also assist producers develop and implement their business plans.

One may choose to get help at a workshop or engage a professional person to help you. To engage a professional, may apply for a 50 per cent rebate of the cost, up to $2,500. Eligibility conditions apply.

The Farm Business Resilience Program is jointly funded by the Australian Government's **Future Drought Fund** and the Queensland Government's **Drought and Climate Adaptation Program**.

Additional resources

It is recommended to use industry specific programs listed above, but if choosing not to, the following resources are available.

A checklist, based on the industry type. One can use the information from the checklists to help develop a Farm Business Resilience Plan:

Livestock — Large scale enterprises self-assessment checklist (PDF, 298.1KB)

B) Livestock — Small-to-medium scale enterprise self-assessment check list (PDF, 297.6KB)

C) Mixed — Cropping and grazing self-assessment checklist (PDF, 319.8KB)

D) Cropping enterprises self-assessment checklist (PDF, 260.1KB)

While anyone can choose to use one of these checklists, additional checklists for other industries will be progressively added, so please come back periodically to check this list.

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North Ipswich Wetlands, by Brian Pepperall (BCA member)

The weather for the past few months has been perfect for a wetlands. Tivoli Creek has been running continuously for most of the last 12 months, but has been looking like a mountain stream for quite a while. Quite the audible babbling brook, gurgling over the rocks and around the logs then moving quietly through the pools. While a little cloudy for a while after rain, it settles down to a clean, clear stream with a hint of brownish tannin.

Local Wood Ducks

There has been a noticeable increase in insect life, especially dragon flies, in a range of colours. Butterflies are numerous, there are plenty of water insects, and fish life seems to be thriving.

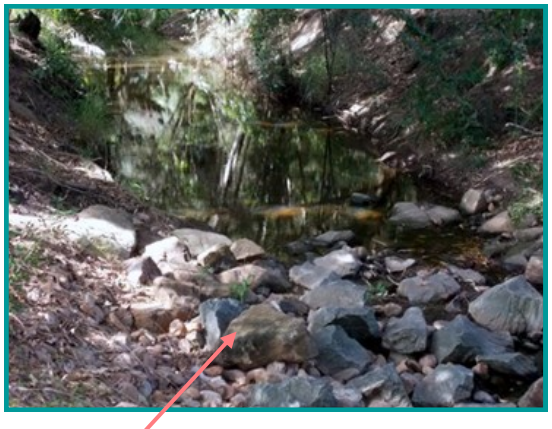
The local wood ducks had about seven babies in tow, black ducks are still in the area, there seems to be a family of bush hens now inhabiting the area and they have been visiting local back yards. This is the first time I have seen these birds. Other birdlife includes five parrot species, three cockatoo species, kookaburras, whip-birds, magpies, butcher birds, pee wee, willy wagtail, currawong, crows, fig-bird, blue faced honeyeater, oriole, two species of ibis, white faced heron and at least five species of raptor. There are more.

Vegetation wise there is quite a lot of natural regrowth from existing plants especially lomandra and hibiscus, as well as some sedge-type plants, grasses and ground covers. One pool seems to have become home to a type of water lily. As well, there has been some planting of lomandra seedlings, hibiscus seedlings and dianella seedlings.

Still lots to do with respect to the rock work along the banks.

With water comes weeds, and a lot of asparagus fern has been removed, along with introduced grasses and seedlings of small leafed pepperina. This is an ongoing problem but not an impossible one.

There is still lots to do with respect to the rock work along the banks and the improvement of the bed load. You can see the spread of the various sized gravels and sands that have been added, and observe the resultant improvement in water quality and reduction in sediments, and thus water clarity.



Rock work along the banks

Environment Forum—Ipswich

Here's a brief rundown of the community meeting , our “brand new” secretary Job had with Jennifer Howard regarding an Environment Forum to be held on March 12 at USQ Ipswich.

We'll have a Stall probably beside, NPQ and Habitat Gardens if they participate. It will be indoors from 10 - 1 setup from 9.00am. Let me know if you'll be able to be there to represent BCA or if you have any ideas for the Stall or for the forum itself.

I think the idea is to showcase what average people can do in their own homes as well as have some speakers from government and industry talking about what they're doing for the environment, including a rep from the Waste Industry.

Perhaps BCA members should get together and have a look at what we have and whether we need anything else for the Stall. I also want to set up our online registration before the event so people can just visit the site and click to register. It could easily double our registered members in one go.

Below is the proper announcement.

An Environment Forum will be held on **12th March 2022** at USQ Ipswich Campus.

It is an Indoor event, commencing at 9.00am and finishing at 1.00pm. The Bremer Catchment Association (BCA) will be represented with a Stall manned by volunteers of BCA.

USQ Campus Ipswich

This will be a great opportunity for the City of Ipswich and surrounding catchments to be involved as well as organisations within the local area.

The City of Ipswich lies within the Bremer River Catchment which is 2030 square km (9203 000 ha) in area. It encompasses a diverse range of land uses which include agriculture, industry, commerce, natural areas and urban development.

There will be several prominent speakers on subjects of the environment and climate and other related subjects. Stall holders will share their knowledge, covering local subject areas related to their objectives.

Time is running out to apply: Planting winter food for wildlife

To help our wildlife be better able to find food in winter, Healthy Land and Water is distributing 15,000 winter forage plants to community organisations and public and private landholders for planting in targeted locations across South East Queensland.

The project has been made possible via the Australian Government's Bushfire Recovery funding, and applications close this week.

Many of our local native wildlife suffer food shortages during winter as productive habitats are often heavily cleared and poorly conserved, with many now classed as endangered ecosystems.

These habitats – such as Banksia woodland, paperbark forest, littoral rainforest, lowland subtropical rainforest and lowland eucalypt forest – provide fruit and flowers during winter for fruit-doves, parrots, honeyeaters, possums, gliders and bats.

If you would like to be involved in planting winter food for wildlife or any related topics, please contact Liz Gould (Healthy Land and Water) by phone 0400 748 157 or email **liz.g@hlw.org.au**

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