QUARTERLY EDITION
OCTOBER 2012

www.reefcatchments.com.au

NATURAL STATE

MACKAY WHITSUNDAY ISAAC

REEF CATCHMENTS

A quarterly update for Reef Catchments members, partners, funders and supporters

CELEBRATING COASTAL CARERS

From hosting volunteer events to coordinating on-ground works, the Mackay Coasts and Communities program continued to improve management of the regional coastal zone in the past quarter.

More than 18 first-time and 22 returning volunteers attended the winter program of Coastal Community Activities at Ball Bay, Haliday Bay, Shoal Point, Bucasia, Blacks Beach, and Eimeo. Hundreds of native seedlings were weeded, fertilised and watered by the volunteers. By fostering native plants and removing invasive species, volunteers help to stabilise sand dunes and protect critically endangered coastal vegetation.

As part of the winter program, coast carers were invited to attend a free bus tour hosted by Pioneer Catchment and Landcare Group showcasing Mackay's best coastal rehabilitation sites. 35 participants visited three coastal sites including Blacks Beach, Shoal Point and Sandfly Creek Environmental Reserve to view the on-ground activities that are underway to maintain and restore coastal ecosystems. The tour highlighted the importance of planning and maintenance of rehabilitation sites, and the critical role that community volunteers and partnerships play in the success of coastal management initiatives.

Coast carers visit Blacks Beach as part of the coastal bus tour.

David and William Lowther volunteer at Blacks Beach Coastal Community Activities.

As always, the volunteer program compliments the suite of high-priority on-ground coastal projects implemented across the region in partnership with Mackay Regional Council. During the winter months, strategic weed control occurred in the Shoal Point to Bucasia dunes, coastal wetlands on Council land at Keeleys Road, and the Slade Point Reserve for Natural Resource Management. These projects are undertaken by specialist weed contractors as a regeneration technique to improve the condition of local vegetation communities.

Moving from winter to spring, we see the arrival of nesting marine turtles and migratory shorebirds to the Mackay Whitsunday coast. The spring program of Coastal Community Activities is now underway, providing many meaningful opportunities for coastal communities to engage in on-ground initiatives at their beaches. The full calendar of events is available at www.reefcatchments.com.au.

The Mackay Coasts and Communities program is a joint initiative of Reef Catchments and Mackay Regional Council with funding through the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program and the Mackay Regional Council's Natural Environment Levy.

IN THIS EDITION:

NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICE COMPLEXES

Celebrating milestones with Rob Cocco, CEO

Welcome to the October 2012 edition of the Natural State. I encourage all our members, partners and contributors to read through this edition and learn about the many Reef Catchments initiatives underway.

I am continually amazed by the growth of Natural Resource Management (NRM) projects and programs undertaken by Reef Catchments, partners and the regional community. Over the past four years, the number of projects and programs undertaken by Reef Catchments has more than doubled.

In the past quarter, a number of key milestones were achieved by Reef Catchments. These milestones showcase the growth of Reef Catchments and our focus on continued improvements in service delivery and engagement with community and stakeholders. For example, the delivery of the first Annual Report and Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the 2011/12 year for Reef Catchments (Mackay Whitsunday Isaac) Limited and the election of three directors to Reef Catchments (Mackay Whitsunday Isaac) Limited at our September AGM.

Another milestone was the approval and commencement of a new Proserpine based Reef Catchments office centre. Funding approval from the board was finalized in September 2012. This office complex will house upwards of 10 staff to service the Whitsundays and broader NRM region. It is expected that the Proserpine centre will be up and running in late October or early November 2012. The office centre outlines the strong commitment that Reef Catchments has to the entire NRM region and to working more directly with Whitsunday residents.

Finally, Reef Catchments received Board approval to investigate toward a new Mackay office complex. Unlike previous arrangements, it is expected that the Mackay centre will be a purchased facility for Reef Catchments which also offers income opportunity via sub lease arrangements.

