



# SPEAKERS

SUSTAINABLE  
GRAZING FORUM |  
MACKAY 2015

**MEGAN STAR** | Manager Strategic Projects (Economic Services)  
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

## Economic implications of adopting improved grazing management practices

Megan is an agricultural economist who is Manager of Strategic Projects for Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. She recently complete her PhD on the trade-offs facing grazing business in achieving sustainable outcomes.

Her research interests exits with both extensive rangelands grazing and sugarcane, and leads projects predominately exploring the productivity and environmental trade-offs in achieving improved sustainable agricultural industries. Recent research has focused on working in multidisciplinary teams to understand the viability and implications of innovations to achieve changed management practices for both sugarcane and grazing production systems.



**MICHELLE SMITH** | Stock Inspector Mackay Whitsunday | Biosecurity Queensland  
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

## On-farm biosecurity planning & Biosecurity Act update

Michelle Smith is a wildlife ecologist with a scientific research background in feral animal management and control (predominantly rodents, pigs and dogs). She commenced working with Biosecurity Queensland (Department of Agriculture and Fisheries) in 2010 as the Stock Inspector for the Mackay and Whitsunday region, dealing with health and production, livestock movements, animal welfare and the agricultural regulatory environment.

In 2014 Michelle was appointed as the Principal Biosecurity Officer for the Central Queensland region of the Invasive Plants and Animals program of Biosecurity Queensland. Pest animals and weeds have adverse economic, environmental and social impacts, particularly in agricultural systems, and Michelle's current role enables her to work closely with local governments, community groups, landholders and other stakeholders to minimise these impacts by implementing comprehensive biosecurity measures.





## GEOFF NIETHE

(B.V.Sc.) Hons. (MVS)  
Research Coordinator, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA)

### Foundations of a breeder herd – junior development

Since graduating in 1974, Geoff worked for 12 years for the NT government in the development and successful implementation of Brucellosis and TB eradication programs. He obtained his Masters in Productive Herd Health & Management at the University of Melbourne and was appointed Principal Animal Production Officer with the Department in Darwin. In 1988 he was appointed Director of the University of Queensland's Pastoral Veterinary Centre at Goondiwindi where he lectured in Beef Cattle Medicine and Production to veterinary students and supervised postgraduate training in pastoral herd management. He has consulted both interstate and overseas and spent 2 years in Turkey establishing a successful lot feeding operation for McDonalds. He currently works for MLA as animal production coordinator for the northern Beef Program. Geoff was president of the Australian Association of Cattle Veterinarians (1994/95) and national president of the Australian Veterinary Association (1998/99).



## LAUREN HEWITT

General Manager of Policy  
AgForce Queensland

### Update to Vegetation policy in Queensland

Raised on a banana farm into a family of woodchoppers, Lauren appreciated at an early age the level of misunderstanding that could develop from a failure to engage with the environmental sector. This experience sparked a passion to specialise in environmental law and science at university and a desire to ensure that environmental regulation be based on both reason and science. Lauren currently works as General Manager of Policy at AgForce Queensland where she coordinates a team of policy specialists who provide important links between individual primary producers and government and industry body regulators. In this role Lauren has represented AgForce Queensland's 5,000 strong membership at state and national forums and conferences, including a range of State Ministerial forums and a National Farmers Federation Policy Committee.

The majority of broadacre agriculture in Australia occurs on leasehold land which is owned by State and Territory governments and is therefore only leased by producers. Lauren has spent several years working with producers to bring about substantive reform of this arrangement – to reduce the risk of producers losing their land – either through increasing rentals or through lease termination. This policy research has involved working with producers and other professionals such as lawyers, property valuers and academics. The latter culminated in the publication of a paper into leasehold profitability in Queensland which highlighted the negative consequences of a failure to reform leasehold land policy.



# SPEAKERS | SUSTAINABLE GRAZING FORUM | MACKAY 2015



## JIM FLETCHER |

Beef Extension Officer | Mackay  
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

### Managing pasture nutrition by growth phase

Jim has worked in the Mackay region for 7 years. His area of work incorporates Grazing Land Management, Animal Nutrition and Breeder Management. Jim places an emphasis on practical, simplistic management of Beef Cattle. He is also the project leader on an MLA funded project looking at biological control options for Giant Rat's Tail grass.



## ROSS DODT |

Senior Industry Development Officer  
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

### Challenges for the local grazing industry

Ross Dodt is an Industry Development Officer with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Specific projects during the past two years include documentation of Mackay's regional peri urban beef sector, coordination of the placement of drought impacted cattle on Queensland's National Parks and a desk top study of Queensland's beef processing sector.

Previously Ross was a beef extension officer based in Mackay since 1982. In this role he was an accredited presenter of the MLA Nutrition, Grazing Land Management and Marketing workshops. For a seven year period Ross managed a live export project involving the placement of weaner age cattle from north west properties on the Departments Julia Creek Toorak Research station and then monitoring cattle live weight change on pasture, during transport and shipping, in Philippine feedlots and carcass market suitability. The project included coordination of the marketing of cattle for the twenty four cooperating cattle owners.

