

Tarcutta Valley Landcare



Chairman's message

By Bob Schofield, Chair of Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group

As we enter a time of extensive change in the delivery of extension and financial support for rural communities, the Landcare networks in NSW could experience huge reductions in valuable on-ground partnership projects.

The formation of Local Land Services (LLS) across the state - replacing Catchment Management Authorities, Livestock Health & Pest Authorities, and parts of the Department of Primary Industries - has been explained by the Minister Katrina Hodgkinson as consolidation and rationalisation of services and personnel, without any loss of regional rural outcomes. However it does seem that the fear of future LLS staffing positions has already seen a huge movement of existing staff away from long-held advisory and face-to-face positions, with the resulting loss of experience. Full details of the changes are available on the DPI website: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/locallandservices.

We will see Sam Shannon (our Regional Landcare Facilitator with Murrumbidgee Landcare) leaving us shortly, and the position of Rob Kuiper (our Catchment Project Officer with the Murrumbidgee CMA) is also likely to change in the next few months. Thank you to both for your dedication to our Landcare Group in the past and all the best for your futures.

I would like to welcome Alan Cole, the new Landcare Support Officer with Murrumbidgee Landcare. Alan will be assisting Landcare networks in the Murrumbidgee catchment for a number of months. He can be contacted at: acole@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au.

At our coming 2013 AGM, I will not be seeking nomination for any executive positions. I wish to thank all members and our supporters in the Landcare community for your energy and enthusiasm during the past years.

Project updates and future activities

By Bob Schofield, Chair of Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group

Blackberry and black willow control project

This project, funded by a Caring For Our Country grant, will finish with a field day on Wednesday 19th June. The field day will be held at Marilyn Starr's property, commencing at 10 am. For more information, please contact Bob Schofield: 69 289 561.

Tarcutta Recreation Reserve

Work is continuing on the repair and regeneration of the Reserve, following the severe flood damage it suffered. Revegetation of the site took place through last winter, with around 1,200 native seedlings planted, using funds from a Murrumbidgee CMA grant.

Coach Hole project

The information sign for the Coach Hole Reserve has been prepared and will be installed shortly. The signage will explain the history of the site, from its time as a watering point for travelling stock through to the incident in 1951 when a coach drawn by six horses was swept away in a

flash flood, with the two men on board and all horses drowning in a hole on the Reserve. The sign will also highlight the recent work by the Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group and local schools to revegetate the site, through a Murrumbidgee CMA grant.

Flood mitigation and erosion control project

This project, supported by Qantas, is continuing well with a demonstration site to be established on the Tarcutta Creek soon. The demonstration site will allow us to trial some of the erosion control methods discussed at the recent workshop, including some of those Alison Elvin outlined in the previous edition of this newsletter.

Flood recovery

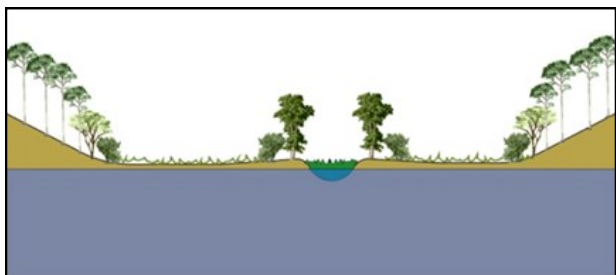
Peter Beal, Project Manager with the Murrumbidgee CMA, will be coordinating the project works for major erosion repairs at two large-scale Tarcutta Creek sites. The work will be undertaken by contractors in conjunction with Wagga Wagga City Council. For more information, contact Peter Beal: peter.beal@cma.nsw.gov.au, or 69 530 716.

Low-cost erosion control

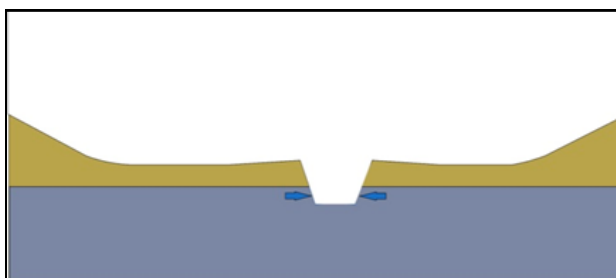
By Cam Wilson

Changed hydrology

Whether it's in a floodplain setting, such as a chain of ponds, or a valley higher in the landscape, an incised channel can greatly affect the hydrology of the surrounding environment.



