TREAT Newsletter Cool Season April - June 2013

Coming Field Days

date	Time	Location
Sat 20 May	1.30 pm	Tolga / Atherton, meet at Tolga State School
Sat 22 June	1.30 pm	Tarzali / Atherton area, Corbett Road, Eden Vacuum

The 20 May field day has been cancelled to TREAT BCC (Barron Catchment Care) to show the work done to mitigate erosion in the Spring Creek catchment. BCC has organised a bus to transport us from Tolga State School to various sites. People need to turn up at the front of the school about 1.15 pm, to make a start at 1.30 pm. TREAT will provide an afternoon tea after the field day, back at the office.

The 22 June field day will look at the revegetation work on his place, started in March 2011. An afternoon tea will be provided afterwards.

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BCC and the Spring Creek Catchment

Geoff Dixon

Barron Catchment Care (formerly Barron River Integrated Catchment Management Association) was established in 1990 after the Howard Government's Natural Resource Management Strategy. Their mandate is to be implemented by the Commonwealth Catchment Management Authorities (NRM, YCC & BA) and non-statutory Catchment Management Associations (GLC). Mt & TRC) who brokered and administered the Commonwealth funding for Natural Resource Management (NRM) projects. The Howard Government's Commonwealth Natural Resource Management Initiative ran for 10 years (from 1997 (formerly TAG NRM) was created to the Howard Government's demise.

BCC members (both committee and ex-committee) come from backgrounds in: an avocado grower, artist, agriculture, landcare, Landcare facilitator, Landcare coordinator, Landcare Group President, Rural Lifestyle property owner, Rural Lifestyle property owner, Farm to Theatre Farm Stayer and Organic Farmer (who is running Regenerative Farm). Committees for each area meet regularly and each area has specific issues they address e.g. lower zone = lack of biodiversity/ recreation potential, central zone = revegetation/ management and upper zone = stormwater management.

The upper zone has been attempting to address stormwater velocity and runoff for over ten years. Farm management plans were developed and implemented. Gully erosion has been addressed by installing gully plugs and revegetation. Stormwater has been treated, hydrologically engaged to slow velocity and provide opportunities for future access, and over engagement. Gardens have been created the well conservation drains installed by the government in the 1970s as the main source of increased velocity in the Atherton area. Revegetation has been undertaken in the upper zone and the lower zone to provide habitat for birds and to reduce the impact of introduced agricultural weed. Thirty-five years have passed the track. Liquid stormwater has been treated by the wetlands to extensive erosion areas and increased sediment loads moving through the main waste system, ultimately impacting on the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon - ever endeared with Barron River rock and other rubbish.

Through the Federal Government's Reef Rescue Program (2009-2013) BCC have managed to acquire funding to tackle local hot spots in the Spring Creek Catchment. Spring Creek is a 1,500 ha catchment, which is a tributary of the Barron River. Spring Creek is the only Spring Creek within the Barron Catchment. Over the last 50 years, where access has been conducted at four locations (Kaban Road, Kaban Road, Tolga Road and Tolga Road) the creek has been subjected to extensive erosion and sediment loads. Spring Creek has been used as an open sewer and bund area to intercept very high velocity stormwater coming from the Boones Knob street network. Before this project, the stormwater was treated by a wetland and then released into the Spring Creek Catchment. Spring Creek is a very steep creek, which has cut into the hard rock (Tolga Granite) and has flowed into the sedimentary plains and the Tolga Volcanic Plateau (Kaban Road). Main soil-forming species were planted and the trees have now achieved canopy closure, which is another potent benefit of this project. This area is now utilized by local people exercising and walking their dogs.

In the second and third years BCC worked on Peace's property at the lower end of this catchment where, during heavy rain events, sediment was being flushed into the Barron River. This property is located on the Kaban Road (Tolga Road) and is part of the Cyclone Larry bucket, but progress was slow and tasks still needed to be addressed to finish the project in the last year of the last season. TRC approached BCC with the support of Peat Rescue funding. BCC established the lower area through the spring of June and July 2012 and finished the project in March 2013. Approximately 1500 trees were planted, including the Cyclone Larry bucket, TREAT did a fantastic job and a short cleaning bust.

During this same period BCC tackled a site in the middle section of the catchment where rock gravels were placed in a drain to lessen stormwater velocity and stop sediment from the concerned street and parkland. TRC helped with the peripheral. This area was an stormwater coming from the Kennedy Highway near the Big Pineapple and the main drainage trees throughout the production areas. Stormwater was treated by a wetland and released into the creek.

The wetland project sites are in the upper section of the catchment where BCC has established a number of projects to reduce sediment, fence and planted trees, including an agro-forestry plot. It is hoped that the Federal Government will extend their successful Reef Rescue Program for another three years. The Spring Creek Catchment is a very small catchment and, as such, is very manageable. We are conducting a field day on Saturday 20th May to look at the Spring Creek erosion sites. Participants are asked to meet at 1.15 pm. at the Tolga Primary School from car park where a bus will take us to the sites.

Ian Freeman's Revegetation

Barb Lansdey/ Ian Freeman

TREAT will hold a field day at Ian Freeman's property on Saturday 22 June starting at 2pm.

This is a great opportunity to take a walk around the property and learn about practical revegetation. The property is highly visible from Lake Barrine Road and provides a great opportunity to notice that what was once a grassy paddock is now heavily covered with mature trees.

