

NORTHERN exposure

Autumn 2009

 NRM
North



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'Nosswick' Cressy – Photo: Melissa Lewarn

From the CEO

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Northern Exposure.

Productive landscapes are the backbone of our livelihoods as well as our lifestyles in Northern Tasmania. This edition of Northern Exposure highlights a range of activities which are a part of supporting productive landscapes which in turn support our economy as well as conserving valuable assets for the future.

Identify the priorities for natural resource management for the Northern region

Key to addressing some of the aspirations for productive landscapes in the region is planning ahead. This means understanding what the people of the region want our landscape to look like in 5 years, 20 years, 50 years. This will then allow us to develop stages and targets along the way to that vision.

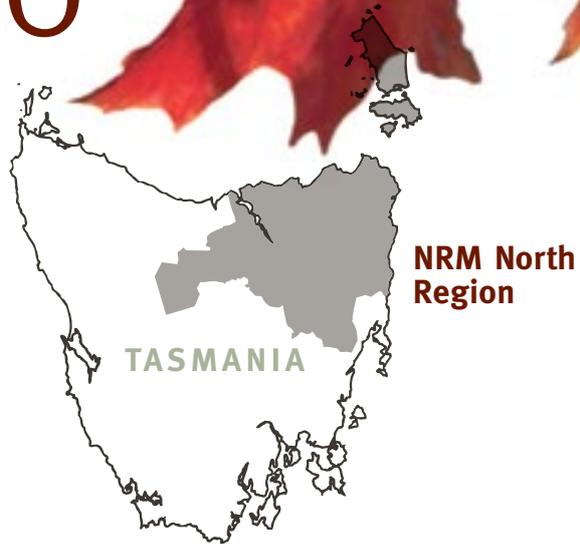
The current Regional NRM Strategy has targets to do just this but it is time to review those to make sure we are still on the right track. Part of the review was undertaken 18 months ago from a technical aspect and over the next twelve months we will be seeking further input.

Facilitate the implementation of the regional strategy

One of the key objectives in the Regional NRM Strategy is to ensure that our natural resources are used productively as well as sustainably. Over the past four years we have been developing our property management planning (PMP) program as a key way of supporting both these aims. It is vital that the people who actually manage the land are doing the planning with the best available information to do so.

Our job has been to provide a framework and the information to do this in and provide support for the implementation of key activities. Importantly, these plans are not just NRM plans; they cover everything from business planning through to vegetation/threatened species management and water use efficiency.

The opportunities to maximize the value of these plans has been recognised and so a Statewide Property Management Systems Framework has been developing over the past few



years. This is a partnership between the three NRM regions, TFGA and DPIW and will be critical to making the most of the potential opportunities of having a strong coordinated approach to the best management of our landscapes.

To facilitate the integration of natural resource management and planning activities

Increasingly climate change and carbon are becoming topics which are on everyone's minds, or at least in their ears. NRM North has been successful in gaining two grants from the Tasmanian Climate Change Office and the Australian Government to produce a series of workshops and a climate change module for property management planning. We have also launched a partnership with the Landcare Carbon SMART program and have provided resources to local government to help work through some of the potential operational considerations of climate change.

Collectively, and with more action on the horizon in this area, we want to make sure that our landscapes stay productive and healthy by assisting land managers to adapt to a variable and changing climate. At the end of the day, it still comes back to the basics, caring for the natural resources of our island home.



James McKee
CEO NRM NORTH

Intelligent Irrigation



“We had expected around 20 people to attend each session, but on the day between 35 to 40 people showed up.”

A project to improve the efficiency of irrigation practices in northern Tasmania has proved a winner with landholders.

NRM North’s Intelligent Irrigation Project was run by Agricultural Resource Management (ARM) between February and June this year.

It aimed to provide professional training to irrigators in environmentally and economically sustainable irrigation practices and assist them, through incentive subsidies, to improve their irrigation efficiency.

NRM North’s Program Manager, Productive Landscapes, Adrian James, said incentives were initially under subscribed so a second round was announced.

“The second round was heavily over subscribed with applications for around 230 thousand dollars and only 74 thousand dollars of funding available.

“NRM North added another 50 thousand dollars which meant we were able to provide funding for more applicants.

“As equipment has been supplied and installed, we’ve been able to fund even more applicants as some farmers have not used their full funding allocation. In the end, we’ve funded 97% of eligible applications.” Mr James said.

The incentives helped fund training and professional advice and the purchase of new equipment including irrigation remote control systems (pump start-ups/shutdowns and irrigator motion sensors), upgrades to pivot sprinkler packages and soil moisture monitoring devices.

The project delivered nine workshops/field days which covered topics including financial cost-benefit analysis of irrigation options, water planning and regulation, dam permits and construction, irrigation and biodiversity and irrigation and farm energy efficiency.

“The training days were very well attended. We had expected around 20 people to attend each session, but on the day between 35 to 40 people showed up.