Ross studied at Queensland's Agricultural College Gatton and New Zealand's Lincoln Agricultural College. Apart from a short period in the Thoroughbred industry experience was gained on Research stations at Ayr (Swan's Lagoon), Theodore and Julia Creek. Extension experience has included Toowoomba, Charleville, Mount Isa and Mackay.





## DR PAM PITTAWAY

University of Southern Queensland  
National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture

### Soil Health

Pam's passion for soil health started at La Trobe University (Victoria), with her Doctor of Philosophy topic on the role of the soil environment in Eucalypt dieback associated with the fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. Since then she has lectured in plant pathology and integrated pest management (Roseworthy Campus of Adelaide University), microbiology (Gatton Campus of the University of Queensland), and agricultural science (Toowoomba campus, University of Southern Queensland). She is currently an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow with the National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba. Her research includes the feasibility of improving the resistance of wheat to root rots, free-living nitrogen fixation in ponded pastures, composting as an alternative waste management strategy for agricultural industries, the leaching potential of liquid fertiliser formulations for plant cane, and developing a novel soil health testing method.

In 2004, Pam was invited to join the MLA Edge Network Soil Health team as a technical advisor, and was an invited speaker at International Conferences in Japan (Greenhouse Gases and Animal Agriculture, 2001) and Malaysia (National Seminar on Integrated Farming Systems, 2002). She has consulted at the national and international level on the development of objectively defined, composted soil conditioners, and has given presentations on soil health to Grain Grower Updates, Conservation Farmers, Landcare Groups and sugar cane growers. Collaboration with primary producers has been essential to her endeavours, providing the practical, first-hand knowledge and experience that under-pins applied research. She has worked with foresters, grain growers, graziers, country meat processors, sugar milling staff, and most recently, cane growers.



## PAUL TIPPETT

Territory Manager  
Heritage Seeds

### New pasture varieties

After completing his education, Paul managed several grazing properties on the Central highlands of New South Wales. From there he moved to Mackay and was employed in the fertiliser industry as a Territory Manager, before moving into retail as Manager of Primac Merchandise in Mackay. When Primac was sold, Paul purchased a dairy at Eungella which he operated for several years. In 2005, Paul started work with Heritage seeds as Territory Manager for North Australia. With many years spent immersed in agriculture, Paul has accumulated a wealth of experience across diverse facets of the supply chain, including production, property management, retail and marketing.





## AMANDA BLAND |

Grazing  
Reef Catchments Limited

### Reef Programme grazing success

Amanda Bland has completed a degree in landscape management with a sub major in systems agriculture and has a wide range of experience in natural resource management programs.

As a Reef Programme Grazing planning officer, Amanda works with eligible landholders to plan, prioritise and develop water quality grant project proposals in the Mackay Whitsunday catchments.



## MISKO IVEZICH | Alluvium Consulting

### Design & Planning for erosion remediation

Misko is an environmental engineer who works for Alluvium Consulting providing advice on river processes and erosion control works. Following widespread flooding in Queensland in recent years Misko has led efforts to understand and manage river erosion for water authorities, local councils and natural resource management groups. Misko has a keen interest in advancing river restoration science having authored or co-authored multiple conference papers in recent years. He also regularly delivers training courses in fluvial geomorphology and river restoration science to government staff and natural resource management groups.



## KIM KLEIDON |

### Event MC

Well recognised and much-loved around the region, Kim Kleidon is Breakfast Presenter for ABC Tropical North in Mackay. As a guru in all things communication-related, Kim also facilitates and runs her own workshops and sessions. Kim's nose for story and vocal talents are in much demand, but in spite of a busy schedule, she manages to regularly find time to support a wide range of community events and initiatives.



“ We would definitely get involved with the Reef Programme again. The improvements we have seen are great. The cattle are now utilising the areas they hadn't grazed before. Overall the future productivity of the property is looking better.”

- Ben and Jodie Ferdinand



## REEF PROGRAMME CASE STUDY

Ben and Jodie Ferdinand, Cedar Bend Kelsey Creek.



Ben and Jodie purchased the 690 hectare Cedar Bend property in 2011. The property is located west of Proserpine in the Kelsey Creek Catchment.

The property is primarily used for beef production and currently carries 120 cows and calves, with a goal to run up to 250 breeders.

The main management issues when the property was purchased included: limited internal fencing constraining the ability to control grazing, major erosion of gullies and tracks, and poorly managed regrowth.

“We initially contacted Landcare to buy plants to reduce erosion in gullies. They told us about the Reef Rescue program (now the Australian Government Reef Programme),” Ben said.

“We then had a visit from a Reef Rescue grazing officer who brought out aerial maps of the property. With the maps and advice we were able to develop a management plan to control stock in eroding areas and manage grazing.”

Through Reef Rescue funding distributed in the Mackay and Whitsundays by Reef Catchments,



Fencing erected as part of the Reef Rescue programme to assist landholders.

