The third year of Reef Rescue has now been completed and even with an extremely wet year we have had Reef Rescue still provided incentives to 283 cane, grazing and horticulture land managers in the Mackay Whitsunday region.

Over 380 individual projects were undertaken in the past year to move to A and B class management practices impacting on a total of 56,462 hectares of land. That’s 56,462 hectares of land that now has improved the water quality leaving the land and entering into our waterways and finally the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

In Year 3 in the Mackay Whitsunday region, $6,660,466 has been provided as incentives to graziers and farmers as part of the Federal Governments Caring for our Country Reef Rescue program.

These incentives have been matched by participants by at least 50% of their own contribution meaning that over $13.3 million has been spent in the region this year alone on improving the sustainability of the dominant local agricultural industries.

“The program has continued to be a great success to date” said Phil Trendell, Sustainable Agriculture manager for Reef Catchments. “Even under the difficult circumstances of the long and intense wet season, land managers have continued to get on board and participate”.

“Over the past few months we have been able to get out and see some of the on ground activities and management changes being undertaken by land managers.

In this 5th edition of the Reef Rescue Newsletter we have highlighted some of these projects.

With two years remaining and an increase in the level of total funding available, Years 4 and 5 look set to be bigger still. “We are looking to build on this success and continue to encourage new graziers and farmers to contact us to see how we can help” said Chris Dench, Reef Rescue Project Officer.

Year 4 will also be the first time that stage 3 growers and graziers will be eligible for Reef Rescue. Chris adds “While stage 1 or new participants are still our main priority, land managers that have had a second round of funding and want to implement more eligible activities are entitled to access funding based on the prioritisation of their proposal”.

This project is supported by Reef Catchments through funding from the Australian Government’s ‘Caring for our Country’ program.
Reef Rescue helped Peter to make changes to the way he plans and then applies his nutrients and chemicals across his farm. With his funding he was able to modify existing equipment and purchase some new equipment and variable rate technology to make implementing his new system possible.

**Water Quality Benefits**
- Reduced risk of nutrient losses with controlled accurate application of fertiliser into the growing zone
- Reduced risk of residual chemical losses from using knockdown chemicals where practical in the farming system.
- Targeted nutrient and chemical applications based on precision planning and variable rate technology

“Last year we had 3 different nutrient blends and these were used at 6 different rates to match specifically what we needed to apply”

Wayne Vickers

Reef Rescue helped Wayne Vickers make big changes on his farm including the adoption of GPS guidance on controlled traffic, variable rate nutrient application and the use of knockdown chemicals where practical. With the funding, Wayne was able to modify existing equipment and purchase some new equipment to make the conversion possible and combine this with low pressure overhead irrigation.

**Water Quality Benefits**
- Reduced risk of sediment losses with a Controlled Traffic minimum tillage system reducing erosion and run-off
- Reduced risk from nutrient losses with accurate site specific subsurface granular application with variable rate technology
- Reduced risk of losses from irrigating in all nutrient and chemical applications while increasing its effectiveness

“If it wasn’t for the incentives from Reef Rescue, I would never have been able to make the change to a controlled traffic farming system and would have had to weigh up the options of what I should invest in”
Andrew Pratt

Reef Rescue helped Andrew Pratt implement an improved farming system on his farms through the use of GPS guidance on controlled traffic, with zonal tillage operations and the use of knockdown chemicals where practical. With the funding, Andrew was able to modify existing equipment and purchase some new equipment to make the conversion possible.

“Reef Rescue really helped speed up what we were trying to achieve on our farms from probably over a 5 – 10 year period to perhaps a 2 - 3 year period.”

Water Quality Benefits

- Reduced risk of sediment losses with a Controlled Traffic minimum tillage system reducing erosion.
- Reduced risk from residual chemical losses with the replacement of residuals with knockdowns where practical.
- Improved soil structure and soil health helping reduce run-off and increase infiltration.

Gary Lay

Reef Rescue helped Gary to complete the implementation and conversion to a controlled traffic farming system. With the funding, Gary was able to help finish modifying his existing equipment and purchase some new ones like GPS guidance and zonal tillage equipment and incorporate new stormwater structures.