The move to owning an office facility is a significant step for Reef Catchments which will allow for enhanced stability in future years given the high rental costs associated with Mackay based commercial structures. While still early on in planning processes, it is proposed that the Mackay based complex would offer co-housing opportunities for many of the community-based NRM aligned local groups. Stay tuned for further details over the coming months.

Clockwise from top: new Board Members Joy Deguara, Lynda Pollock and Craig Fraser.

COLLABORATING TO PROTECT THE RARE PROSERPINE ROCK-WALLABY

Update from Derek Ball, Operations Manager-Biodiversity

The sailing catamaran 'Wild Cat' departed Mackay Marina before dawn on 17 July. Crewed by Wild Mob and Reef Catchments staff, the catamaran was on a passage through rough seas and overcast conditions to Gloucester Island. After picking up a team of volunteers from Griffith University at Airlie Beach, the 'Wild Cat' reached Gloucester Island late afternoon in time for us to establish our base camp for the next 9 days.

That evening a team briefing was conducted by staff of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Our task: a comprehensive survey of the endangered Proserpine rock-wallaby with the goal of improving our understanding of the biology and ecology of the rare unique species. In much improved weather, calm seas, and blue skies, morning routines were quickly established with captured wallabies being safely and carefully examined. Wallaby health was ascertained under expert veterinarian supervision before they were released back into their natural habitat. In the afternoons, volunteers and staff made major efforts in removing weeds toxic to the wallabies, such as pink periwinkle, and habitat altering weeds, such as rubber vine.

60 Proserpine rock-wallabies were examined. The data collected will provide invaluable information that will guide conservation of the species. Weeds within four areas of habitat, critical for wallaby survival, were removed as part of ongoing management strategies by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and hundreds of kilograms of marine debris removed from the island.

As our only way to access remote wallaby habitat areas was by small boats, opportunity arose to remove marine debris from turtle-nesting beaches and in areas where seabirds might suffer entanglement from rope, nets and other plastics. Libby and Dave Edge of EcoBarge Clean Seas transported the marine rubbish to the mainland after first collecting data describing the type and amounts of debris as part of a nationwide research project designed to find ways of reducing this threat to the marine environment.

Working together, Reef Catchments, Wild Mob, Queensland Parks and Wildlife, and Eco Barge Clean Seas helped to protect and preserve the wallabies.

During the survey, it seemed that the natural environment rewarded the team for its efforts. Humpback whales made regular morning transits around our workboats and flotillas of manta rays provided a spectacular backdrop in the afternoons.

The collaboration continued when Reef Catchments and the Office of National Parks Minister Steve Dickson issued a joint media release about the survey of the Proserpine rock-wallabies on Gloucester Island. Featured in newspapers Courier Mail, Daily Mercury, Whitsunday Coast Guardian and Whitsunday Times as well as radio station ABC Tropical North, the survey was well-received by local and state-wide press in September.

Above right: Derek releasing a Proserpine rock-wallaby. Photo courtesy Wild Mob.

Right: Marine debris collection was coordinated by Libby Edge (pictured) of Eco Barge Clean Seas Inc. Photo courtesy Wild Mob.

Bottom right: The Gloucester Island survey crew including Queensland Parks and Wild life staff, Reef Catchments staff, Eco Barge staff and Wild Mob volunteers. Photo courtesy Wild Mob.

REHABILITATING THE O'CONNELL RIVER WITH ENGINEERED LOG JAMS

Update from Sal Gray and Melanie McSwiney, Healthy Waterways

The O'Connell River drains one of the largest catchments in the Mackay Whitsunday region flowing from high in the Clarke Connors range to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. It has an expansive catchment area of more than 83,000 hectares.

As one of 10 priority catchments under the federal government Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, the O'Connell River is an important area for the Mackay Whitsunday community. In an effort to promote river health, Reef Catchments has been coordinating the development of the O'Connell River Streambank Stabilisation Demonstration Reach that includes the construction of three engineered log jams (ELJs) designed to reduce bank instability and erosion.