Intact hydrological processes result in significant water storage in the landscape



Once a gully has formed, it acts as a drain

Soil health

One of the most important points to note when it comes to erosion is that it's a symptom of declining landscape health. Increased groundcover and improved soil health, through practices such as time-controlled grazing, will result in reduced runoff. There's also the advantage of water being stored for longer where the farmer wants it: under the plants. Increasing carbon levels through such practices can also address acidification and improve stability in sodic soils.



Plant roots on David Marsh's property (left), compared to the set stocking neighbour (right)

Stopping the cut

If you have erosion on your property, a good place to start is to address any active headwall cuts. This basically involves armouring the face to prevent it cutting back any further. The materials used will depend on what you have on hand:

Zuni bowl



If you've got plenty of rocks, then a Zuni bowl is an option for cuts less than 1 m. The lowest point of the spill-over should be in the centre, and a pool-forming sill constructed on the downstream end to half the height of the original cut. This technique isn't recommended on dispersive soils.

Timber structures

Thinning of regrowth forests or over-crowded revegetation projects can improve the health of the stand while yielding logs for construction.

Log step



This technique is suitable for cuts up to 1 m. Logs must be butted up and secured hard against the back wall of the cut and wired together. Diversion helps ensure all flow goes down the structure. This technique is not suitable for permanently flowing sites.

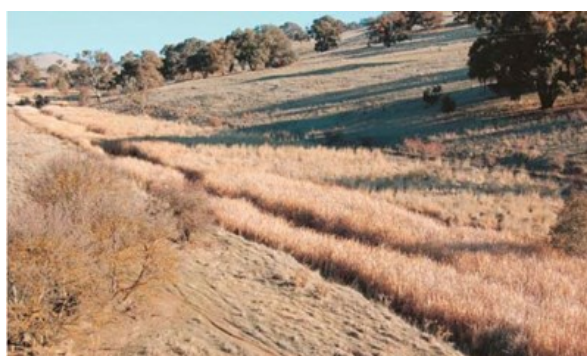
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Log ramp



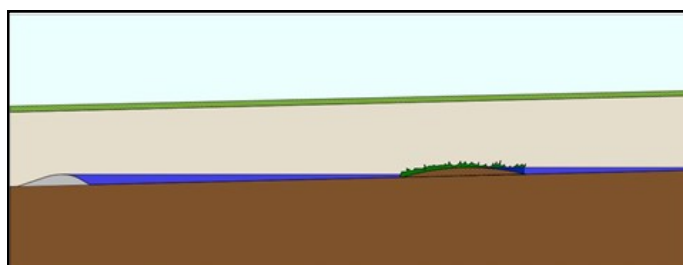
Suited to smaller cuts, less than 0.5 m. As the materials break down, vegetation will colonise and stabilise. Rocks can also be utilised.

Enhancing natural repair processes

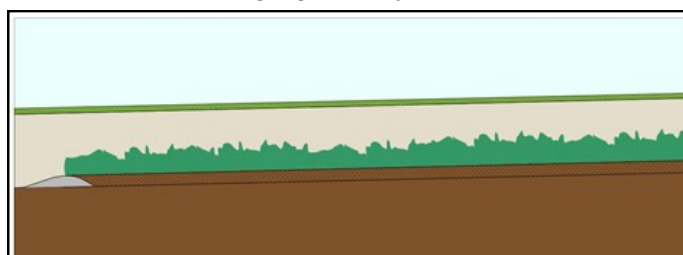


In the Jugiong catchment, many incised channels have started to self repair

In-stream wetlands catch sediment which raises the bed and increases both moisture and nutrient availability, leading to further wetland growth and so on. Grade control structures can be utilised to give nature a helping hand to get this process started.



