

REEF RESCUE

2012

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(07) 4968 4200



The Burns Family

Gully Management

Reef Rescue is assisting Rob and Robyn Burns to stabilise a major gully slip through revegetation and riparian fencing.

Rob Burns is a firm believer in learning from his neighbours to improve his land management. "We watch what our neighbours do," said Rob who manages farm operations at Orr Farm. Rob and his family act as stewards of the land. "We bought the land to control what happens to our environment. We've always had a passion for sustainability."

A major landslide occurred in 2010 on Rob's property after heavy, prolonged rainfall on a south west facing slope above Sawpit Creek. There had been one major and several minor landslips on similar steep slopes on the property over the years. A number of factors contributed to Rob's most recent landslide, including:

- The steep slope (approx. 20^o-30^o)

- Saturation of shallow soils from prolonged rainfall and seepage
- The lack of deep rooted vegetation above the slip area to take up moisture and stabilise soils

After consulting with Landcare and the Department of Primary Industries, Rob knew something had to be done. The area surrounding the slip was immediately fenced to reduce danger to stock as well as promote ground cover for stabilisation.

Land slips can lead to the loss of productive land and result in stock injuries. There are limited solutions to a slip of this magnitude that would not require large machinery and great expense.



About the farm...

Eungella graziers the Burns family bought their Eungella property in 2007 and developed what Rob Burns calls a lifestyle cattle farm. The farm is run by Rob along with his wife and son. They named the property Orr Farm, recognising Owen, his son, Robyn, and Rob himself.

The family originally purchased the Eungella property in the 1970's as a dairy. It was sold in the 1990's as they followed other business avenues in the region. In 2007 they bought back the 102ha Eungella property, as a grazing property. They currently run 110 breeders, steers and bullocks. The property is divided into a number of paddocks, with off stream water and fenced riparian areas help manage the stock and land.

Amanda Bland from Reef Catchments talked to a number of colleagues with experience in soil conservation who all recommended the most cost effective way of stabilising Rob's landslip would be revegetation with a mix of deep rooted trees, shrubs and small, clumping plants with fibrous roots above and around the site.

In 2012 with help from Reef Rescue funding, Rob is going to permanently fence the landslip area and the adjoining creek to control stock access. In addition, Rob intends to plant out the landslip area with local native plants to stabilise the soil and reduce any further slips.

Revegetation will be done in two phases. The first phase will be planting fast growing local pioneer species and small, clumping plants. The second phase is revegetation with slower growing native plants with deep roots.

Rob plans to revegetate with native species including brown kurrajong, lilly pilly and Lomandra sp. "Not only do we need trees to stabilise the slip, but also ground cover and shrubs," he said. The positive effects of

revegetation extend beyond stabilising land. Native species provide a wind break and shelter for stock and help ensure wild life habitat connectivity through developing connected corridors.

This is Rob's second time working with Reef Catchments. Two years ago, he received Reef Rescue funding to complete the stocktake workshop, undertake soil testing and property planning. He also received assistance to construct riparian fences to control stock access to creeks. Riparian fences also help to create wildlife

corridors and improve water quality. According to Rob, riparian fences help to avoid future problems and "keeps cattle out of calamities."

Activities on this property will improve Water quality by reducing sediment runoff from gully erosion and stream bed and bank erosion through:

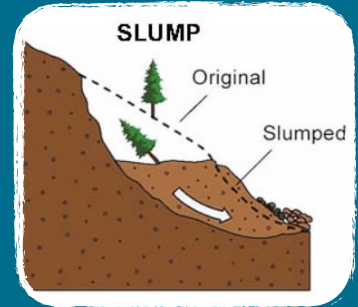
- Improved soil stability by controlling stock access to eroding gully and creek
- Improved soil stability on hillsides by revegetation with deep rooted plants
- Increased water absorption into the soil reducing saturation

"We bought the land to control what happens to our environment. We've always had a passion for sustainability."



Revegetation work on Orr Farm. Photo by Saskia Von Fahland

OUTCOMES



Improved soil stability by controlling stock access to eroding gully and creek (ref. www.ga.gov.au/hazardlandlide.html)



Improved soil stability on hillsides by revegetation with deep rooted plants



Increased water absorption into the soil reducing saturation

Reef Catchments

Reef Catchments is the regional NRM body who oversees the Reef Rescue program in the Mackay Whitsunday region for the federal government.

Contact Amanda Bland at Reef Catchments on (07) 4968 4216 or email: amandabland@reefcatchments.com.au