Property bank erosion prior to on-ground gully management works.





The installation of 9km of land type and riparian fencing, helped to improve grazing management, ground cover and control a number of eroding gullies.



Ben and Jodie were able to install 9km of land type and riparian fencing, and established off-stream watering points to improve grazing management, ground cover and control a number of eroding gullies.

They also took the opportunity to have a Reef Rescue funded soil conservation officer inspect several major erosion sites and provide detailed plans on how to manage the erosion. Jodie additionally participated in a Reef Rescue trial to train landholders in the Phoenix property mapping program.

"Reef Rescue has helped our overall farm management through internal fencing and water points which have allowed us to rotate cattle and reduce grazing pressure. It also makes it easier to muster," Jodie said.

When Ben and Jodie purchased Cedar Bend most of the land had been scrub pulled, leaving large rows of debris and regrowth. Now they have a number

of paddocks where they plan to remove timber rows and control regrowth. Each paddock will be then sown and locked up for 12 months. This will improve overall management and production of the property.

"Through Reef Rescue we have turned one large open paddock into five smaller paddocks with off-stream water. This will help our long term management plans," Ben said.

"We would definitely get involved with the Reef Programme again. The improvements we have seen are great. The cattle are now utilising the areas they hadn't grazed before. Overall the future productivity of the property is looking better."

**\*\*Graziers please note:** Reef Catchments is currently taking Expressions of Interest from landholders in the next round of funding for the Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue), available July 2014.



For more information contact Reef Catchments

MACKAY WHITSUNDAY ISAAC

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“ Thanks to the Reef Catchments Reef Rescue program, in the first financial year of our involvement, we were able to complete 2.8km of riparian fencing, install three off-stream watering points, complete a Stocktake pasture course, implement pasture monitoring and improve pasture management.”

- Kel and Amanda Tennent



## REEF PROGRAMME CASE STUDY

Kel and Amanda Tennent, Cloudbreak, CREDITON



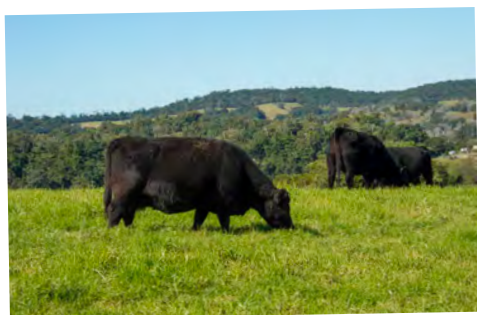
Kel and Amanda Tennent purchased Cloudbreak in 2010. The 86 hectare property lies on the edge of Eungella National Park and CREDITON State Forest, near CREDITON. CREDITON Creek runs the length of the property's southern boundary. The land type is wet highland forest, with steep gullies and highly erodible soils with a tendency for landslip. The property was established as a dairy farm in the 1930's and prior to that was cleared for timber.

When Kel and Amanda purchased the property in 2010 it was dominated by lantana (estimated 80%) and a variety of other weed species. With the assistance of family and friends, the pair began the

arduous task of clearing lantana and developing A-class pastures of Kikuyu, Rhodes grass and a variety of legumes.

“We want to operate Cloudbreak as a successful cattle breeding and fattening enterprise, and to do this by being environmentally sustainable and utilising best practice methods in line with our business plan,” Kel said.

In 2011-2012, Kel & Amanda applied for funding through Reef Catchments' Reef Rescue water quality grants. This allowed them to attend a DAFF-run Stocktake Course, which gave them the



Pasture monitoring and management.

Off-stream watering point.







Through internal fencing of gullies and the installation of strategic water points, the Tennents have slowly developed an effective rotational grazing program for long term improvement.



foundation knowledge needed to start improving property management. They were also funded to install 2.8km of riparian fencing to control stock access to a number of steep sloping gullies prone to erosion.

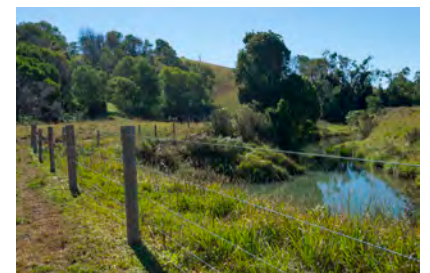
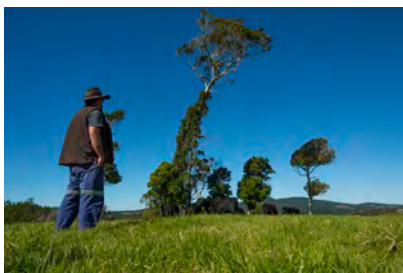
“Thanks to the Reef Catchments Reef Rescue program, in the first financial year of our involvement, we were able to complete 2.8km of riparian fencing, install three off-stream watering points, complete a Stocktake pasture course, implement pasture monitoring and improve pasture management,” Kel said.

