

'Improving land management practices in the Ord Catchment.'

Project Synopsis

Project commencement: 2006

Project completion: 2008

Total project investment: \$333,000

Funding Source: National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

Project Aim

The identification and encouragement of the uptake of improved practices that, while known are not widely adopted as part of land management in the Ord Catchment.

The Challenges

The main challenges that we encountered included:

- Facilitating adequate Indigenous engagement.
- Managing the expected wet season flood events.
- Managing unexpected high rainfall in July 2007.
- Fitting into landholder's production schedules' that were in turn dictated by weather and fire.

Project Synopsis

The scope of this project spanned a number of successful activities and Rangelands NRM Western Australia provided excellent administrative support across the life of the project as well as personnel support to the road show showcasing a number of NAP projects. Some of the key activities included:

- Six training events showing land managers the best methods to protect roadways and fencelines from the impacts of erosion. The training events involved land managers who have to manage erosion regularly including pastoralists, local Government personnel and owners of small rural blocks.

- A two day workshop was held in partnership with neighbouring Landcare organisations. Victoria River District Conservation Association (VRDCA) and Halls Creek East Kimberley Land Conservation District Committee (LCDC) demonstrated different techniques to remediate erosion on the Nelson land system as well as preventative measures to reduce the risk of further erosion. Speakers included personnel who have worked within the region from 1960 to the present day.
- An instructional video was created in partnership with neighbouring Landcare organisations VRDCA and the Halls Creek East Kimberley LCDC. It was created for landholders and focussed on the Nelson Springs Workshop, demonstrating revegetation techniques for eroded land.
- Two 30 hectare demonstration sites were developed to demonstrate techniques to reduce erosion caused by a poorly constructed and maintained fence line and an active gully system. The focus was on reducing impacts at a landscape level as well as being site specific. The fence line site targeted small landholders and the gully site targeted pastoral landholders and was done in partnership with the landholder.
- A fire training seminar was held in partnership with Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) for the Indigenous communities of Maxwell Plains.
- Three fire forums were held in partnership with the National Landcare Program (NLP) Landcare facilitator. The forums were aimed at the general community, Indigenous community and pastoralists. They showcased a series of current projects and activities across northern Australia that were dealing with fire and its effects on the landscape.
- From the pastoral fire forum a demonstration of a coordinated burning program between the state agency Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and neighbouring pastoralists was successfully implemented.
- Two road shows were held within the project. The



first covered nine topics focussed on reducing soil loss, irrigation, check banks on drainage lines, blue bush regeneration, gully erosion and weed control. The second road show showcased 14 local National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) projects and exposed landholders and stakeholders to a variety of different projects that were unknown but potentially beneficial to them.

- A case study of a fire was prepared in August 2008 highlighting the environmental impacts of the fire and the control processes undertaken. The case study will feed back to stakeholder groups so findings can be incorporated into their preventive and control practices.

Our Successes

- A survey was undertaken of those who attended the erosion workshops. The survey showed that attending landholders and employees were better able to plan and undertake erosion control works. This was demonstrated through at least 2850 km of station roads and fence-lines assessed for potential erosion problems, and works undertaken where needed as a direct result of those workshops.
- The bulk of the demonstration sites installed over the life of the project are still in operation and successfully assisting in erosion remediation activities on site.
- The Fire Forums and associated workshops successfully pulled together community members and stakeholders to give them information on the status of various fire related projects in northern Australia. Coordinated burning between DEC and landholders adjacent to DEC land resulted from the pastoral forum.
- On request, a further 150 DVDs (50 initially distributed in WA) demonstrating erosion rehabilitation techniques that were produced as part of this project were distributed across all the Kimberley and Pilbara region of Western Australia.

Benefits to the Ord Catchment

This project has been successful in developing a number of key benefits to the Ord Catchment including:

- Landholders reducing the effects of erosion - leading to improved water quality.
- Reduced infilling of waterways through sediment moved by erosion.
- Improved vegetation retention and improved primary production in the Ord catchment.
- Increased understanding of fire issues by the local community and stakeholders leading to a project to develop a local management plan and implement early season burning strategies.

Key Outcomes Achieved

The key outcomes of this project include:

- Best practice management strategies adopted by land managers that resulted in the protection and recovery of water resources and associated riparian and aquatic biodiversity.
- Reduced impacts of erosion threatening primary production and aquatic and riparian biological diversity.
- Greater understanding of landscape influences on land management.
- Engagement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous land managers in the natural resource management process.

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