

Partners towards a healthy Catchment

3-4 September, Wellington NSW



Field trip notes

Site one: Mount Arthur Reserve

Property Details:

Land manager: Tony Layland

Property: 'Mount Arthur' Reserve Trust

Location: Wellington

Size of property: 2200 ha

Soil Types: Shallow Soils (Tenosols)

Sub-catchment: Bell River

Landcare Group: Mount Arthur Reserve Trust

Mount Arthur Reserve Trust:

The Mount Arthur Reserve Trust is an incorporated group made up of community volunteers and manages 2200 ha of crown land situated on the western side of Wellington. It was set up in the late 1960's as a conservation reserve for the preservation of native vegetation, wildlife habitat and community recreation areas. The trust employs a part-time ranger (Tony Layland) to manage the reserve lands. The Trust welcomes new members – please contact Erica Baigent 6887 1261 if you would like to know more.

Reserve Management Issues:

The Reserve is a significant area of remnant vegetation located at the northern end of the Catombal Range. It contains riparian areas including the Macquarie River and Bush Rangers Creek and has a great variety of vegetation communities, ranging from Hill Red Gum/ Black Cypress Pine woodlands on the ridges to Yellow Box Grassy Woodland and River Oak Forests on the riparian flats.

A significant population of *Swainsona recta* occurs in the reserve. Flora and fauna surveys are regularly carried out, with interested community members welcome. Notable management issues include:

- Managing Tiger and Prickly Pear using biological and traditional weed control methods.
- Managing exotic woody weeds such as Olives, Privet and Tree of Heaven.
- Managing total grazing pressure impact from feral goats and native herbivores. Water storages (dams) located throughout the reserve are artificially supporting grazing animals to the detriment of native groundcover, shrubs and other wildlife.
- Fuel load management. Recently developed a fire management plan with infrastructure maintained to assist with fire fighting.
- Vandalism of signs and recreational facilities.

The Mount Arthur Reserve Trust has recently received funding from the Central West CMA to assist with on-going conservation management of the reserve. Innovative components include using animal proof fencing around dams to manage grazing pressure and a 20 ha revegetation project to reconstruct endangered Grassy Box Woodlands.

Site two: 'Karuga Park'

Property Details:

Landholder: Nigel Kerin (2008 NSW Farmer of the Year)

Property: 'Karuga Park'

Location: Yeoval

Size of property: 2632 ha

Soil Types: Red Clays/ Red Brown Earths/ Red Podzolics

Sub-catchment: Little River

Landcare Group: Little River (LRLG)

Summary of farm business:

'Karuga Park' is a conglomeration of four 'holistically managed' properties running sheep, wool, cattle trading, pasture cropping and no-till farming. Total carrying capacity is around 18,000 to 19,000 Dry Sheep Equivalent (DSE), including 600ha dual purpose 'Maroombie' wheat.

During the past five years, these properties have been subdivided into 10-12 ha paddocks and watered by troughs to create 250 paddocks, which are time-control grazed to balance environmental and profit targets. Under this system, groundcover has increased to 100% and is now building mulch layers to achieve zero runoff. In the past two years there has been a massive increase in biodiversity of the perennial grass pastures, and the Kerin's are currently going through organic accreditation for their 480 ha 'Naringla' farm at Yeoval.

Nigel Kerin is renowned for his innovative approach to farming. He was the first producer in the Central West to adopt the Soft Rolling Skin (SRS) breeding principles 15 years ago to produce Merino sheep that are wrinkle-free and don't require mulesing or flystrike protection; and select genetics for worm resistance. Three years ago they were the only cell graziers in the district.

Projects Summary:

- 440 ha of perennial pasture established, and 1200 ha subdivision fencing and water reticulation installed to improve grazing management - partly funded under Central West CMA Incentive Rounds 2 and 3.
- Conservation machinery project to add Jenke Press Wheels to a converted Shearer Trash Culti Drill - partly funded under Central West CMA Incentive Round 4.
- Little River Landcare 'HELP' Project - 80 ha of perennial pasture establishment including wire and water improvements. Funding provided to LRLG under the CMA Round 5 'HELP' project (Helping the Environment through Landholder Practices).

Points of interest are:

- Pasture cropping (early sown & late sown) into native grasses.
- Establishment of 'tropical grass' pastures sown in December 2007.
- No maintenance electric fencing and no maintenance stock watering systems.
- Accurate grazing / paddock records together with farm business records (Cash Books Plus) demonstrate that financial wealth precedes environmental wealth.