In the following 2012-2013 funding round, Kel and Amanda received further funding for an additional 3km of riparian fencing along Crediton Creek to control stock access and reduce erosion along the banks. They also installed a further four off-stream water points and undertook 48ha of pasture

improvement and rehabilitation. Activities included undesirable species control and A-class pasture preparation, including sowing a variety of pasture species.

By internal fencing of gullies and the installation of strategic water points, the Tennents have slowly developed an effective rotational grazing program for long term improvement. This has allowed them to control stock grazing in different areas of the property, improve ground cover and enabled them to regularly spell paddocks for up to a number of weeks.

**\*\*Graziers please note:** Reef Catchments is currently taking Expressions of Interest from landholders in the next round of funding for the Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue), available July 2014.



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Geoff Bosel

## RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

**The Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) helped Geoff Bosel to construct 7.8km of riparian fencing and install four watering points on his grazing property.**

With the help of Reef Rescue funding, Mt Challenger grazier Geoff Bosel was able to carry out changes that have made a big difference in the way he is able to manage his property, particularly in keeping his cattle out of the creeks.

Geoff constructed 7.8 km of riparian fencing and installed four watering points throughout the property.

“(The funding) has made it easier to handle the country. Mustering used to be very ad hoc and the shortage of people to help work the land has always been a problem,” he says. Now, Geoff is able to hold planned musters and utilise the resources that he does have.

The work done through Reef Rescue means that it will be easier for Geoff to continue to develop the property himself. “Where we have built the fences along the riparian zone, they will not get washed away, which is a

big plus. This will stop all of the cattle wandering off after floods. (The activities) have improved the creek by reducing cattle tracks,” he says.

The newly constructed riparian fencing and watering points will help to improve water quality by creating bank stabilisation, reducing sediment input into the waterways, improving native riparian vegetation, increasing ground cover and preventing cattle from disturbing sediments on the bank.

Geoff initially became involved in Reef Rescue because he was looking for some assistance in the Queensland Country Life newspaper.

“We saw the advertisements for Reef Rescue, and Reef Catchments was the only (organisation) helping out graziers,” Geoff says. He had already established a few kilometres of riparian fencing on the property and without the Reef



### About the farm...

Geoff Bosel has owned his Mt Challenger property since 1997. The 7,540 hectare property is located at the headwaters of Eden Lassie Creek. Previously, the property has consistently run 800-900 breeders/heifers and their progeny to two years. Mt Challenger now runs 1,000 breeders and Geoff sells his weaners at 6-9 months at the Sarina and Rockhampton cattle sales. His vision was to run cattle on agistment and upgrade the breeding herd to become a profitable cattle property.

**For more information on being involved in the Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) contact Reef Catchments on: (07) 4968 4200.**

*This project is delivered in Mackay Whitsunday Isaac by Reef Catchments through funding from the Australian Government Reef Programme.*



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Rescue funding, would have continued slowly, but progressively.

“We couldn’t afford to continue to do a large amount of riparian fencing because of the financial investment. It doesn’t matter what your best intentions are - if you have no income, you can’t act upon any of those plans. Reef Rescue assisted in constructing this fencing at a faster rate.”

Geoff was impressed with the support he received throughout the project and from Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation precision planning consultant Jim Fletcher.

***“It doesn’t matter what your best intentions are. If you have no income, you can’t act upon any of those plans.”***

“Getting involved in the planning workshop was great. It was good to hear what other people were doing, and to hear what they think you should be doing,” he says.

“There were no problems with Jim. He is a good man for the bush and he went through the processes clearly and made the application process easy.”

Geoff’s vision for the future of his property includes eliminating a lot more of the weeds and to establish smaller paddocks to enable cell grazing.

Geoff has previously undertaken large-scale weed control for snake weed on his property, and now, he is trying to manage weed impact on the pasture and increase the stocking rate.



## OUTCOMES



Bank stabilisation



Reduced sediment disturbance and cattle tracks near waterways



Improved riparian native vegetation



Improved ground cover

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## River Run Grazing

### RIPARIAN & PASTURE MANAGEMENT

**The Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) helped Stephen and Leanne Fogarty and Darren and Melanie Hamblin make big changes on their grazing property. They were able to attend a pasture stocktake workshop, construct 4.5 km of riparian fencing and a number of watering points throughout the property, conduct soil tests and take control of Lantana weed in the riparian zone.**

Since taking over River Run in 2008, Stephen and Leanne Fogarty and Darren and Melanie Hamblin have developed the infrastructure of fences and lane-ways and planted improved pastures such as Callide Rhodes and Creeping Blue, Signal and Pangola grasses on the property. Seca Stylo, Lablab, Cowpea and Butterfly Pea legumes have also been planted into the pastures.

Stephen, the property manager, has intensively managed the pastures with Urea, DAP, foliar and mill mud sprays being applied along with trial plantings of fodder crops. Spreading the mobs out during the wet season meant better pasture utilisation and less Buffalo Fly - which ultimately has resulted in content cattle. Stephen does supplemental feeding to add protein in dry conditions and to maintain weight-gain during the wet season.