Grade control structures can encourage deposition and the formation of bars upstream. They also hold moisture for longer periods of time



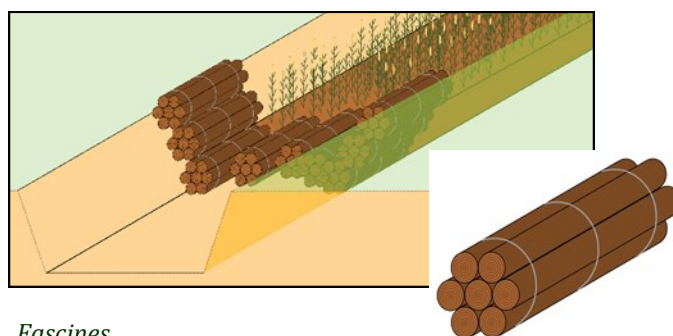
Moisture levels enable riparian vegetation to establish, which catches sediment and begins the natural in-stream wetland process

Some simple grade control structures which you can build yourself include:

One rock dams



Ensure that the rocks follow a similar curved profile to the original gully floor. Scattering some seed heads helps the vegetation establishment along.



Fascines

Used by armies since Roman times for crossing gullies, this technique can be useful for repair work as well.

Vegetated earth banks



An open weave geo-textile protected these banks when first constructed, while allowing the rhizomes of aquatic plants to weave in and out and stabilise the structure, reforming a chain of ponds.

Further information

Cam has produced a set of notes which provide more information on the various control structures outlined in this article. For a copy of these notes, please contact Nicole Maher (nmaher@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au).

Contact details for Cam Wilson

Email: cam@earthintegral.com

Murrumbidgee Landcare Annual Forum

Cross property planning to balance conservation and production

The 2013 Murrumbidgee Landcare Annual Forum is being hosted by the Junee Area Landcare Network, and will be held at the Junee RSL on Thursday 22nd and Friday 23rd August.

The Forum will feature a field trip in the Junee, Ilabo and Bethungra area, along with a series of presentations covering topics including:

- Pest animal management (David Croft, formerly NSW Department of Primary Industries)
- Managing salinity at a landscape scale (Rob Muller and Greg Summerell, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage)

- Community environmental action across the catchment (Alan Cole, Murrumbidgee Landcare)
- Why paddock trees matter (Mason Crane, Australian National University)
- Networking Landcare in schools (Toni McLeish and Marion Benjamin, Murrumbidgee Landcare).

The Forum costs \$40 for one day or \$60 for both days, for Landcare members and community volunteers (\$60 for one day / \$100 for both days for all others).

For more information, or to register to attend, contact Murrumbidgee Landcare: ph (02) 69 331 443, or www.murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au/forum/2013.

Winter climate outlook for the Tarcutta Valley and region

By Robbie Lennard, Wagga Bureau of Meteorology office

Temperatures: Winter maximum temperatures are likely to be below the median (65% chance), but minimum temperatures are likely to be above the median (70% chance). Warmer than normal nights are also likely. For more information: www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/temp.seaus.shtml.

Rainfall: A wetter than normal season is likely for the region this winter (65% chance). This is due to the warmer than normal ocean surface temperatures around much of the continent, which can provide more moisture to the atmosphere and, with favourable weather conditions, may result in increased rainfall. Models also indicate that a

negative Indian Ocean Dipole is likely, which also increases the chances of above normal rainfall over southeast Australia. For more information: www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/rain.seaus.shtml.

El Niño: All atmospheric and oceanic indicators currently remain neutral in relation to El Niño-Southern Oscillation. For more information: www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso.

This seasonal outlook is based on data available at the start of June 2013. For further info, and regularly updated predictions, check out the Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook web pages provided.

The REAL price of a cow!

Contributed for your amusement

The local car dealer, who was known to have taken advantage of several people in the community, informed a farmer that he would be coming over to buy a dairy cow from him.

The farmer priced the cow as follows:

Basic cow	\$499.95
Shipping and handling	\$125.50
Extra stomach	\$79.25
Two-tone exterior	\$142.10
Produce storage compartments	\$126.50
Four-spigot, high-output drainage system	\$149.20
Automatic fly-swatter	\$88.50
Genuine cowhide upholstery	\$179.90
Deluxe dual horns	\$59.25
Automatic fertiliser attachment	\$339.40
4x4 traction assembly	\$884.25
Pre-delivery wash and groom	\$69.80
Additional dealer adjustments	\$741.60
Total list price (including options)	\$3,485.20



“You’ve got to have trees!”