Reef Catchments has been working in close partnership with the Australian Rivers Institute of Griffith University, Pioneer River Improvement Trust and a team of O'Connell River land managers on the project. The demonstration reach is located on a 300 hectare grazing property in one of the upper reaches of the river.

Construction of the ELJ structures has just been completed on the wide section of the river where the high unstable outside bank was taking the full sheer force of the river flow, causing soil erosion and sediment run-off. Over time, the structures should change the behaviour of the river, helping to re-align the channel, while also creating pools and in-stream habitat.

Constructing the ELJs has not been light work. The three structures required around 90 logs each up to 8 metres in length, most with intact root balls. The root balls are critical in stabilising and anchoring the structures into the river bed and bank.

The O'Connell River Streambank Stabilisation Demonstration Reach is funded through Australian Government Caring for our Country and Queensland Government with assistance from the Rio Tinto Hail Creek Mine Community Development Fund.

Dr Andrews Brooks of Griffith University, Sal Gray of Reef Catchments and Fiona Kruger of Rio Tinto discuss the log jams.

Cameras were installed on the site to film the progress of the log jam installation over several weeks.

One of three engineered log jams on the O'Connell River.

PARTNERING FOR CLEANER MACKAY STORMWATER

Update from Sal Gray, Healthy Waterways

Mackay Regional Council's Natural Environment Levy is working for cleaner urban waterways. In September 2012, Reef Catchments, Mackay Regional Council, and Eco Barge Clean Seas met on site at Ooralea, a suburb just south of Mackay, to walk through the design of a new stormwater management and monitoring program.

The Mackay stormwater maintenance and monitoring program is funded by the Mackay Regional Council Natural Environment Levy (NEL) and will be delivered in partnership with Reef Catchments and Eco Barge Clean Seas Services.

Earlier this year, the Natural Environment Advisory Committee (NEAC) assessed the stormwater management program as a high priority healthy waterways project for the Mackay local government area. Previously, the Ecosystem WQ Think Tank of the Healthy Waterways Alliance had prioritised a series of waterway projects to be rolled-out with the assistance of the Mackay Regional Council Natural Environment Levy. This is the first of the waterways project funded by the Levy to be underway in our area.

Using solid pollutant filter nets, rubbish will be captured from stormwater outlets adjacent to Cuttersfield Estate subdivision and the new shopping precinct at Ooralea. Water from the stormwater outlets at this location eventually flows into Bakers Creek, south of the city, and then into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Thankfully, there's a solution to reducing pollutants entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon through stormwater. End of line solid pollutant filter nets are proven as effective pollutant and litter retention devices. The systems are designed to be installed at strategic 'hot spots' with the devices capturing a range of gross pollutants from stormwater flows.

Site inspection for stormwater project design, Bruce Highway at Ooralea with MRC, Ecobarge Clean Seas and Reef Catchments.

Storm water outlet at Cuttersfield Estate, Ooralea.

The filter devices consist of a stainless steel sleeve extension that is inserted and fixed into existing, or new, pipe outlets. The extension is fitted with a net for capturing and retaining gross pollutants. When the filtration net becomes full it disengages from the extension cylinder sleeve. A pull cord then tightens around the net throat and prevents the remobilisation of captured pollutants. When the rain event has ended the net is emptied and resecured.

Eco Barge Clean Seas will work with Reef Catchments and Mackay Regional Council to maintain and empty the nets after rain events.

The captured debris will then be sorted by type and quantity and the information stored in a database for later analysis. Typically these units collect and retain 91% of gross pollutants larger than 19mm in diameter at a range of flows. It is an exciting project for Reef Catchments and may be the beginning of a new program to involve the community in keeping our waterways healthy.

