BREMER CATCHMENT ASSOCIATION INC.

around the bremer

January 2020

Special points of interest:

Our next Meeting in 2020 is on 20th February Everyone welcome

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President's Corner by Bill Steentsma

Many Studies and Reports have been prepared for SEQld including our Bremer Catchment. These are dated in the past and recent. Several of these catchment studies had extensive time, comments and knowledge input of many. They were prepared with a clear expression of the ability of our community to cooperate, and to form partnerships.

The abundant Reports are meant to guide us as a management tool. It defines a series of actions for each of the 13 sub-catchments. It includes agricultural landuse, recreation, tourism, community attitudes and the general well-being of the catchment.

These recommended actions are based on available data, the findings of numerous studies, and the BCA input.

Actions are not fixed, but over time must be reviewed and fine-tuned. Community opinion can be softened through awareness and education programs which clearly explain why an action, or no action is taken.

Lead agencies, for the specific issues, can be identified. Depending on their available expertise, finance and knowledge of the issues.

These studies should be viewed as "not for the sake of having studied" but implementing actions. The year 2019 gave us many reminders from within the many past Reports and Studies.

Wishing you all a happy New Year and sufficient rain for 2020.

Cat's claw creeper and the Bremer catchment.

Cat's claw creeper *(Macfadyena unguis-cati*) is an aggressive vine native to tropical America. Its name derives from the three-clawed tendrils which grow from its stems, each resembling a cat's claw which it uses to hook on and climb up host trees. Cat's claw creeper was introduced to Australia as a garden plant, particularly for screening trellises and walls, and has escaped to become a major weed of native forests and riparian areas in eastern Australia.

The problem with cat's claw creeper is its ability to kill mature trees by completely smothering them. It can also outcompete native plants and grasses by forming a dense mat of vegetation above ground altering the structure and composition of the native plant community. Cat's claw creeper produces abundant seeds that are dispersed by wind and water.

Image 1. Cats Claw Creeper forming monoculture and killing mature trees.

Cat's claw creeper has been targeted for biological control due to its widespread impacts on native vegetation and the difficulty and expense of controlling established infestations. Two insects have been released in Queensland, both of which attack the leaves. It is hoped that these agents will reduce the growth and seeding of the weed and the production of tubers. It will be some years before the impact of these biological control agents can be assessed.

The invasive vine can also be controlled by cutting off the vines and treating the lower stems and foliage with herbicide. This is slow work and requires follow up work and monitoring is essential. Physical removal is possible for very small plants, as long as the roots and tubers are completely removed.

The Bremer catchment covers approximately 203,000 hectares with the main channel the Bremer River, even though Warrill Creek is the longest waterway in the area. The Bremer flows into the Brisbane River which in turn empties into Moreton Bay. It is important to note that Cat's claw creeper infests the entire SEQ bio region and contributes to the erosion and water quality issues around the entire region. Cat's claw creeper poses a direct threat to Scenic Rims' threatened vegetation communities.

The Bremer catchment supports a diverse range of land users which include natural areas, eco tourism, agriculture, grazing and urban develop-

The Bremer catchment supports a diverse range of land users which include natural areas, eco tourism, agriculture, horticulture, grazing and urban development.
Many stakeholders including land owners, community groups, Landcare organisations and Local Governments are committed to remove Cats claw creeper within the Bremer catchment and with a combined and continued effort will make a difference. (ref: Comments).

Comments: BCA President: A Workshop is urgently called for by all Network Stakeholders. Referring to the Catchment Action Plan (CAP) and "Mayors fund river upgrade". The leadership has to be decided after the March 2020 election

If you would like any further information regarding pest plants and weeds please contact Scenic Rim Regional Council on (07) 5540 5111 or follow the link https://
www.scenicrim.qld.gov.au/our-environment/biodiversity/pest-plants-and-weeds

Growing a digital future in agriculture: what will it take?

Australia's agricultural industries have the opportunity to harness the benefits of big data and digital technology, and it's a case of working together at all levels, according to the Australian Farm Institute's Executive Director Mick Keogh.

Mick was the keynote speaker at the *Australian Agriculture: Growing a Digital Future* National Forum held at Parliament House in Canberra in September. The forum bought together representatives from Rural Development Corporations, educators, researchers, government, the private sector and the farming community.

Research has shown that digital innovation could lift the GVP of the Australian agricultural sector by $20.3 billion. Four key areas have been identified as benefiting producers across the sector – managing inputs, automation and labour saving, market access and biosecurity and genetics. The Australian agricultural sector has set a course for Australian farms to produce $100 billion by 2030. In his keynote presentation, Mick outlined the opportunities and challenges for Australian agriculture's digital transformation.

"In the past, Australian agriculture was able to increase output, despite low productivity growth, by expanding the amount of land and water resources utilised by the sector," he said.

"That option is no longer available, and in fact the amount of land and water resources available to the sector has declined significantly in recent decades, and is predicted to shrink further.

"Consequently, a key focus of efforts to increase the annual value of agricultural output in Australia must be on improving agricultural productivity."

The widespread adoption of digital technologies by agricultural businesses is potentially one of the most important ways to stimulate improved rates of productivity growth.

Mick said the advantages that digital technology can bring are not limited to the farm, and some of the biggest gains in value are likely to be generated from the adoption of digital systems that extend seamlessly through the supply chain from farm to consumer.

