



REGIONAL WRAP UP

Executive Officer, Darlene Irvine...

Wow, the year is flying by - I think I missed April!

Digital Economy Strategy

We are moving quite steadily on attracting NBN Co. and developing our Digital Economy Strategy. This is a project which shines as a true regional collaborative effort. We have been working with David Ives (Mach Technologies) to ensure we are kept up to date with what is happening in this arena. He is also providing great network linkages into NBN Co. We have requested information from councils to start developing our capability and capacity document which will support not only economic development and our bid to get national broadband network rolled out sooner rather than later.

Local Laws

We had another local laws meeting this month which has highlighted how far councils have progressed in such a short time. There are still some sticking points but we hope to have these resolved in the next couple of months. We will next meet in June to pull apart Subordinate Local Law 1 - Administration.

FNQROC Board

At the last board meeting held in April the board decided to commission an independent review on the operation and deliverables of FNQROC. This will be the first such review in 10 years and I look forward to learning of the results which will be shared with all.

The next FNQROC Board meeting will be held on 6 June 2011 in Cooktown. This will be followed by the FNQRRG Board meeting. The FNQ TS RDA meeting will also be held in Cooktown on 7 June 2011. FNQROC staffers are looking forward to beating the councils at lawn bowls!

Leave

I would also like to add that during the month of May I will be on leave from now until 18 May 2011 and then again for a week from 29 May 2011.

REGIONAL PROCUREMENT

Regional Procurement Coordinator, Steven Cosatto...

This month's focus has been on establishing the foundations for procurement including the development of documents, establishing contact with other procurement groups to identify like processes, and continuing to meet procurement/purchasing coordinators within FNQROC.

A draft contract template to be used initially for water treatment chemicals (and then to be used for other items) has been completed and will be sent to solicitors this week for review. The template will then be presented to council treatment coordinators and the Regional Procurement Group for review and input with regards to product specific items. Once the document is finalised we will be in a position to proceed to tender (June).

A Procurement Summary Guide for new/existing purchasing staff also has been finalised and will be forwarded to FNQROC Purchasing Coordinators for review.

Regional Natural Asset Management Coordinator, Travis Sydes...Pond apple – partnerships in management

The Pond Apple Working Group and the National Pond Apple Management Group met recently in Cairns in the second joint-sitting of the two groups. Stakeholders from Mackay to Cape York are involved in the cross-regional and national collaboration to manage this Weed of National Significance.

Pond apple impacts on biodiversity

Pond apple actively invades and alters the composition of tropical ecosystems, disrupting forest succession by out-competing the soft-fruited and short-lived seeds of many rainforest and riparian species. The monocultures along riparian zones, and across the wetlands which result, impact on seasonal fruit availability and diversity for a range of species including the nationally endangered Southern Cassowary. There are fifteen Endangered Regional Ecosystems invaded by and at threat by pond apple in the Wet Tropics bioregion alone.

Response to cyclones

Like all WONS, pond apple is well adapted to take advantage of both natural and human induced disturbance. Pond apple is able to rapidly respond after major disturbance, recovering from structural damage, mobilising as a seedling bank and producing significant amounts of fruit in the years following. After Tropical Cyclone Larry in 2006 researchers recorded an 18-fold increase in seed production in the two years following complete canopy loss. This equated to a post-damage ebb of 438,000 seeds per hectare (2006), increasing to more than 8,000,000 seeds per hectare in just two years (2008), (data from Setter 2008). Stakeholders in the Yasi impacted region are bracing for the population boom which will follow in the cyclone's wake.

A moving target

The seeds of pond apple are adapted to float with fruit production peaking during the northern wet season. On a local scale floods and extreme weather events are able to transport seeds many kilometres along watercourses and across wetlands. On a national scale pond apple seeds are able to float as viable seeds for extended periods in salt water and can travel on ocean currents for hundreds of kilometres (up to 1,300 km) before making landfall. The unique nature of this dispersal mechanism requires national collaboration across all stakeholders and coordination across all active infestations will be essential firstly to prevent the further spread into North Western Australia, Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea; and secondly to deliver the national goal of eradication.

Collaborations in management

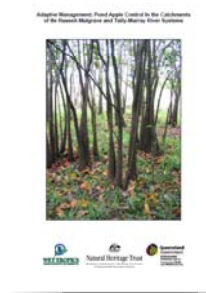
Stakeholders from across the region have actively collaborated on the management task at hand guided by adaptive management principles. Field techniques and approaches have evolved with the support of science, strategic planning and regional partnerships.