By collecting size, type and quantity information on the debris collected, we can start to glean a picture of the common sources of pollutants that are finding their way into our rivers, streams and the Great Barrier Reef lagoon from urban areas.

WORKING STRATEGICALLY TO MANAGE MACKAY'S PESTS

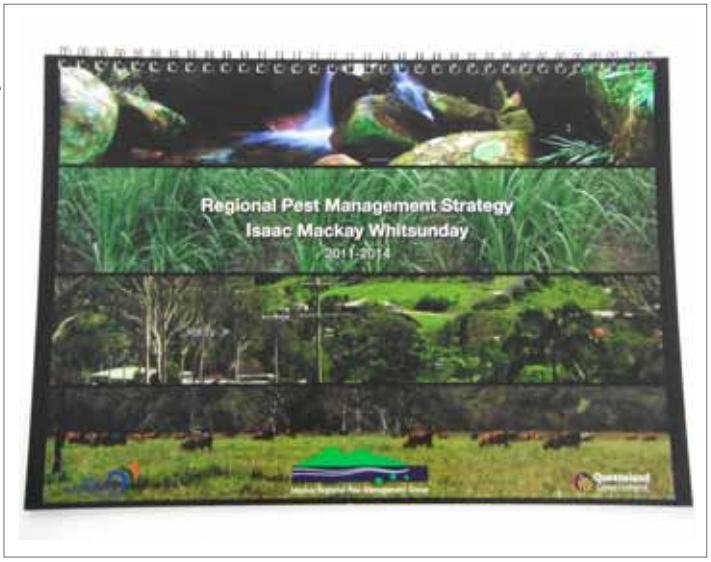
Update from Michelle Field, Land and Water Coordinator-Pest management

Over 2700 exotic plants and 73 exotic animals have been introduced into Australia, severely impacting agriculture systems, urban areas and the natural environment. To combat the invasion and prevent new pest incursions in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Region, Reef Catchments works closely with the Mackay Regional Pest Management Group (MRPMG).

Together, we implement strategic pest management projects across the region. Established in 2002, the MRPMG consists of organisations whose core business involves the provision of pest management information and expertise.

To articulate and promote best practices, the Regional Pest Management Strategy Mackay Whitsunday Isaac 2011-2014 was written for the MRPMG by Reef Catchments and published in January 2012. The aim of the strategy is to coordinate pest management across the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Region and to ensure that best practice principles are carried out in a consistent and efficient manner.

The Strategy breaks the region into 4 landuse types: Grazing; Intensive Agriculture; Urban, Transport Corridors; and Disturbed Verges.



Within these landuses, pests—either plant or animal—were selected out of a regional pest list compiled by technical working groups. The selected pests were evaluated by a landuse-prioritisation tool to determine their level of impact on the landuse. For example, the top pests for the Grazing landuse were Giant Rats Tail Grass, Mimosa pigra, Lantana, Parkinsonia and Sicklepods.

Based on the Strategy and the organisational aim, the MRPMG will be exchanging a series of letters with current and future organisations to:

- Confirm continual participation of a representative in pest management meetings and relevant activities.
- Identify the key pest management actions undertaken that align with the Strategy.
- Confirm stakeholder pest management actions and commitments each year.
- Seek stakeholder reports on the progress of the actions each year.
- MRPMG will compile an annual report that showcases combined efforts towards strategic pest management.

Through these communications, MRPMG co-ordinates the flow of information between organisations involved in pest management, enables organisational representatives to discuss pest management issues, identifies and promotes the achievements of organisations through an annual MRPMG reporting process, and provides evidence of a strategic pest management approach to support future funding applications.

Mackay Regional Pest Management Group

For more information or to download the Strategy, head to our website: www.reefcatchments.com.au/pests.

Giant Rats Tail Grass.

Mimosa pigra. Photo credit: DEEDI.

Lantana.