"Some of the best avenues Australian agriculture has available to increase the value of output involve targeting higher value and premium markets," he said.

"The potential additional value that digital technologies can bring to Australian agriculture was outlined in a detailed economic analysis by the Centre for International Economics under the Precision to Decision Agriculture project – the forerunner to Growing a Digital Future.

For more information visit **crdc.com.au/growing-digital-future**

*AgriFutures Australia is a project supporter of A*ustralian Agriculture: Growing a Digital Future.*

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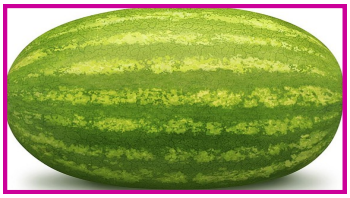
Watermelon farming an ancient practice

The leaves they found in the sarcophagus of an unknown priest had genes present that prevented the bitter flavour from developing.

Watermelon farmers in the Bremer Catchment have been taking part in a practice that dates back to ancient Egypt. A leaf found in a mummy's sarcophagus in a tomb in Egypt was tested and the results revealed it was from a 3500-year-old domesticated watermelon plant.

While the DNA investigation into the leaf told the scientists which plant they had, it was a picture on a wall in the tomb of Chnumhotep in Saqqara, that showed a green, elongated melon.



Watermelons are native to the region but the wild ones are bitter and have white flesh. The leaves they found in the sarcophagus of an unknown priest had genes present that prevented the bitter flavour from developing.

The study came to the conclusion that Egyptians of the New Kingdom were eating red, sweet watermelon 3500 years ago. *From the Fassifern Guardian.*

The Concept of Catchment Health by Bill Steentsma

When designing an indicator program for these, the local community must select indicators that address local concerns and conditions.

Many indicators are needed to assess "Catchment Health". During my DPI/DNR time, I often pondered about this topic.

Firstly, it is important to clarify the meaning of the word "health" in environmental context. The meaning of the health of a paddock, farm, catchment and landscape is not very clear. Catchment health implies a viable condition.

When designing an indicator program for these, the local community must select indicators that address local concerns and conditions.

Choosing indicators are highly subjective and are often biased by personal experiences and goals, local knowledge, funding, available data and intuition. For example, I would select soils as indicators, an economist will focus on dollars and a landholder considers production.

New Biosecurity Advisory Group announced

This week the Minister for Agriculture, Senator Bridget McKenzie announced the establishment of a new biosecurity advisory group, Biosecurity Futures.

The group will be made up of members from the National Farmers' Federation, Australian Pork Limited, Fertiliser Australia, Freight and Trade Alliance, Food and Beverage Importers Association, Tourism and Transport Forum, Minerals Council and Seafood Industry Australia.

It will be chaired by the Minister and meet twice a year, or as needed, to discuss biosecurity concerns as well as ways to improve the biosecurity system.

National Farmers' Federation CEO Tony Mahar said he was looking forward to working with the group to discuss the diverse biosecurity issues that affect the agriculture sector.

"Australia's biosecurity system is absolutely fundamental to the success of our agriculture industries, to the health of our natural environment and to our society and economy at large," said Mr Mahar.

"We welcome the Minister's decision to set up this new advisory group, which will allow industry to contribute constructively to biosecurity policy discussions at a high level".

From AustralianFarmers 29th November 2019

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Biosecurity, as originally conceptualized, is a set of preventive measures designed to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases in crops and livestock, quarantined pests, invasive alien species, and living modified organisms. The emerging nature of biosecurity threats means that small scale risks blow up rapidly, thus an effective policy becomes a challenge for there are limitations on time and resources available for analysing threats and estimating the likelihood of their occurrence.

Wikipedia

New research uncovers opportunities for environmental income

On International Soils Day the National Farmers' Federation and KPMG launched their latest joint report, outlining how Australian farmers can set themselves up to tap into global demand for sustainable investments.

It is a well-known fact that Australian farmers are at the frontline of Australia's conservation efforts, managing 51% of the countries landscape. Despite this, efforts to reward and offer incentives for best practice have often been sporadic. The report, released today, recognises the need to create markets that connect investors who are willing to pay for positive outcomes, with the farmers who are doing great things for the environment.

The research shows that there are new opportunities for farmers to unlock the value of natural capital, such as the land and ecosystems that underpin farm production and that new sustainable finance mechanisms could unlock billions in additional farm income.
NFF President Fiona Simson welcomed the report and its key recommendations, stressing the fact that farmers play a critical role in caring for the environment. "Unfortunately, efforts to incentivise and reward environmental practices historically have been short-term or based on ad-hoc grants and programs. They have also been interfered with through complex and poorly understood regulatory requirements," Ms Simson said.

"We need a comprehensive approach that delivers the right incentives, and the right outcomes for farmers and the environment." The key recommendations of the report were:

- Implement the $30 million Pilot Agricultural Stewardship Program including supporting a research project to further develop these instruments;
- Establish a $1 billion National Biodiversity Conservation Trust as per the Craik Review recommendations; and

The development of a National Natural Capital Policy and Government-backed standards and trading structures.
Robert Poole, KPMG National Food and Agribusiness Lead Partner, said the report shows that there are tools readily available for farmers, we just have to make them work.

For more information go to the AustralianFarmers website.

AustralianFarmers is an online community powered by the National Farmers' Federation.

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Editor's Contact details:

Email: msteent@ngvemail.com

Mobile: 0414 381 664