A landscape transformed - a Melaleuca wetland recovers after the mechanical control of a mature pond apple infestation at Baileys Creek in the Daintree. Manual control of seedlings will secure this site (images Sydes 2010).

Strategic planning and partnerships

Stakeholders from across the Wet Tropics and Cape York are supported by the Pond Apple Working Group in a direct working relationship with the National Pond Apple Management Group. The group maintains an active dialogue between operational, research and strategic planning staff from across the regions.



A cross tenure and collaborative partnership between stakeholders has seen the region's initial plan for management of pond apple in the Wet Tropics (2004) expand to support stakeholders from Mackay to Cape York (2010-15) in the national effort against pond apple. FNQROC conducted the review of the plan in close consultation with stakeholders.

In other areas of Natural Asset Management:

Weed Society of Queensland - I accepted the position of North Queensland representative on the WSQ. The group meets by telephone every six weeks to share regional news and projects. The WSQ hosts the Biannual Queensland Weeds Symposium and promotes the wider understanding of invasive species management.

Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee - met in Ingham on 15 April 2011 to discuss a range of issues including weed spread prevention post-Tropical Cyclone Yasi.

Regional Landscape Repair and Resilience Working Group - met in Atherton on 29 March 2011 to discuss a range of regional topics and projects including the development of a Best Management Practice guide for tree planting and revegetation activities in the Wet Tropics.

National Tropical Weeds Management Committee – Hinchinbrook Shire councillor Pat Lynch from Hinchinbrook Shire and myself represented regional Local Government stakeholders at this six-monthly meeting. The committee discussed the upcoming review of the National cost shared Siam Weed Eradication Program and the ongoing funding of the National Four Tropical Weeds Eradication Program. The

National Environment Research Program Working Group - met for the first time on April 12 to workshop research priorities for rainforest research in the Wet Tropics. The program will follow on from the investment in the Reef & Rainforest Research Centre which began in 2006.

Upcoming events:

Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee & FNQ Pest Advisory Forum – Cooktown 26 and 27 May 2011.

Northern Region Interdepartmental Committee for Bushfires – 11 May 2011

Northern Australian Pest Fish Working Group – 31 May 2011

REGIONAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Regional Planning and Sustainability Coordinator, Daniela Gambotto...

Incorporating Biodiversity Provisions in new Planning Schemes

Following the work already completed with Tablelands Regional Council, a meeting with State Government Departments was convened to obtain some initial feedback on this project. DLGP and DERM representatives were invited to view the mapping methodology in action and answer questions that planners had in relation to developing a biodiversity overlay map and code for planning schemes.

All planners were invited to attend the meeting as the mapping methodology and the draft code are both being developed to ensure they can be applicable across the region. All councils will eventually find themselves in a similar scenario when they get to the stage of preparing their own planning schemes, so it was considered to be of benefit for them to come along.

The meeting proved to be an excellent opportunity to query State Government representatives on their expectations and requirements in relation to achieving biodiversity outcomes required by the FNQ 2031 Regional Plan. It was also a chance for the State to enquire about the process we have been through in developing the framework.

As councils will be required to obtain sign off from the State on their Planning Scheme, this pre-emptive step will hopefully eliminate any issues or concerns that may arise in the future.

TROPICAL INNOVATION AWARDS

FNQROC is a major supporter of the Tropical Innovation Awards which aims to firmly establish the north as a centre for tropical expertise and ensure that the region's creativity remains on the leading edge in our fast changing world. Applications are now welcomed for this year's Tropical Innovation Awards. Applications close on 30 June 2011. Free workshops to assist with writing applications and making a short presentation to the judges have been scheduled as follows:

Workshop 1: Thursday 12 May, 9am-2pm @ Civic Reception Room, Cairns Regional Council, 119-145 Spence St, Cairns

This workshop will help all entrants to really think about their innovation and showcase what makes it unique to the judges, in a professional and inspirational way. Attention to detail is a key as well as compliance to the competition guidelines. Typically inventors have a broad skill base but filling in award entries is not a part of this repertoire. So to ensure that everyone has as an equal chance at success, this workshop will show how to put together an award winning application.