“It was pleasing to have landholders from other NRM regions attend the training days, even though they weren’t eligible for incentive funding.” Mr James said.

Rachel Brown from Agricultural Resource Management said it was good to see the significant farmer investments in terms of time to attend training events and farmer contributions towards sustainable irrigation technologies.

“The project was structured so that farmers contributed at least 30% of costs towards any incentives, but we know that many farmers have invested very significant amounts of their own money in upgrading their systems to improve water use efficiency.

“Everybody is thinking about ways to make the most of their water resources and it is great that NRM North has been able to assist with such practical initiatives.”

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State Government.



Tasmanian Property Management Systems Framework

The three regional Natural Resource Management bodies, The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the State Government are working collaboratively to guide and support the implementation of the Tasmanian Property Management Systems Framework (PMSF).

The PMSF was initiated by the three NRM regions in partnership with the TFGA and the State Government following the FarmRIGHT project. The project is funded by the Australian Government and Tasmanian Government through the NRM regions and the two stages have been managed by the TFGA.

FarmRIGHT identified the need for simplified yet improved planning processes to assist primary producers and other landholders in Tasmania to more effectively deal with the increasing range of pressures being imposed on them and their enterprises.

Accordingly, the PMSF was developed as a mechanism to assist landholders to better manage these pressures and to address increasing demand from the community, government and retailers for more formal processes to demonstrate the sustainable nature of property management practices.

In May last year, the TFGA, State Government and the three regional NRM bodies signed a Memorandum of Understanding that signified their willingness to work together to further develop and implement the framework for the benefit of Tasmanian landholders.

After the signing, a management group for the PMSF was formed by representatives from each of the signatory organisations and assumed the role of managing the implementation of the PMSF.

In February, the management group appointed Project Officer, Marcus McCormick, to commence work on the further implementation of the PMSF and to progress the development of Property Management System Modules. This appointment has enabled the PMSF implementation to be actively driven and promoted within Tasmania on a full-time basis.

Mr McCormick said the implementation phase of the project was progressing well with the framework beginning to develop an increasing presence in property planning circles.

“The next 12 months will see some exciting achievements under the PMSF with the first three modules currently under development and expected to be available for delivery to Tasmanian landholders in late 2009.

“These three modules will be natural assets related and will provide a mechanism for primary producers and landholders to assess the condition of and develop actions for the improved management of soil, water and biodiversity assets on a property.

“These modules will serve a dual purpose as they will also be the means by which landholders intending to access water from the Tasmanian Irrigation Developments will be able to collate the necessary information needed for the Irrigation Development Board to assess the level of sustainability of any proposed irrigation activities.” Mr McCormick said.

In the longer term, the PMSF will deliver further standards and templates for several Property Management System Modules relating to aspects of property management including business and finance, food safety and quality, animal health and welfare, heritage and culture and human resources.

Furthermore, the potential for a recognition system for Property Management Systems will be investigated into the future and if found to be feasible, it is anticipated that this will provide a range of on-going benefits to landholders who wish to be involved.

Mr McCormick said Property Management Systems had the potential to significantly simplify planning processes for landholders, provide a tool for improved business and resource management and to further enhance the working relationship between landholders, the government, NRM regional bodies and the TFGA.

“However, as the development of Property Management Systems is currently in a stage of infancy, there is much work to be done to achieve these outcomes.

“Over the coming months, a major point of focus will be to further promote these benefits and the concept of Property Management Systems to relevant stakeholders.”

The development and delivery of the first three modules to landholders will also be a key focus in the implementation of the PMSF.

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Northern Tasmania is set to take a leading role in the emerging carbon market with the launch of the NRM North Landcare CarbonSMART partnership.

The joint venture between NRM North and not-for-profit carbon service provider Landcare CarbonSMART, was officially launched at Agfest in May.

NRM North Chief Executive Officer, James McKee, said it was an exciting project to be involved with.

“Carbon rights have become tradeable property and while we don’t view this as a ‘get rich quick’ scheme, we do see huge potential for landholders to get a financial return on land that is used for long term revegetation.

“In effect, we view this as a potential form of stewardship payment for managing vegetation, both for carbon sequestration and also for outcomes such as biodiversity, water quality and salinity management.” Mr McKee said.

The regional trading pool will enable greenhouse gas emitters, including large industry, to buy carbon permits under the Australia Government’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme at competitive rates and secure a long-term flow of permits at fixed prices.

Landholders with approved carbon sink plantings could then expect annual payments based on the amount of carbon sequestered in that year less administrative and insurance costs.

“The typical range would be from \$60 to \$120 per hectare per annum over the life of the project with high rainfall areas often providing annual incomes over \$350 per hectare in some years.

“This would be a guaranteed income stream for at least 30 years, after which time the trees capacity to sequester carbon tapers off.

“And with recent changes to tax laws meaning the cost of establishing carbon sink forests is now tax deductible, landholders effectively get to revegetate part of their properties for free to create long-term income which can be used to better manage these areas.” Mr McKee said.