Peter Reeckman talks about the value of trees and other projects at ‘Umbango’

Peter Reeckman has been farming at ‘Umbango’ for 28 years. Together with his wife Debbie, they run a self-replacing merino flock and beef cattle on their 1,200 hectare property.

Driven by some major salinity issues in parts of the property, Peter planted a series of tree lots and also took part in a significant farm forestry project. This project, commencing in 2003, involved planting an area of 9.5 ha to a range of tree species, including many Eucalypts along with some Acacias. The majority of these plantings have been very successful, and are now showing excellent growth (see photo, at right).

The salty soak downslope from the tree plot has shown much improvement and, as a further potential benefit, Peter is excited about the opportunity of the forestry plot attracting bees to the property, when the trees begin flowering.

As a further strategy for dealing with the dryland salinity areas on the property, Peter commenced a Perennial Pasture Management Plan with the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority in 2006. This provided the Reeckman’s with a grant to sow perennial pastures, including phalaris, white clover and sub clover.

These pastures complement the native pastures which the Reeckman’s have on many of their hilly paddocks. The native pastures include weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), red grass (*Bothriochloa macra*) and kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*), and are an important part of the grazing system.

While the drought had a significant impact on many of the improved pastures, much of the phalaris and sub clover survived and continues to offer beneficial feed to the stock on the property, while also helping to improve the areas affected by salinity.



The farm forestry lot on Umbango

The Reeckman’s have been members of the Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group for many years, and most of the projects on their property have stemmed from their involvement with the Landcare Group.

In recent years, Peter and Debbie have been involved with the Communities in Landscapes project (the precursor to the Cross Property Planning project, outlined on pages 6-7 of this newsletter).

Their involvement in the Communities in Landscapes project allowed them to plant scattered trees, with the goal of ultimately creating wildlife corridors to improve connectivity between areas of native vegetation within and across properties in the region.

It may be some time before the trees are big enough to provide this cross property linkage, but Peter believes that the connections are a really good idea, and are the best means of providing valuable habitat for native birds and other wildlife. Says Peter: “You’ve got to have trees!”



The Reeckman’s cattle graze on perennial pasture, near an area previously severely affected by dryland salinity

Tarcutta and Humula Cross Property Planning projects

By Jacinta Christie, Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc

The Murrumbidgee Landcare Cross Property Planning Project aims to help landholders develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of conservation and biodiversity on their own properties, and across the local landscape, through workshops, meetings and the provision of funding for on-ground work (such as tree planting, protection of existing remnant vegetation, and managing threats to biodiversity through weed and feral animal management).

The sections below outline some of the activities which have already taken place, or are planned for the coming months. If you would like further information on any of these project activities, please contact Jacinta Christie at Murrumbidgee Landcare: jchristie@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au, or 0431 953 778.

Blackberries and St John's Wort the focus of integrated weed management planning

Over the past three months, the Cross Property Planning Project has contracted Alison Elvin from Natural Capital to work with individual landholders in the Humula Cross Property Planning group to develop whole of property integrated weed management plans.

All landholders who worked with Alison had already completed a three day Integrated Weed Management Workshop, delivered by Jenene Kidston from NSW DPI, which covered the basics of integrated weed management from understanding plants and risk assessments, to control methods and strategies, and guidelines for developing plans. The Integrated Weed Management Plans were each developed in consultation with the landholders and Alison, and were designed to:

- Identify threats to biodiversity and production on the landholder's property;
- Identify the location of the major infestations of identified weeds; and
- Provide a 5-10 year management and monitoring strategy, based on a combination of cultural, mechanical and chemical controls.

The final workshop in this series was held on the 7th May at Humula with presentations from both Alison and Jenene. Topics included native grasses, grazing and soil health in weed management, and strategies versus control methods for blackberries and St John's wort. Landholders were given the opportunity to review their proposed plans with Alison and also to attend a site with a locally common invasive weed issue where management options could be explored.

On-ground weed management work identified and undertaken through the plans will be partially funded through a \$4,000 grant to the individual landholders, with further funding available in 2014.

What native plants and animals are on my property?

Have you ever wondered what species of birds, mammals and insects are hiding on your property? What about all the strange plants that you cannot identify? If you are a member of the Humula or Tarcutta Cross Property Planning groups you will soon be able to find out!