BUSTING WEEDS AND SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS IN SARINA

Update from Saskia von Fahland, SLCMA Coordinator

Over the last few months, Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association (SLCMA) was busy working on a variety of projects including coordinating community coastal activities at the Sarina Beaches, working with landholders in the Middle Creek Dam catchment to undertake on-ground activities to improve water quality, undertaking property visits, delivering the Land for Wildlife Program on behalf of Mackay Regional Council, and facilitating local events.

Weedbuster Week was popular with landholders, who brought their 'bag of weeds' along to our Weedbuster display. Having their plant identified, landholders left satisfied with some helpful advice on how to control it as well as swapping it for a non-weedy native plant. SLCMA volunteers celebrated Landcare Week with a 'morning in the gardens'. Volunteers enjoyed a guided tour of the Sarina Community Native Gardens, some 'hands-on' weeding and seed collecting followed by a sausage sizzle.

SLCMA works with the community to help protect the natural environment within the Sarina Catchment. We do this by providing free property visits and land management advice to landholders; undertaking on-ground rehabilitation projects; and engaging youth and volunteers in educational and practical landcare activities. For more information contact SLCMA on 49561388 or visit www.sarinalandcare.org.au

SLCMA Volunteers celebrate Landcare Week.

LANDCARE PROVIDES INFORMATION TO LAND MANAGERS, VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY

Update from Christine Peterson, WCL Coordinator

Cattle grazing on wetlands: productive, biodiverse landscapes. Photo: C. Peterson.

From June to September, Whitsunday Catchment Landcare (WCL) has encouraged Whitsunday land managers and community members to seek advice on land management and participate in events such as National Tree Day, Weedbuster Day and Walk & Talks.

A number of Whitsunday residents participated in a Wetland Walk & Talk on a private property on Goorganga wetlands. This enabled participants to have a close up view of a successful grazing operation in a biodiverse wetland setting. The 'talking' part of the morning consisted of information about native vegetation, weed control, fire regimes and fauna –mostly water birds—although a Red-bellied Black Snake received a mention after the adrenaline subsided.

A Red-Bellied Black Snake seen on Goorganga Wetlands. Photo: S Cleeland.

Whitsunday Catchment Landcare (WCL) holds Walk & Talks on a regular basis. Those interested in participating should contact WCL on 4945 0267 or www.whitsundaylandcare.org.au.

Furthermore, WCL supported land holders in their property management with the tools and information. We are never idle working in NRM and Landcare, a one-stop-shop for many people for advice on land management. Our work involves phone calls, 'drop-ins', property visits and events. This allows land managers to tackle their own property management with tools and information provided.

RINGING IN YEAR FIVE OF REEF RESCUE

Update from Chris Dench, Land and Water Coordinator-Reef Rescue

The fifth and final year of Reef Rescue is off to a flying start. In 2012/13, cash incentives worth over $5.6 million are available to landholders for 'on-farm' projects.

To date, more than 800 Mackay Whitsunday land managers in the sugarcane, grazing and horticultural industries have received Reef Rescue funding to improve their farm with direct, positive benefits for the water quality leaving each farm involved.

In 2012/13, we plan to work with 347 landholders to plan, implement and complete projects by the end of May 2013 with an emphasis on properties that have not been involved with Reef Rescue.

Reef Rescue incentives are also available to cane and grazing industry groups to ensure knowledge and best practices are available to all land managers regardless of their involvement in a project. For example, a current industry project is developing guidelines for the application of mill mud on cane properties.

Knowing the nutrient content of mill mud and the difference in nutrient content between mills will give growers confidence in the rate at which the mud is being applied and growers can then calculate whether further nutrients (if any) are needed.

ESTIMATED LOAD REDUCTIONS MADE POSSIBLE BY REEF RESCUE FROM 2008-2012

- Suspended sediment load reduced: 189,380 t/yr
- Particulate Nitrogen load reduced: 399 t/yr
- Particulate Phosphorus load reduced: 222 t/yr
- Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen load reduced: 240 t/yr
- Total Pesticides load reduced: 1618 kg/yr

These estimates are based on Reef Catchments models linked to the Reef Catchments Mackay Whitsunday Water Quality Improvement Plan (2008).