“We will utilise the lower banded mill mud rates on our fallows where the beds will be, utilise the nitrogen that has been fixed from the legumes and then only top up any other nutrients required at planting.”

Water Quality Benefits

- Reduced risk of sediment losses with a Controlled Traffic minimum tillage system reducing erosion and run-off
- Reduced risk from residual chemical losses with the replacement of residuals with knockdowns where practical
- Improved soil health and reduced nutrient inputs from utilising legume fallows.
Nutrient Trials

Independent Agricultural Resources (IAR) has been working with Mackay Sugar and AgriServe to run field trials using Mill Mud with the aim of quantifying the rates of release of nutrients and their availability to the crop.

Understanding the nutrient components of mill mud and how they are available and taken up by the crop will allow growers to include these nutrients in their fertiliser planning, allowing a reduction in fertiliser application rates while maintaining productivity.

“If mill mud can be used at low rates through precision application with sound knowledge as to what is being applied then there is a great opportunity for growers to save money on fertiliser inputs” (Rob Sluggett from IAR.)

Benefits to the grower and the environment:

- A reduction in the amount of nutrients applied reducing the cost for growers while reducing the potential loss of nutrients off the farm.

AgDat

Funding has been provided through Reef Rescue to develop a new farm management recording system. AgDat and the AgDat remote unit allows growers to easily and accurately record any work undertaken on a property to ensure the most efficient management is being carried out. Growers can record a range of data and easily compare between years.

“Information on nutrient, chemical and irrigation applications can be recorded together with administration details and any farm management changes allowing for more informed decision making and better comparisons between years.” (Kevin Moore from AgriServ)

Benefits to growers and the environment:

- Accurate information on areas of application and rates prevents any over application saving time and money. Outputs suitable for Reef Regulations reporting. Incentive and full training offered.
Grazing

Don McNichols

Reef Rescue has helped Don and Michelle McNichol manage their property more effectively by constructing 200m of riparian and 500m of land type fencing. The McNichols also undertook 3 soil tests to manage fertiliser inputs on their property.

Water Quality Benefits:

- Riparian fencing keeps stock out of waterways preventing erosion.
- Land type fencing allows for better pasture management, maintaining good ground cover throughout the year.
- Soil testing provided accurate nutrient information which helps in decision making regarding fertiliser inputs.

“Our nutrient program and land type fencing has made a noticeable difference to the thickness of our pastures and increased our mulch layer”.

Gavin Linthwaite

Reef Rescue helped Gavin and Katrina construct 1.2kms of riparian fencing and 3.2kms of land type fencing to separate his property into different land types. The linthwaite’s also received funding to purchase a blade plough to control woody weeds on their property.

Water Quality Benefits:

- Construction of riparian fencing increases bank stabilisation
- Land type fencing helps in pasture and stock management including the use of fire to control weeds and ease of mustering cattle on the property
- The construction of a blade plough controls woody weeds on the property without the use of tebuthiuron

“We would not have completed these activities as soon as we did without Reef Rescue. These are all activities that we wanted to do and Reef Rescue help us to do it”.

"Our nutrient program and land type fencing has made a noticeable difference to the thickness of our pastures and increased our mulch layer".
Meet Brandi-Lee Stanley
Reef Catchment’s new Grazing Key Contact Coordinator

Education:
Attended primary schools in the Northwest of Queensland at Winton and completed most of my secondary education at Moranbah and am now finalising through Recognition of Prior learning my Diploma of Rural Business Management/ Agriculture with plans on studying a part-time dual Bachelor degree in Agribusiness/Applied Science in 2012 at Gatton University.

Current Role:
I am employed by Reef Catchments Mackay Whitsunday Isaacs Limited as the Reef Rescue Grazing Key Contact Officer (KCO). My role as the KCO involves; promoting, encouraging and coordinating graziers to express interest in participating in the Reef Rescue water quality grants by adopting A and B class grazing management practices. Disseminating EOI information to the Reef Rescue PPC officers and other Reef Rescue team members and supporting stage 2 graziers in the development of project proposals.