Not only new plantings would be eligible for payment – anything established after January 1990 could attract payments.

“Carbon trading has been happening in Australia for around five years now in a highly informal and unregulated market.

“That is about to change and the regional carbon pool hopes to provide some leadership, clarity and opportunity for landholders.” Mr McKee said.

To be eligible to enter the new regional carbon pool, the land must:

- have been cleared as at January 1, 1990, except for a few paddock trees or scattered remnants;
- be capable of growing trees;
- be greater than 10 hectares for new plantings, or at least five hectares for plantings established since January 1990.

In the interests of ensuring maximum biodiversity, mixed indigenous plantings would be required.

“We don’t envisage these plantings will dominate the landscape in the way that large-scale forestry might..

“It would probably suit people who share our commitment to sustainability and adapting to climate change but who are interested in generating some additional income.”

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NRM North’s CEO James McKee and Minister David Llewellyn

News in brief...

Jellyfish Discovery

Some tiny creatures have caused a stir at Lake Trevallyn in Launceston. The Scientific and Technical Officer for the Tamar Estuary and Esk River (TEER) Program, Michael Attard, caught live freshwater jellyfish in the lake in March.

The discovery officially confirms the existence of the species *Craspedacusta sowerbyi* in Tasmania.

While there have been some reported sightings, this is the first official record.

It is believed the species originated in China and was

carried to Tasmania as tiny larvae on birds' feet.

The jellyfish are not harmful to humans.

The specimens caught by Mr Attard will go on display at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery at Inveresk.



NRM North's Michael Attard with Dr Lisa Gershwin from QVMAG

Research Forum

Agricultural researchers from throughout Tasmania met in Launceston in February to share their knowledge and achievements.

The Tasmanian Agricultural Research Forum was organised by NRM North with support from NRM South, the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research, the Department of Primary Industries and Water, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the University of Tasmania.

It aimed to enhance agricultural research and outcomes in Tasmania by facilitating the exchange of information and networking

opportunities between researchers, funding agencies and stakeholders.

The forum attracted guest speaker Dr Rohan Nelson who is an agricultural and natural resource economist from the CSIRO in Canberra.

A keynote presentation was given by Professor David McNeil who is the chair of Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania and Director of the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research.



Dr Rohan Nelson with NRM North's Adrian James

Climate Connect



NRM North has received a 50 thousand dollar grant from the State Government to implement emission and energy reduction strategies for Tasmanian agriculture.

The Minister Assisting the Premier on Climate Change, Lisa Singh, presented NRM North Chief Executive Officer, James McKee, with a cheque for the Climate Connect Program in early June.

The project will coordinate and run a series of workshops, field trips and

property specific energy audits, which would lead to the implementation of actions to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

The project is being rolled out in partnership with a number of other organisations including Hydro Tasmania Consulting, Agricultural Resource Management (ARM), the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the Department of Primary Industries and Water.

Out & About



Northern Midlands Sub-Region

Mill Dam Helping Hand



Students from the Deloraine High School have planted more than two thousand native trees, shrubs and grasses as part of the Mill Dam Restoration Project at Longford.

The work follows the removal of crack willows and rubbish along the

reserve section of the Macquarie River bank and the installation of fences to define paddock grazing and recreation areas.

Students were keen to be involved with the project and enjoyed the chance to work outdoors.

Propagation Workshop

A propagation workshop at Evandale attracted a large number of green thumbs.

The session, run by the Understory Network, demonstrated the techniques for planting seeds directly into forestry

tubes and taking cuttings from saltbush.

Participants will put their new skills to good use at a community nursery which was recently established at Missionsdale.



Out & About



Tamar Sub-Region

River Health Day

Landholders learned how to assess river health at a free public field day in late May.

The session at the South Esk River at Corra Linn was organised by Northern Waterway Assessment, which is a partnership between NRM North and the Launceston Environment Centre.

Participants were shown how to collect and identify macro invertebrate (waterbug) life in the river and use it to assess river health.

The session also covered the assessment of riverbank vegetation and the testing of water quality as well as storing, using and interpreting data.

The field day targeted property owners, anglers, current and prospective Waterwatch volunteers and those with an interest in the environment and natural resource management.





Natural Resource Management
in Northern Tasmania

NRM North is responsible for planning, delivery and implementation of integrated natural resource management (NRM) in northern Tasmania. We take a holistic approach to managing the environment through identifying regional priorities and develop integrated NRM plans that are based on sound scientific data. NRM North was established in 2003 through a community-driven process in response to the Tasmanian Government's Natural Resource Management Framework and its enabling legislation, the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Act, 2002.

Our role is to:

- Develop programs that recognise the need to balance the environmental, economical and social needs of the community.
- Provide leadership to ensure that sound management of the region's natural resources continues.
- Promote partnerships with all stakeholders to determine appropriate investment and cost sharing strategies.

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Working with you to care for the natural resources of our island home.