TREAT was very fortunate that Ian purchased the property in August 2010 specifically to plant trees and create the final link for the Parkinson Creek Wildlife Corridor to connect with the National Park at Lake Barrine.

Now, eleven flourishing years later, Ian Freeman and the first 3 community plantings suffered from dry weather and frosts. Ian diligently waters the trees in the dry season, but the frosts last year were particularly bad, and in the areas on either side of the creek, approximately 50 trees died. These will need to be replaced. The last plantings for the creek bed and banks of the creek, Friday, morning volunteers on 8 March 2013.

This year, the community planting days were held in January in its to establish more tree growth before winter frosts, and therefore hopefully survive better than last year's plantings. Ian Freeman's property is located on the Kaban Road (Tolga Road) and is part of the Cyclone Larry bucket, but progress was slow and tasks still needed to be addressed to finish the project in the last year of the last season. TRC approached BCC with the support of Peat Rescue funding. BCC established the lower area through the spring of June and July 2012 and finished the project in March 2013. Approximately 1500 trees were planted, including the Cyclone Larry bucket, TREAT did a fantastic job and a short cleaning bust.

There are always some trees in target plantings, and the first 3 community plantings suffered from dry weather and frosts. Ian diligently waters the trees in the dry season, but the frosts last year were particularly bad, and in the areas on either side of the creek, approximately 50 trees died. These will need to be replaced. The last plantings for the creek bed and banks of the creek, Friday, morning volunteers on 8 March 2013.

There are now large areas of canopy closure in the first (2011) planting around a small remnant in the gully, and Ian reports that wildlife has already started using the habitat provided by the trees and shrubs in the planting.

Although big plantings are very well suited for scientific trials, Ian has tried various combinations of fertilizer addition, mulching and maintenance. Generally, success has been good (weed management, particularly grass maintenance (weed and grass exclusion).

Ian's observations

- Plant early in the season to get good root growth prior to the frosts and dry periods.
- Water the trees when required, especially in the first 2 months after planting.
- Keep all weeds (grass and other) away from the trees, especially the grass, many, many from the trees.
- Watering just around the trees is good in the short term but later, landscape dig in the mulch and damaged(?) many trees.
- Mulch is very important for weed control.

The first day will start at 2pm until 3.45pm. We will walk to the other side of the creek, crossing the creek and then walk back to the 1st planting and Cyclone Road. Finally walking back to the shed through the National Park. An afternoon tea will then be held in the shed. All are welcome to attend.

Right Tree, Right Place, Right Time, for the Right Reasons

Nigel Tucker

Volunteers at the potting bench

Lack of rain TREAT 50th anniversary year. For any locals focused on the 50th anniversary celebration, TREAT 50 years is a fact in itself, but to achieve this in a regional area is quite amazing. Not only has TREAT been instrumental in organising planting days, but in the Atherton Tablelands community groups have traditionally struggled to maintain a membership base and to attract new members. Volunteers are the lifeblood of the work afterwards for 3 years and it was heartening to see the face about ... we just do what we do!. But there has been a change in the last 10 years, with the ageing of the baby boomers and the changes which have made as a result of WHS and other influence.

When I joined TREAT in 1984 the organisation boasted 35 members. On my first Friday as DPWS Lake Eacham nursery manager I had 35 people turn up for the Friday morning tea and the nursery bought in over sales of $7,000 Today TREAT has around 500 member households, and TREAT volunteers have planted over 1,000,000 trees. Over the last 10 years grants have been as high as $750,000 and TREAT's membership alone now contributes to the local economy. Back in 1984 I was the only person in North Queensland who was paid to restore habitat. Today, projects in Queensland alone are the most popular restoration destination.

100 people in North Queensland derive their income from tree planting. TREAT members have been running the series of certified courses. At that time, knowledge of propagating native plants was restricted to genera like Eucalyptus and Acacia, and if you wanted to propagate Rainforest species, you had to go to Queensland Forestry Department in Gympie. Propagation was a trial and error. Growing seedlings was a mystery, and there was not even a little research done. Today, we have revolutionised the choice and variety of seedlings available. Today the Lake Eacham nursery propagates hundreds of carefully selected species and over the course of the years has made a huge contribution to the local economy and environment.

Early TREAT plantings featured plenty of failures and unprofessional results. TREAT members would labour with plantings in tall Guinea Grass and Lantana, and the trees would die. Today, we have learned that we need to kill the grass and weeds around the seedlings (grass (non and over) was even found on Seven of caring hectares). Along with herbicides, weed exclusion using herbicide boasts standard practice, greatly speeding up canopy closure, reducing maintenance times and enhancing plant survival. Today, plantings are well-planned, well-cared for, and well-monitored. Volunteers are the lifeblood of the work afterwards for 3 years and it was heartening to see the face about ... we just do what we do!. But there has been a change in the last 10 years, with the ageing of the baby boomers and the changes which have made as a result of WHS and other influence.

Traditionally, there were problems with human-centred reasons. Soil erosion, windbreaks, shade and beautification (early much sowed up people's choice). Today, we understand that greater emphasis must be placed on habitat and fragmentation, but in the early 1980s, we had no knowledge of the ecology of the Atherton Tablelands. Back