**Connecting biodiversity to tourism**

**MACKAY // Friday, 15th APRIL 2016**

Reef Catchments staff have been working closely with Mackay Regional Council over the past 3 years, on the Lagoons Creek rehabilitation project. Monday April 18th stage two begins beside Glenella Connection and Lansdowne roads to create a naturalised waterway with two adjacent wetlands, connecting stage one to the existing Botanic Gardens lagoon.

Why is this important?

The Lagoons Catchment exists within a low-lying alluvial flood plain with an average elevation of less than 10m, draining into the Pioneer River and, ultimately, the Coral Sea.

Connecting this important aquatic habitat and improving it’s health means the number of fauna residing there will thrive, including fish (e.g. barramundi), water birds (e.g. swamp hens), platypuses, snakes, turtles and frogs. The Lagoons waterway is often used as a recreation area, and is a known bird watching location, as well as hosting recreational fishers. It’s also a place of both Indigenous and European cultural and spiritual values.

Over the history of the site, development of surrounding land combined with weather events has led to sediment build-up, increased nutrients and changes in vegetation cover. Water quality is key to the survival of not only aquatic fauna but the flora on which they feed.

Coasts and Biodiversity Co-ordinator Stefanie Wabnick explains, “This stage of the project will address issues through the establishment of a vegetation corridor, rock placement, filtration of water entering the waterway, and instream vegetation to treat pollutants. Installing wetland and submerged plants provides the retention time required by ‘biofilms’ to grow and treat pollutants.”

Fishways will also be installed to assist diadromous (migratory) species, connecting the fresh water systems to the Pioneer River and ultimately the sea. Reef Catchments Manager Katrina Dent, is keenly aware of the importance of waterway connectivity, “This is the missing link between the Mackay Region Botanic Gardens and Pioneer River, with so many recreational fishers and boats we have a responsibility to ensure fishstocks into the future.”

ENDS

\*Reef Catchments published the Water Quality Improvement Plan in 2015 and it is now available on the website as an E-book http://reefcatchments.com.au/water/wqip/

MEDIA are invited to attend the site of the works Monday 0900-0930

Please meet in the carpark on the western end of Lagoon Street near roundabout.

**Interview contacts:**

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