John Werner is proud of his crop.

Annette, Dennis and John Werner are third and fourth generation family farmers. Their 330 hectare property includes 112 hectares of cane, an area leased for council quarry, and grazing paddocks. In 1989 they were one of the first farms to be 100% green cane harvested. Their property sits in the Cattle Creek sub-catchment.

Reef Rescue helped the Werners to make improvements on their farm including the adoption of a controlled traffic system with improved nutrient management. With Reef Rescue funding, the Werners were able to modify their existing equipment and purchase some new equipment to make adopting their ideal system possible in a short time frame.

This year through Reef Rescue funding, the Werner's will build a sub-surface mill mud applicator and aim to apply rates at 20 tonnes/ha, which will cover 2 years of phosphorous requirements.

"Without Reef Rescue, we would have still been keen to do all of this work, but it would have taken much longer," said John Werner.

MONITORING WATER QUALITY IN REGIONAL CATCHMENTS

Update from Belinda Billing and Milena Gongora, Land and Water Coordinators-Paddock to Reef

The 2012 wet season marked three years of water quality monitoring for the Paddock to Reef program in Mackay. The monitoring program has gathered water quality information on various management practices at the paddock scale and also collected multi-farm and multi-block water quality data along with sampling in the Sandy Creek Catchment.

The paddock scale water quality program uses strip trials to look at A (aspirational) and B (best practice) sugarcane farming practices with C (conventional) strip trials for comparison. Conducted at Victoria Plains and Marian, the trials monitor runoff and the collected information on productivity and economics. The trials help to determine which management practices are most practical for farmers both economically and environmentally.

In our sugarcane monitoring, some early results show that the 1.8m controlled traffic system averaged 18% less runoff compared to a traditional 1.5m system. Furthermore, results show that applying herbicides within 14 days of a runoff event has resulted in significant losses when compared to applications that benefited from having more time before a runoff event and/or being incorporated such as through irrigation.

Work has begun to update the paddock scale monitoring program. Over the last three years, we have found the Marian site is prone to prolonged flooding which makes it difficult to measure water quality results throughout the wet season. A plan has been drawn up to increase the number of strip trials at the more reliable Victoria Plains site and the monitoring equipment has been removed from the Marian site. Following the 2012 cane harvest, two new strip trials will be created to compare the banding and broadcasting of residual herbicides.

The Paddock to Reef program started filling the knowledge gap around coastal grazing systems with a rainfall simulation trial. Infiltration and runoff rates in coastal grazing land were tested through the trial run in Proserpine this April. This is the first trial to examine infiltration and nutrient runoff on Mackay Whitsunday coastal grazing land.

The trial was designed by Michael Boyd and Belinda Billing from Reef Catchments along with DNRM rainfall simulation lead, Bruce Cowie, to measure infiltration rates on alluvial flats and plains and eucalypt hills and ranges. Trials were carried out at the end of the wet season on both A/B class and C condition pastures within both land types. The trials also looked at nutrient loads in runoff. Fertiliser (DAP) was applied three weeks prior to the simulation, which replicated very heavy rain over a prolonged period of time.

Initial results showed that infiltration on alluvial flats and plains (cane soils) was rapid, with very slow to almost zero runoff. Conversely the hills and ranges ran-off almost immediately showing poor infiltration, despite high levels of ground cover. Further information will come following analysis of the samples collected. The results will be used to better inform models that represent our coastal grazing land, which has seen very little research to date.

The Paddock to Reef program has developed a comprehensive baseline for management practices in the cane and grazing industries in Mackay Whitsunday.