Workshop 2: Thursday 16 June, 9am-2pm @ Civic Reception Room, Cairns Regional Council, 119-145 Spence St, Cairns

As part of the 2011 TIA awards process, entrants will be required to make a short presentation to the judges. To give everyone equal footing this three hour workshop, by professional presenter Andrew Griffiths, will give entrants many simple and practical tips that will help them to develop a quality presentation and deliver it to the judges with real impact.

The 2011 Awards have been extended to include participants from all Tropical Zone Countries, which will provide an opportunity for applicants to gain international exposure and support.

An evening event is to be held on 12 August 2011 at the Cairns Convention Centre and will include a number of invitees including judging panel, industry experts, venture capitalists, mentors, associated organisations, government officials and the public to network and

celebrate the winning inventions and/or innovations. The awards provide an opportunity for applicants to link with professional businesses and State and Federal funded programs.

Secondary school students are also encouraged to apply via the Emerging Innovation section which suits applicants who are in the early stages of development (patented or not patented). The applicant is required to provide a business plan or business case highlighting the viability of their invention/innovation.

More details can be found on www.tropicalinnovationawards.com.

DATE CLAIMERS 2011

The **FNQROC and FNQRRG Meetings** (FNQROC Organiser: Darlene Irvine; FNQRRG Organiser: Gerard Read).

| FNQROC | FNQRRG |
|---|---|
| Monday 6 June 2011, Cook Shire Council, Cooktown – 10am | Monday 6 June 2011, Cook Shire Council, Cooktown – 1.30pm |
| Monday 8 August 2011, Cairns Local Disaster Coordination Centre, Woree – 10am | Monday 8 August 2011, Cairns Local Disaster Coordination Centre, Woree – 1.30pm |
| Monday 10 October 2011, Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Innisfail – 10am | Monday 10 October 2011, Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Innisfail – 1.30pm |
| Monday 12 December 2011, Cairns Regional Council, Cairns – 10am | Monday 12 December 2011, Cairns Regional Council, Cairns – 1.30pm |

FNQ Regional Road Group TC Meetings (FNQRRG TC Organiser: Gerard Read).

Friday 20 May 2011, Cairns Regional Council, Committee Room, Level 3, 10am

FNQ Procurement Group Meetings (FNQROC Organiser: Steve Cosatto).

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| Wednesday 8 June 2011 – Cairns | Wednesday 21 September 2011 – Cairns |
| Wednesday 7 December 2011 – Cairns | |

Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee (NAMAC) Meetings (FNQROC Organiser: Travis Sydes).

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| Friday 27 May 2011 - Cook Shire Council |
| Friday 26 August 2011 - Cairns Regional Council |

Regional Asset Management Committee Meetings (FNQROC Organiser: Gerard Read).

Thursday 2011 – Cairns Regional Council

FNQROC Sustainability Group Meetings (FNQROC Organiser: Daniela Gambotto)

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| Friday 3 June 2011 – Cairns Regional Council |
| Friday 2 September 2011 – Cairns Regional Council |
| Friday 2 December 2011 – Cairns Regional Council |

FNQROC Community Plan Meetings (FNQROC Organiser: Darlene Irvine).

To be advised

FNQROC Planning Group Meetings (FNQROC Organiser: Daniela Gambotto)

Thursday 7 and Friday 8 April 2011 (LGAQ Decision Support Tool Training) – venue to be confirmed

Friday 17 June 2011 - Cairns

Friday 19 August 2011 - Cairns

Friday 7 October 2011 – Cairns

Friday 16 December 2011 – Cairns

FNQROC Local Laws Group Meetings (FNQROC Organiser: Darlene Irvine).

June – date to be advised

FNQROC CONTACT DETAILS

| Position | Name | Phone | Email |
|--|-------------------------|--------------|--|
| Executive Officer | Darlene Irvine | 07 4044 3038 | d.irvine@cairns.qld.gov.au |
| Regional Natural Asset Management Coordinator | Travis Sydes | 0448 852 732 | t.sydes@cairns.qld.gov.au |
| Regional Infrastructure Project Coordinator | Gerard Read | 0407 735 304 | g.read@cairns.qld.gov.au |
| Regional Planning & Sustainability Coordinator | Daniela Gambotto | 07 4044 3376 | d.gambotto@cairns.qld.gov.au |
| Regional Procurement Coordinator | Steven Cosatto | 07 4044 3048 | s.cosatto@cairns.qld.gov.au |
| Administration Officer | Sandra McCormack | 07 4044 3343 | s.mccormack@cairns.qld.gov.au |