Stephen says the hardest part about having cattle on the coast, is managing the wet season with them, but with Reef Rescue funding, further improvements on the property were able to be made to address the issue.

He participated in a stocktake workshop, which gave him the opportunity to brush-up his skills and provide direction in estimating pasture yields and developing forage budgets. Stephen has since begun the process of taking photos of pastures and adjusting stocking rates.

The Fogartys and Hamblins also used the funding to successfully construct 4.5 km of riparian fencing on River Run.

“It worked out really well. Getting the river fenced off was a really big thing. We are now able to manage the movement of cattle more effectively and maintain higher ground cover,” Stephen says.

“We would not have this scale of fencing without the Reef Rescue funding. There would still be large sections of the Pioneer River to which we would not be able to control the access of cattle. Having a good body of grass on the ground has helped to eradicate erosion and having the riparian zone fenced has also been a benefit in the wet conditions.”



#### About the farm...

The Fogarty and Hamblin families own a 220 hectare grazing property called River Run, which is an ex-sugarcane farm. The property has 300 dry heifers and steers with 20 Bazadias breeders - when crossed with the Brahman they are called Bazaman. The enterprise is run as a fattening block, and the stock are dressed to 240 kg to 290 kg for Kuttabul, Marian, Walkerston and Slade Point butcher shops. River Run is also a proud supplier to Bushman's Bazaman pies and Romeo and Juliet's Restaurant in Mackay.

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Stephen does not feel that they have lost access to too much of the riparian area, as it is still a managed zone.

The provision of a number of watering points throughout the property helped to reduce cattle tracks down to the river and pads around existing dams.

Stephen also used the Reef Rescue funding to conduct soil tests, which was particularly helpful for the front paddock. He discovered that the previous year's DAP application had provided little benefit, indicating a problem.

Finally, Stephen was able to control Lantana weed along the riparian zone to relieve pressure on existing native vegetation.

Stephen found out about the Reef Rescue initiative from the newspaper and ABC radio. From there, he says paperwork and access to the funding was a simple process.

The Reef Rescue funding encouraged Stephen to implement the changes on River Run at a faster rate.

*“Getting the river fenced off was a really big thing. We are now able to manage the movement of cattle more effectively.”*

“I had always wanted to do a bit more in the data-recording aspect of the property management and access to the stocktake workshop provided a good first step in that direction.

The soil testing will also be beneficial,” Stephen says.

Overall, changes which may have taken five years to implement, instead took just one year.

“We probably would not have conducted the same scale of work without the 50 per cent level of funding. We would have stretched the work out over a longer period of time,” Stephen says.

Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation precision planning consultant

Jim Fletcher provided great support to Stephen throughout the duration of the project.

“Access to Jim was great. He was down to earth, very knowledgeable and shared that knowledge freely. We probably would not have become involved (with Reef Rescue) as easily, without Jim,” Stephen says.



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## OUTCOMES



Content cattle and improved knowledge in property management.



Effective management of cattle movement and reduced cattle tracks and pads around river and dams.



Better nutrient management, erosion eradication and increased ground cover.



Weed control and better control of stock during wet season.



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## Gavin Linthwaite

## RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

**The Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) helped Gavin & Katrina Linthwaite to construct 1.2km of riparian fencing and 3.2km of land type fencing to separate his property into its different land types. The Linthwaites also received funding to purchase a blade plough to control woody weeds on their property.**

Gavin and Katrina Linthwaite own and manage the property Mt Funnel, a 5000 acre grazing property. The property is boarded by both Rocky Dam Creek and Cape Palmerston National Park and has been in the Linthwaite family for over 30 years. The Linthwaite's run 500 breeders and turn off 300-400kg steers destined for the feedlot. The herd consists of predominantly Brahman cattle with some smaller numbers of Brangus and Charolais.

Through funding provided by Reef Rescue Gavin has constructed 1.2 km of riparian fencing along Rocky Dam Creek. The fencing will help improve water quality by increasing bank

stability, which in turn will lower sediment entering the waterway and also improve the condition of riparian vegetation.

Gavin explains "the fencing helps control cattle around the creeks and to graze it when you want to graze it and not have them in there all the time". The riparian area on the property maintains a large body of pasture insuring good ground cover year round.

Gavin has also implemented 3.2km to date of land type fencing to separate his property into its different land types. "The land type fencing helps us manage the cattle and split when we have cattle on the hills or on the flats to maintain our pasture. It also helps



### About the farm...

Gavin and Katrina Linthwaite own and manage the property Mt Funnel, a 5000 acre grazing property. The property is boarded by both Rocky Dam Creek and Cape Palmerston National Park.

The Linthwaite's run 500 breeders and turn off 300-400kg steers destined for the feedlot.

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us to implement our fire management program that relies on effective stock management. A added bonus of the fencing is the ease of mustering and managing cattle on the property”.