Reef Catchments worked with Mackay Area Productivity Services, Plane Creek Productivity Services, Proserpine Productivity Services and CANEGROWERS to survey sugarcane farmers in the region. This has been provided to QDAFF who have combined the results with Reef Rescue data sets to ascertain the hectares of cane land under A, B, C or D management for nutrient, soil, irrigation and chemical management. The collected data has been shown to local industry leaders who agree this will be a vast improvement on the previous baseline used to measure change.

The improved grazing baseline for the region was completed through a combination of QDAFF grazing surveys and information gathered through the Reef Rescue property planning process. This new data allow us to accurately measure and model the adoption of improved cane and grazing management practices in our region and across the Great Barrier Reef catchments.

Below: Ken Rhode explaining trial equipment at the Marian site.

SHOWCASING REEF CATCHMENTS PROJECTS TO CHINESE WATER RESEARCHERS

LAND AND WATER

Update from Saskia von Fahland, SLCMA Coordinator

On 21 August Reef Catchments hosted 15 delegates from the Pearl River Water Resource Commission. Visiting Queensland from Guangzhou, China, the delegates toured Mackay to learn about Reef Catchments water quality improvement programs.

Reef Catchments took the delegates to three sites, including a Paddock to Reef sugarcane monitoring site at North Eton, a Landcare site at Marian and a Mackay Coasts and Communities site at Shoal Point. Later Reef Catchments staff presented to delegates on Project Catalyst, Healthy Waterways, Pest Management and Reef Rescue.

Delegates travelled to Mackay as part of a state-wide trip to learn about coastal and estuarine water quality management. Their trip was funded by the Australia China Environment Development Partnership (ACEDP), a five-year $25 million Australia Government and AusAID initiative.

One project, 'River Health and Environmental Flows in China', aimed to establish methods for assessing and improving river health and environmental flows in Chinese rivers. Pilot studies were completed in three river basins: the Yellow River, the Gui River (in the Pearl River basin) and the Taizi River.

The Gui River study was undertaken with the Pearl River Water Resources Commission, who visited Reef Catchments. The delegates spent three weeks in SE Queensland in laboratories and lecture halls before traveling to view sites in Townsville and Mackay.

"It's been useful to get out into the field in Mackay. The delegates were keen to talk to the scientists, managers and farmers who are doing the on-ground activities," said Mr Hanington, who has hosted multiple groups of Chinese delegates since 2009. "NRM groups have always been engaging and hospitable."

"We were interested in seeing Australian rules and measures for assessing water health," said Pearl River Water Resource Commission director Mr Wu Xiaolong. "We wanted to improve our knowledge of biological monitoring and river health assessment by viewing Reef Catchments sites."

Claire, PCL coordinator, describes a revegation site.

Delegates at the Paddock to Reef trail site in Marian.

SUPPORTING THE CLEAN ENERGY FUTURES PROGRAM

LAND AND WATER

Update from Robyn Bell, Special Projects Manager

The Australian Government is supporting regional NRM groups to update existing NRM Plans through the Land Sector package of the Clean Energy Futures program. Funds will be provided over the next five years to guide planning for climate change impacts and maximise biodiversity, water and agricultural benefits.

Funding to update regional plans is divided into two separate streams; Stream 1 to help support NRM groups identify opportunities within the landscape for adaptation and mitigation activities and Stream 2 to support development of regional-level scenarios about the impacts of climate change for use in NRM land use planning.

The Stream 2 funding was announced in mid-August 2012 inviting research institutions to submit proposals to the eight clusters around Australia. Reef Catchments is part of the Wet Tropics cluster and representatives from each NRM group in the cluster have met and developed a brief for research institutions to consider in developing their proposals.

Key issues and concerns for the Wet Tropics cluster include change in distribution and abundance of invasive species and emergent risks, impact of sea level rise on coastal ecosystems and communities, and impacts on rural and primary industries and adaptation opportunities among many others. Stream 1 funding will be announced in early October.

