

2014 water quality IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Constant Creek

Management Area Progress Report

Summary of progress

The Constant Creek catchment area drains into the Sand Bay nationally important wetland and Sand Bay Declared Fish Habitat and Dugong Protection Area. The estuary and receiving marine waters support mangroves, intertidal flats and seagrass beds. The catchment supports diverse land use; 30% grazing, 19% cane, 38% wetland and National Park. Over time, clearing for agricultural production in the catchment has impacted water quality as well as riparian habitat, affecting fish community abundance and diversity.

In 2007, Constant Creek estuary and freshwater stream were rated as low to moderate condition relative to other Mackay Whitsunday catchment areas, while the marine receiving waters are currently rated as being under risk. Between 2007 and 2013, there have been efforts to improve management practice initiatives in cane, grazing and horticulture. This work provides a solid foundation from which to expand management practice improvement in the grazing enterprises of the Constant Creek catchment area.



"It didn't take long to begin to see the environmental and economic outcomes of improved stock management using land type fencing"

David Wright,
Constant Creek grazier

Ecosystem implementation highlights

- Riparian management has been improved along almost 8 km of Constant Creek by graziers who have installed riparian fencing and off-stream watering points
- Construction of a rock ramp fishway has removed a critical barrier to fish migration

Agriculture implementation highlights

- More than 12 farmers have improved the management of soil, nutrients and herbicides on almost 10% of the intensive cropping land in the catchment with Reef Rescue support
- Eighteen graziers have improved pasture management on more than 314 ha with Reef Rescue support

Future priorities

Grazing and cane management practices that reduce nitrogen and phosphorus loads are the highest priority for continued improvement of water quality. As marine risk exposure from pesticide and nutrient loads has been rated as high in the near shore environments, management practices that reduce other nutrients and residual herbicides are also a priority.

All system repair actions that improve fish habitat and species diversity and abundance are critical to improve the ecological health rating for Constant Creek. Riparian vegetation restoration and connectivity is also a high priority to support fish communities and stabilise stream bed and banks for improved water quality. Prioritisation and investment in mangrove and saltmarsh rehabilitation are also crucial to halt degradation and initiate recovery of these coastal systems and reduce marine risk exposure.



The pre-cast concrete cone fishway installed on Seaforth Creek has helped restore critical fish passage and flow in the Constant Creek catchment management area