Gavin has also received Reef Rescue funding for improved pasture management. With this Gavin purchased a blade plough which will allow him to control woody re-growth within his pastures without the use of herbicides such as tebuthiuron.

*“The land type fencing helps us manage the cattle and split when we have cattle on the hills or on the flats to maintain our pasture. It also helps us to implement our fire management program”.*

The Linthwaite’s are planning to implement additional riparian, land type fencing and watering points through the Reef Rescue program as a stage two participant. Gavin has recommended Reef Rescue funding to other graziers looking to complete activities like those completed on Mt Funnel. “We would not have completed all of these activities as soon as we did without Reef Rescue. These are all activities we wanted to do & the Reef Rescue funding helped us to do it”.



## OUTCOMES



Riparian fencing to improve bank stability and reduce sediment loss



Reduced chemical application



Maintaining pasture to maintain ground cover and reduce sediment loss

Reef Catchments is the regional NRM body, overseeing and delivering the Reef Programme in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region, through funding from the Australian Government.

Contact Reef Catchments Grazing Officer Michael Boland on (07) 4968 4215 or e: michael.boland@reefcatchments.com

**For more information on being involved in the Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) contact Reef Catchments on: (07) 4968 4200.**

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Don McNichol

## RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

**The Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) helped Don & Michelle McNichol manage their property more effectively by constructing 200m of riparian & 500m of land type fencing. The McNichols also undertook three soil tests to help manage fertiliser inputs on their property.**

Since purchasing Sheldon Park in 2007 Don & Michelle McNichol have been continually making improvements to the once Lantana and Sickpod infested property. To help in the implementation of some of these improvements the McNichol's applied for Reef Rescue funding for riparian and landtype fencing off stream watering points and soil testing.

Sheldon Park is a 25Ha property that is used to its potential through the embryo program the McNichol's run. Each year around 40 heifers are purchased around 15 -18 months and implanted with an embryo of stud quality genetics. The Heifers are then preg tested at 10 weeks,

those with a positive reading are sold back to the embryo source and the empty heifers sold to a local butchery.

The 200m riparian fencing completed stretches the entire creek frontage of the property. Don explains, "We didn't want the cattle drinking out of the creek. We wanted to bring the cattle up to an off stream watering point". "Now we just put them in there to keep it trimmed back and make sure we don't disturb the ground cover and cause any erosion".

The riparian fencing installed by Don will also help to improve the quality of the riparian vegetation along his creek helping to add to the stability of the bank and reduce the risk of sediment loss.



About the farm...

Don and Michelle have owned Sheldon Park a 25Ha property located in the Plane Creek Catchment for just over 4 years. Don and Michelle have worked extremely hard in this time to turn around the block from a lantana and Sickpod infested block into a productive grazing property.

The McNichols run an embryo program where empty heifers are purchased each year, implanted with embryos and then sold on again after a successful preg test.

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Don McNichol standing next to a riparian Fence helped funded by Reef Rescue

In addition to the riparian fencing, land type fencing was installed to split the creek flats from the steeper ridge country.

“We wanted to separate the pasture types on the different country and manage them separately”. “We have poorer pasture on the ridge country, this allows us to maintain good ground cover on both land types”. “It also allows us to move cattle off the flats in the wet season and stop them from bogging it up”.

The McNichols also conducted three soil tests funded

by Reef Rescue, which helps to make informed decision when it comes to fertilizer inputs.

“Soil testing has insured we don’t apply any nutrient we don’t need, we just replace what the cattle are taking out”. “Our nutrient program and land type fencing has made a noticeable difference to the thickness of our pastures and increased our mulch layer”. “These good pastures are helping to resist Giant Rat Tail grass from establishing from seed up the catchment”.

*“We have poorer pasture on the ridge country, this allows us to maintain good ground cover on both land types.”*



## OUTCOMES



Riparian fencing to improve bank stability and reduce sediment loss



Soil testing assists in the reduction of nutrient losses



Improved pasture management

Reef Catchments is the regional NRM body, overseeing and delivering the Reef Programme in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region, through funding from the Australian Government.

Contact Reef Catchments Grazing Officer Michael Boland on (07) 4968 4215 or e: michael.boland@reefcatchments.com

**For more information on being involved in the Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) contact Reef Catchments on: (07) 4968 4200.**

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Scanlan Family

## RIPARIAN & PASTURE MANAGEMENT

**The Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) helped Karen Scanlan and her family construct 5.4 km of riparian fencing and install five off-stream watering points on their Flaggy Rock grazing property.**

The Scanlan family's vision for their Flaggy Rock grazing property is for it to be weed free and to run as a viable property with approximately 200 head of cattle. They believe that farming has a bright future in the Mackay region and is interested in the potential of value adding for good land management practice.

Karen first heard about Reef Rescue through her involvement with Sarina Landcare, and after joining the initiative, the family was able to use the funding to continue to improve the property.

The Scanlans constructed 5.4 km of fencing along the riparian zones of Weybush and Flaggy Rock creeks.

In conjunction with the riparian fencing work, they also installed five off-stream watering points. A contractor was used to assist with both projects.