The Murrumbidgee Landcare Cross Property planning Project is funding flora and fauna surveys to be conducted in spring 2013. A public spot-lighting evening will be held in conjunction with the surveys - more information will be provided in upcoming editions of the newsletter.



Mike Slack-smith and David Tooke working on their integrated weed management plans



The harp trap, used to safely catch bats without hurting them, is explained to landholders at a spot-lighting evening

Using native species to manage invasive weeds

As described in the Autumn edition of this newsletter, a series of trials are being established at Humula, Kyeamba and Ilabo to examine the ability of native species to suppress invasive weeds. The trials will look at various native grasses, Acacias, shrub legumes, groundcovers and forbs.

The Humula trial will be conducted at Lawrie and Nicole Sykes' property, 'Miowere'. This trial will compare the competitiveness of native species against St John's wort in an existing fenced remnant on the property. Work commenced on this trial in late May 2013.

Tree and shrub planting around Humula

Easter proved a busy time for many Humula Cross Property Planning group members. Project funds were used to provide around 700 trees and shrubs, to assist landholders to replace trees that had been lost from the previous cross property planning project in the area (the Communities in Landscapes Project).



Lawrie Sykes inspecting the proposed trial location on his Humula property, 'Miowere' (left)

Sam Shannon, Regional Landcare Facilitator with Murrumbidgee Landcare, assessing trees planted on Lawrie and Nicole Sykes' property (right)

The Story of Box Gum Grassy Woodlands

A new DVD has been released, giving a short history of the Box Gum Grassy Woodlands ecological communities. The DVD covers the history of these communities, from indigenous management, through early European settlement and changes in agricultural practice to today. It describes how management of these communities has changed over time and the impacts these changes have had on these important and highly fertile ecosystems. It then provides insight into how many of these communities have come to be listed as endangered under both state and federal legislation. Most importantly, the DVD provides information about what can and is being done to reverse the detrimental effects of past management.

"The Story of Box Gum Grassy Woodlands" can be viewed online for free, at: www.gbwcmm.net.au.

Alternatively, contact Peter McCallum, Treasurer of the Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group, to ask about borrowing a copy of the DVD: (02) 69 289 563, or pmccallum@harboursat.com.au.



Key contacts

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Jeff Shepherd, Agribusiness Manager:

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Coming events

Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group Meetings and AGM

Meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of each month, from 7.00 pm at Tarcutta RSL. The meeting on Tuesday 25th June will include the Group's AGM. Please come along to find out more about the Group, and help plan the coming year's activities! For more information, contact Bob Schofield: 69 289 561

Blackberry and Black Willow Project Field Day

Wednesday 19th June. This field day and shrub planting will celebrate the finish of the Caring For Our Country blackberry and black willow project. It will start at 10 am, at Marilyn Starr's place. For more information, please contact Bob Schofield: 69 289 561

Graham Centre Sheep Forum

Friday 28th June, CSU Wagga. With a theme of 'Efficiency of production', the forum will feature presentations, Q&A panels and workshops. For more information: www.csu.edu.au/research/grahamcentre/field-day/sheep.htm

Graham Centre Beef Forum

Friday 9th August, CSU Wagga. The Forum will have a series of presentations and workshops based on local research. For more information: www.csu.edu.au/research/grahamcentre/field-day/beef.htm

Murrumbidgee Landcare Annual Forum

Thursday 22nd to Friday 23rd August, Junee. See the article on page 4 for more information, or check out the website: www.murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au/forum/2013

2013 NSW Landcare and Catchment Management Forum

Tuesday 3rd to Thursday 5th September, Newcastle. This bi-annual forum is the premier event to showcase sustainability, Landcare and volunteering across NSW, and includes a huge range of speakers and field trips, along with the annual Landcare Muster and the NSW State Landcare Awards Dinner. For more information: www.landcarecmaforum.com.au

22nd International Grasslands Congress

Sunday 15th to Thursday 19th September, Sydney. The Congress will explore the current issues facing grasslands around the world, centred on the theme of 'revitalising grasslands to sustain our communities'. For more information: www.igc2013.com

If you have any questions or comments about this newsletter, or would like to contribute any ideas, please contact Nicole Maher (Newsletter Editor):

nmaher@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au, or (02) 69 310 981.

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