REPORTING ON REEF CATCHMENTS BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

Update from Rod Hall, Corporate Services Manager

Total income for the 2011/12 financial year was $14,676,598 of which $12,582,638 was from Commonwealth and State governments via their respective Caring for Our Country and Q2 Coasts and Country programs. Additional commercial investment toward Natural Resource Management (NRM) income was $1,820,538, with donations and interest totalling a further $273,422.

During 2011/12 allocation of income to Reef Catchments was spread across five major programs of operations for the organisation being:

- Land, Water, Waterways and Community - $11,093,870
- Biodiversity, Coasts, Marine and Indigenous - $1,364,527
- Corporate services - $1,845,501
- Climate Futures - $330,361
- Public Fund - $42,339

During the 2011/12 financial year, contract analysis of project investment in the region determined that an additional in-kind portion from project partners and land mangers totalled $35,223,835. When combined with Reef Catchments direct on-ground investment, this takes the total investment toward NRM priority projects in the region, managed by Reef Catchments, to $49,900,433.

Expenditure by program, during 2011/12 shows a total of $1,363,546 expended in "Corporate Services" programs, while "Land, Water, Waterways and Community" Programs and "Biodiversity, Coasts, Marine and Indigenous" Programs expenditure totals were $9,019,087 and $916,360 respectively.

Further analysis of expenditure outlines an overall percentage comparison of component expenditure to total expenditure of the following;

- 20% of total expenditure is toward Reef Catchments overheads inclusive of salary and wages, infrastructure, and all internal business expenses.
- 19% of total expenditure is toward NRM partnerships and services provision by third parties, and
- 61% of total expenditure is toward on ground aligned actions.

Reef Catchments undertook a number of key governance and operational improvement actions during the 2011/12 financial year. Development and implementation of strategic policies concerning Reef Catchments position toward key actions aligned to issues such as: sustainability and climate change, water management and regional landscape health.

Reef Catchments continues to develop and refine internal operational and governance policies aligned to Finance and Audit, Human Resources, IT, Work Place Health and Safety, Corporate Risk and subcommittee governance.

There have been many activities including the implementation of a board and staff renumeration benchmarking exercise, forward planning and budgeting toward the development in 2012/13 of a revamped regional NRM plan, and increased of Reef Catchments' formal engagement with regional, state, national and global stakeholders.

IN THIS EDITION OF NATURAL STATE

40+ volunteers cared for Mackay beaches 60 Proserpine rock-wallabies surveyed 200+ logs used to create engineered log jams on the O'Connell River 91% of gross pollutants to be removed from Bakers Creek using filters 100+ weeds discussed in the pest management strategy $5.6 million available for landholders for 'on-ground' improvements 8 trials of water quality in the Mackay Whitsunday region 15 Chinese delegates toured Reef Catchments project sites 2 streams of funding for the Clean Energy Futures program Over $14 million in total Reef Catchments income for the 2011/2012 financial year

NATURAL STATE IS PRODUCED BY REEF CATCHMENTS

Reef Catchments is a not-for-profit company that delivers natural resource management solutions in partnership with the community to preserve the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region for future generations.

By facilitating on-ground change and working for long-term solutions, Reef Catchments protects the natural resources of the region. Reef Catchments aims improve community awareness of natural resource issues as well as community capacity to respond. We strive for close involvement with the community, local council, State and Federal government agencies as well as the private sector.

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NATURAL STATE

MACKAY WHITSUNDAY ISAAC

REEF CATCHMENTS

A quarterly update for Reef Catchments members, partners, funders and supporters

POSTAGE PAID AUSTRALIA

UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit reefcatchments.com.au for more details.

27 OCT
COASTAL COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AT BUCASIA AND EIMEO

13 NOV
STOCKTAKE WORKSHOP IN MACKAY

17 NOV
COASTAL COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AT BALL BAY AND BLACKS BEACH

20 NOV
STOCKTAKE WORKSHOP IN MACKAY

1 DEC
COASTAL COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AT BUCASIA AND HALIDAY BAY