

2014 water quality IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Myrtle Creek

Management Area Progress Report

Summary of progress

Myrtle Creek captures runoff from the southern edge of Dryander National Park the flows through the area near the Strathdickie township. The creek connects with the lower reaches of the Proserpine River, which enters the sea at Repulse Bay. The catchment is dominated by intensive cropping, with low levels of grazing. While the upper reaches still maintain good riparian zones, there has been a high degree of riparian vegetation removal throughout the creek system. Even though large areas are with the National Park reserve, the demands on the natural system of the Myrtle Creek catchment by agricultural production are high, with significant impacts on ecosystem health.

In 2007, the ecological condition of the Myrtle Creek catchment area was rated as low relative to other catchments in the Mackay Whitsunday region. Between 2007 and 2013, there has been considerable effort to improve sugar cane management. As a result, the water quality of Myrtle Creek catchment has seen some improvement, however efforts will need to continue to meet community values for ecosystem health.



Second generation cane farmer Lou Raiteri and his family are leading innovators, embracing new farming systems for economic and environmental sustainability.

Ecosystem implementation highlights

- Barriers to fish migration have been prioritised and fish community type and abundance have been surveyed to inform system repair works

Agriculture implementation highlights

- Cane farmers have improved the management of soil, nutrients and herbicides on almost 50% of the intensive cropping land in the catchment with Reef Rescue support
- One sediment detention basin has been constructed on a cane property to improve the quality of water leaving the farm

Future priorities

Grazing and cane management practices that reduce nitrogen and phosphorus loads are the highest priority for continued improvement of event water quality. Management practices that reduce other nutrients and residual herbicides, particularly diuron, are a moderate priority.

All system repair actions that improve fish habitat and species diversity and abundance are critical to improve the poor ecological health rating for the Myrtle Creek catchment area. Riparian vegetation restoration and connectivity is also a high priority to support fish communities and stabilise stream bed and banks for improved water quality.



Lou Raiteri's shielded sprayer setup for controlled traffic farming system. The introduction of precision agriculture farming systems yield long term improvement in soil health, along with immediate benefits such as improved moisture retention and weed control.