Site three: 'Catombal'

Property Details:

Landholder: Munro Family (presenter Hamish Munro)

Property: 'Glenwood' (part of Catombal Pastoral Company)

Location: Cumnock

Size of property: 1295 ha (part of a total 4000 ha)

Soil Types: Non Calcic Brown Soils/ Red Brown Earths (Red Cromolsols)

Sub-catchment: Little River

Landcare Group: Little River (LRLG)

Summary of farm business:

Catombal Pastoral Company is a mixed farming enterprise including 1000 trading steers, a self replacing Merino flock, prime lamb production and 1000 ha wheat and canola. All cropping is zero-till farming using a 12m Gason eco-till air seeder fitted with Jankee press wheels. This machine allows for shallow/ deep banding fertilizers, and small seeds are sown in front of press wheels. Rotation includes 4 years cropping (Canola/ Wheat/ Canola/ Wheat) followed by 8 years perennial pasture (2 years cattle grazing, then 6 years sheep grazing). On the more fragile country, cropping is reduced to 3 years.

Pastures include 'Genesis' and 'Sardi' Lucerne; White Clover; 'Dalkeith' and 'Goulburn' Sub-Clovers; 'Sirossa' Phalaris; 'Currie' Cocksfoot; and 'Fletcher MaxP' Fescue. Pastures are top dressed with single super in years 1, 2 and 4, depending on soil tests.

Projects Summary:

- Mid Macquarie 'Ripple Project' provided incentives for paddock sub-division and improvements in farm water supplies.
- CMA Round 3 – 467 ha fencing and water project to improve grazing management, with the creation of 8 new paddocks and the installation of 12 new water troughs.
- CMA Round 4 – 321 ha fencing and water project to further paddock subdivisions for improved grazing management. The project involved the creation of 5 new paddocks, installation of 7 new troughs and the construction of 3 new dams.
- Little River HELP project – 170 ha of perennial pasture establishment, using the Little River Landcare Group's 'Rock Hopper' in some areas. This machine was partly funded by the Central West CMA through a Round 1 project.

Points of interest are:

- Use of conventional fencing 8:90:30 hingejoint plus barb on top, to split paddocks into 20 to 40 ha units.
- Mob size ranges up to 273 heifers and 183 steers, provide grazing for 5 to 7 days, followed by a 50 to 60 day rest period depending on pasture growth/ climatic conditions.
- On 'Glenwood', number of paddocks has increased from 33 paddocks to 53 paddocks, with an option to divide further into 60 units.
- Autumn sown 'perennial pasture' using LRLG 'Rock Hopper' machine.

Site four: 'Wongalee'

Property Details:

Landholder: James & Sal Morse

Property: 'Wongalee'

Location: Molong

Size of property: 1052 ha

Soil Types: Red Basalts (Non Calcic Brown Soils/ Red Chromosols)

Sub-catchment: Bell River

Landcare Group: Cundumbul

Summary of farm business:

'Wongalee' is a commercial Shorthorn beef cattle operation producing yearling steers for the supermarket trade and as feeder cattle for the feedlot industry. 'Wongalee' also has a small 'drought/ opportunity lot' feeding facility to finish stock and to spell pastures.

In addition, 320 ha are cropped annually including wheat, canola and grazing wheat/ oats.

Perennial pastures consist of Phalaris, Cocksfoot, Fescue grasses with Subterranean Clovers and Lucerne to provide a legume balance.

Projects Summary:

Cundumbul Landcare Group was one of the first 3 groups in the Central West started by Tom Gavel in 1990 (now Chair of the Central West CMA). The original Landcare emphasis was on tree planting, but the group has since diversified into broader landscape management issues. Cundumbul Landcare Group received funding under the Central West CMA Round 5 'SMART' project (Sustainable Management and Rehabilitation Targets), providing landholders with incentives to undertake property planning, conservation farming machinery conversion, perennial pasture establishment, fencing and water improvements and riparian protection works.

James and Sal Morse were also part of the highly successful Central West CMA Round 5 - Mid Macquarie Landcare STORM project comprising 20 farmers (Supplying the Optimum Natural Resource Management). This project provided incentives to implement 'wire and water' improvements and attend training programs to improve their grazing management outcomes.

Points of interest are:

- Extensive water reticulation scheme installed throughout the property. Water is pumped from a bore to 90,000 litre concrete and zincalume tanks and gravity fed to concrete stock troughs. System is designed to supply up to 400 cows and calves.
- Rotational grazing of livestock, with paddocks sub-divided to provide improved grazing management and groundcover. Use of low-cost New Zealand 'Rappa' single line electric fencing system to split paddocks.
- 'Drought/ Opportunity lot' feeding facility employed to finish livestock and 'rest' pasture paddocks as required.
- Perennial pastures direct drilled using 'rock hopper' machine.
- Pasture cropping utilised to renovate pastures and re-establish groundcover.

**Thank you to all for their assistance in the
'Partners towards a healthy Catchment' conference.**