What about the future:
I believe that by promoting and helping grazier’s up-take the financial assistance offered through Reef Rescue Grants, the follow on benefits allow more opportunity to access current industry advice regarding best management practice information and current property planning tools. These added benefits provide grazier’s within the region opportunities to implement practices and activities to improve their production. That is producing a more sustainable product of kilograms of beef per ha while reducing their overheads and direct costing, as well as the shared community benefits of improved water quality and sustainability of their landscapes.

Reef Catchments 2nd Reef Rescue MERI Performance Story Report

Reef Catchments is committed to the delivery of Reef Rescue in the most effective and efficient way possible. To help achieve this, Reef Catchments has developed up a Reef Rescue MERI plan. MERI stands for monitor, evaluate, review and implement and is a process of finding out how we are going delivering Reef Rescue, are we achieving what we were aiming to do and are there areas were we could improve and do it better. Some of the MERI activities completed in Year 3 include developing up 16 case studies, interviewing 70 participants and delivery partners and culminating in the second Reef Rescue MERI performance summit. From this work, the second Reef Catchments Reef Rescue MERI performance story report was prepared and is available to be downloaded from our Reef Catchments website at www.reefcatchments.com.au
Horticulture

Tibby Dixon

Reef Rescue helped Tibby Dixon implement improved inter-row management on his lychee farm. With the funding, Tibby was able to maintain excellent ground cover between his lychee rows and utilise the residue as mulch and organic matter under the trees.

“The main reason for doing this was to maintain a good ground cover on the inter row to reduce the risk of any soil erosion and the subsequent weed control under the trees will reduce the reliance on herbicides.”

Water Quality Benefits

- Reduced risk of sediment losses from maintaining a good inter-row ground cover
- Reduced risk of chemical losses by reducing herbicide applications
- Improved soil health improving infiltration and water retention

Graham Wessling

Reef Rescue helped Graham implement improved land management practices on two macadamia farms he manages in the Mackay Whitsunday region. With the funding, Graham was able to implement a range of soil, chemical and irrigation activities that benefit not only the business, but the environment as well.

“If it was a high priority activity, it may still have been done but for most it has been brought forward 4 – 5 years by getting the funding”.

Water Quality Benefits

- Reduced risk of sediment losses from improved ground cover and drainage management
- Reduced risk of chemical losses by using knockdown herbicides and reducing applications
- Improved irrigation management helping reduce the risk of any run-off
2011/12 - What’s ahead for Year 4?

Reef Catchments is looking to build on the success of the past 3 years of Reef Rescue and continue to expand the program to work with more new land managers.

Years 4 and 5 are set to be bigger still with over 7 million available in incentive’s each year for the adoption of A and B class management practices.

“This year we are looking to increase the number of land managers that we will work with” said Chris Dench, Reef Rescue Project Officer. “We are hoping to work each year with a minimum of 155 new and 70 repeat farmers, and 75 new and 25 repeat graziers”.

Any stage 3 land managers that are implementing eligible activities will also be able to participate; however, priority will be given to stage 1.

Eligible activities are based on the A and B class management practices identified in the ABCD management framework developed for each industry; cane, grazing and horticulture in the Mackay Whitsunday Region. These practices are now being validated by the Paddock to Reef (P2R) monitoring and modelling program.

Results from the P2R program will be published in the next Reef Rescue newsletter out in January 2012.

If you are interested in finding out more about Reef Rescue and how you can get involved, contact the Key Contact Officer for your relevant industry (details below).

The key Contact Officer is there to provide support throughout the application process and answer any questions you might have.

If you are interested in finding out more about Reef Catchments and any of the other programs that we are involved in visit www.reefcatchments.com.au or call 4968 4200.

Helpful Links:
- www.reefcatchments.com.au
- www.canegrowers.com.au
- www.growcom.com.au

For more information:

This newsletter is produced by Reef Catchments - the natural resource management organisation for the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region. If you would like more information on any of the articles in this newsletter, or if you would like to submit a story idea for the next issue, please contact Reef Catchments on (07) 4968 4200.

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