

2014 water quality IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Carmila Creek

Management Area Progress Report

Summary of progress

The Carmila Creek catchment drains from a low elevation in the foothills of the Clarke Range joining the High Ecological Value waters of Great Barrier Reef lagoon to the east. The creek mouth is anchored by shelly beachrock that also helps protect the offshore Flat Islands and extensive tidal flats. Carmila Creek catchment area supports an extensive grazing industry that accounts for 75% of the local landuse. The floodplains adjoining the coastal wetlands and the creek margins are dominated by cane production occupying 19% of the catchment.

In 2007, the ecological health of Carmila Creek was rated as moderate relative to other Mackay Whitsunday catchment areas. The estuary was below average condition for the region resulting in a high marine risk exposure rating for the near shore waters. Between 2007 and 2013, there has been significant efforts to improve agricultural management for improved freshwater, however there has not been the same investment toward ecosystem health recovery. With committed resourcing and industry support, future efforts should include management activities that will contribute to the catchment condition meeting community ecosystem health targets.



West Hill National Park wetlands are located between agricultural production areas of Carmila Creek catchment and the Declared Fish Habitat Area off Flat Island.

Photo credit: Qld Government

Ecosystem implementation highlights

- Riparian management improved along 10 km of Carmila Creek by graziers who have installed riparian fencing and off-stream watering points with Reef Rescue support
- Feral pig control was undertaken across 10,000 ha of the catchment area

Agriculture implementation highlights

- Cane farmers have improved the management of soil, nutrients and herbicides on more than 15% of the intensive cropping land in the catchment with Reef Rescue support
- Five graziers have improved pasture management on more than 160 ha with Reef Rescue support

Future priorities

Grazing management practices that reduce dissolved inorganic nitrogen loads are the highest priority for improving event water quality in the Carmila Creek catchment area. Management practices that reduce other nutrients and residual herbicides are a moderate priority.

Improving the condition of the estuary is a high priority for this catchment. A significant increase in investment towards active management and restoration of instream habitat and riparian vegetation is required to enable fish communities to gain the maximum benefits from the improvement in freshwater quality.



Carmila Creek catchment landholders played a key role in the ground based feral pig control program deploying and monitoring traps across private landholdings. High levels of damage to cane cropping lands by feral pigs have been recorded across the catchment.