The improvements to the farm, along with the knowledge in pasture management that the family gained throughout the Reef Rescue work, has resulted in the stabilisation of the banks along the property's waterways and the reduction of sediment input

into the waterway caused by cattle tracks. They were also able to improve the native riparian vegetation and increase ground cover on the property.

Karen says without the Reef Rescue funding, the family would not have been able to implement the changes as easily due to competing priorities on the property.

"There was so much work that needed doing on the property. The partnership worked really well because we would not have been able to afford to give the work the priority that we did," she says.

"We had a list of priorities for the property which included the activities funded by Reef Rescue as well as other jobs like house improvements and pump repair. The incentives provided by Reef Rescue enabled priority to be given to some of the more environmental orientated projects, such as fencing along the riparian zone, which may not have been done for five, perhaps, ten years. There are still other activities with Reef Rescue that we are interested in doing in the future."



### About the farm...

The Scanlan family has been operating their 500 ha grazing property at Flaggy Rock for two years. They run 140 adults and calves with 17 bulls, and have the intention of increasing the stocking rate to 200 as they improve the pasture. The breeding property runs Drought Master bulls and heifers. The cattle are sold at the Rockhampton Drought Master sales, in Nebo and at the Mackay Elders market.

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The initiative also gave the Scanlans access to information from the project's precision planning consultant, who helped increase their knowledge about pastures, how to better manage them and identify pasture species and weeds.

"(The consultant) was very helpful. Because of the involvement of the industry staff, we understood the process clearly and felt comfortable with the contract that we had to sign and the paperwork that was required to receive payments," Karen says.

Karen also believes that the cash incentive scheme offered by Reef Rescue is the most appropriate way of getting farmers involved in best practice.

"I think that it is much better than the punitive approach. I doubt that farming could afford to implement these activities without incentives. The running of workshops would be very useful and informative, but at the end of the day they wouldn't enable the changes to occur. Education is great, but farming doesn't pay that well - there is rarely surplus money around to undertake environmental work. The practicality is that most people just don't have the money to spend on these activities."

Karen is confident that the activities promoted by Reef Rescue will bring about desired environmental and economic outcomes in grazing.

***"The partnership worked really well because we would not have been able to afford to give the work the priority that we did."***

"From the point of the (Great Barrier Reef), the more people that become involved, the better. More people mean that bigger steps can be taken to improve the reef. We are very happy and have achieved everything that we were hoping to achieve. We have spoken to neighbours about Reef Rescue and encouraged them to get involved," she says.

In addition to the potential of value adding for good land management practice, Karen is also interested in stewardship payments for graziers who care for areas of native revegetation.

"For us, the main goals we have for the future is to improve our pastures and conduct some vegetation along the creeks. It would

be useful to continue to receive assistance to achieve these goals," she says.

The property's pastures include Signal Grass Pangola, Setaria and Legumes. The Scanlans have plans to plant eight hectares of Cow Pea and Butterfly Pea for the bulls to direct graze.

Weed control is primarily done by slashing, as the family is trying to reduce the use of chemicals. Chemical control is used only as a last resort.

Between 150 and 200 ha of the property is fenced off from grazing at all times, to protect the native vegetation.



Increased ground cover



Improved riparian buffer and native vegetation



Bank stabilisation



Reduced cattle tracks and sediment run-off into waterways

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Albert Volker

## RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

**The Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) helped Albert & Nita Volker manage pasture on their property more efficiently by separating land types by constructing 0.75kms of land type fencing. The Volkerts also undertook pasture and stock monitoring on two land types to monitor improvements in their pasture over time.**

Reef Rescue has helped the Volkerts to achieve better pasture management over their grazing paddocks with .75km of land type fencing and pasture monitoring sites. Albert Volker states; "Reef Rescue prompted us and provided us the opportunity to divide these land types. It has motivated us to keep doing more of it."

Without the opportunity, financial assistance and support from Reef Rescue and support officers, the Volkerts do not believe they would have divided their land types. Ease of management has resulted from fencing land types, this has helped to control grazing pressures by supporting pastures during early establishment along

with weed management in monitoring and selectively controlling weed species.

Before their involvement with NRM groups, the Volkerts have been proactive in managing their property. This includes tackling erosion from gully heads caused originally from cattle access to water in the creeks. Also controlling weed invasions such as Lantana by investing not only precious dollars but also labour, machinery and that ever pressing issue: time.

Reef Rescue riparian fencing incentives have assisted in helping to keep ground cover on gully heads and allowing the Volkerts to keep cattle out for most of the time.



### About the farm...

Situated in the lush valleys between the Pioneer Peaks National Park and the picturesque Mt Juke bluff, is Albert and Anita Volker's 203 ha family property. Traditionally cane farmers the Volkerts have owned their block since 1966, and originally used cattle only for the purpose of maintaining fire breaks around the cane. Now, less than 75 ha of cane remains and is share farmed with his brother and nephews. They are now steadily transforming their cane paddocks to improved pastures and to date have 133 ha now supporting their 100 head Brahman/Droughtmaster beef herd.

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The Volkert believe that through Reef Rescue, fencing off these potentially dangerous landscapes to not only cattle, workers and machinery has potentially saved lives. Albert and Anita plan to continue with their management and control of weed invasions and gully restoration. Albert and Anita also follow up their pasture management with spot spraying and regularly monitoring for new invasions of species for example Sporobolus grasses such as Giant Rats tail and Giant Parramatta Grasses.

*“Reef Rescue prompted us and provided us the opportunity to divide these land types. It has motivated us to keep doing more of it.”*

Being more in control of pasture management decisions helps the Volkert when targeting cattle markets. Albert and Anita generally sell their weaned cattle through the local Sarina sales, with the older cows and bulls being culled on temperament, fertility and age and sold direct to the Baker Creek Borthwick’s abattoirs. The Volkert have been involved with the Natural Resource Management groups over previous years and would recommend Reef Rescue to others thinking about this kind of work.



## OUTCOMES



Better nutrient management and increased ground cover



Improved management of stock to reduce soil disturbance in riparian areas



Improvement management of stock in wet season

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## David Wright

### PASTURE MANAGEMENT

**The Australian Government Reef Programme (formerly Reef Rescue) helped David Wright and his family improve the pasture management on their Constant Creek and Mt Spencer grazing properties. They were able to construct 1.55 km of land type fencing at Constant Creek and 3.55 km at Mt Spencer.**

David Wright and his family had already begun making improvements to their Constant Creek grazing property, when they found out about the Reef Rescue initiative.

The project funding allowed the family partnership to speed up the work and complete 1.5 km of land type fencing at Constant Creek and 3.55 km at the second property at Mt Spencer.

The Constant Creek project fenced off a hard ridge from flatter, more productive land. The family had also installed a watering point at this property.

The land type fencing constructed at Constant Creek helped to improve and maintain ground cover through more efficient use of available forage.

The family was comfortable building land type fencing which met the Reef Catchments standards for the funding offered. They implemented a wildlife-friendly top plain wire fence.

The funding advanced the rate at which the family was able to initiate and complete the works. "We wouldn't have done (the Constant Creek work) so quickly, if we didn't get the funding. We would have left it for another year or so," David says.

David said the family was planning on completing the Mt Spencer fencing within the next five years, however the Reef Rescue funding brought this forward. In fact, there is parts of the Mt Spencer property that they would never have fenced, if not for the funding.

"The 50 per cent funding is very generous and makes it very attractive to do fencing activities."

David is already seeing the environmental and economic outcomes that his family set out to achieve.

"We have already been able to undertake re-seeding with Signal Grass and the land type fencing has enabled us to lock the cattle



#### About the farm...

David Wright and his family has three grazing properties in the Mackay region. The main breeder property is at Mt Spencer, between Eton and Nebo, and runs 4,500 head of cattle over 80,000 acres. The Constant Creek property is 1700 acres and runs 500 head of cattle, however David's vision is to increase this to 1000 head. All steers are sent to the Dabin Property, near Nebo, to grow and finish while the cull heifers are sent to Constant Creek to trade weight. Most of the cattle go to the meat works.

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out of that land type while the pasture is established. Without the fence, we would not have been able to stop the cattle getting into the newly re-seeded pasture,” David says.

He hopes that they will now be able to manage the ground cover more effectively and as a result, increase the stocking rate.

David is also confident that the family will experience economic benefits in the long run.

In terms of improving water quality, David and his family’s work means improved ground cover, which will reduce sediment input into the waterways.

David initially read about the Reef Rescue initiative in the media, but didn’t realise that it applied to grazing. After speaking to Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation precision planning consultant Jim Fletcher, he discovered that he could get involved. “Jim was very good to work with. He obviously has a good background in the (grazing) industry and is a very practical bloke. The mapping and planning component was excellent and

pointed out directions for the future,” David says. “With these two projects, I signed off on them and it was within a fortnight that I had received the (funding). It was like return mail. The big advantage of the way the Reef Rescue budgets were developed, was that I didn’t have to race around town getting

quotes from all and sundry. You just put your own figures in and they were accepted, or not.”

Due to the size of the job, David would not have carried out the work without 40 per cent funding or more.

“Anything less does not justify advancing the priority of the works. The 50 per cent is what made the project attractive,” he says.

“In comparison to anything else that I have tried to do in the past, Reef Rescue does not compare. The project was so simple and easy - that’s the reason why I would line up to have another chop at it. I can’t criticise the process at all. I hope that the funding continues for years to come. Particularly with larger properties, it is difficult to get all of the work done in 12 months. There are a lot of benefits that could come from Reef Rescue.”

***“The 50 per cent funding is very generous and makes it very attractive to do fencing activities.”***



Improved ground cover and pasture utilisation



Reduced cattle tracks near waterways



Reduced sediment input into waterways



Improvement in ground cover

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