

**SEARCH CRITERIA**

<b>Model</b>	Model A: Empowerment Model
<b>Industry</b>	Rural communities, regional communities
<b>Focus/Level</b>	Community
<b>Outcomes</b>	Building community, building management skills
<b>Special Interest Groups</b>	Other

**1. PROJECT TITLE:**

Central Highland Regional Resource Use Planning Project PILOT

**2. FUNDERS:**

Land & Water Australia, CSIRO, Department of Natural Resources and Mines Queensland, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Local Government and Planning

**3. PROVIDERS:**

DNRM, CSIRO

**4. KEY CONTACTS:**

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**5. INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY:**

Rural Community Groups (eg Fitzroy Basin Food & Fibre Group, Agforce)

Human services Sector

Sustainable use of natural resources

Regional planning

Central Queensland/Queensland

Funding for the pilot concluded in August 2001. Changed funding and management structures were put into place after this date.

**6. PROJECT CONTEXT:**

There have been significant pressures on regional Australia to move towards both more sustainable and equitable systems of production and resource management (Dale, A.P. et al. 2000). Regional planning approaches are increasingly seen as a way of deliver sustainable natural resource use. Land and Water Resources R&D Corporation (LWRR&DC) commissioned CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems (then Tropical Agriculture) to undertake a review of regional resource use planning in Australia. As a direct result of this review the Central Highlands Regional Resource Use Planning Project was funded to develop and evaluate new and more effective approaches to regional planning for sustainable resource use.

The Central Highlands Region is a well-defined sub-region within Central Queensland. It comprises a unique set of geographical and sectoral interests. The region is part of the Fitzroy River catchment and effectively constitutes one of the six

sub-catchments of the system but includes parts of the Burdekin River and a small part of the Cooper catchment.

It comprises some 95,000 square kilometres and encompasses the 5 shires of Bauhinia, Belyando, Emerald, Jericho and Peak Downs. This area is part of two significant bio-regional regions – the Brigalow Belt and the Desert Uplands (Sattler and Williams, 1999). Over half of the Jericho Shire falls within the Desert Uplands biogeographical region and the remainder falling within the Brigalow Belt biogeographical region which is characterised by relatively fertile soils.

The region has a sub-tropical, semi-arid climate with high rainfall variability that contributes to many of the challenges facing land managers.

The region supports a population of approximately 30,748 people (ABS 1996 Census of Population) that is heavily dependant on extensive primary production and mining industries for it's livelihood (Powell and Chalmers 1999).

This regional population is undergoing significant change due to shifts in these dominant industries. This is couples with the emergence of new industries with different labour demands.

The Central Highlands has undergone significant changes in recent years with changes in the way water and land resources are being used. The trend has been from native pasture-based sheep and beef production to broadscale clearing of brigalow and broadacre grain production. The use of water in the region has escalated with the development of the Emerald Irrigation Area and rapid expansion of irrigated cotton and horticultural production. The coal industry and it's associated infrastructure has also emerged as a significant user of the regions resources both in terms of land and water.

As in many other regions of Queensland these changes in land use have contributed to increasing conflict and increasing pressure to make land use decisions that will contribute to the economic viability of the region. In the past there have been some significant NRM decisions made that are now effecting the region in terms of biodiversity, water quality and social impacts.

Since mid 1997, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems (formally Tropical Agriculture), the Queensland Government, Central Queensland University, the Central Highlands Development Corporation and LWRRDC have worked collaboratively with key regional stakeholders to establish and evaluate a more negotiated approach to regional planning for sustainable resource use. In the past, Governments have tended to drive regional planning in response to resource use crises or single-issue focus (e.g. drought or protection of high value heritage areas).

## **7. PROJECT NICHE (SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES):**

The Central Highlands Regional Resource Use Planning Project (CHRRUPP) aims to set up a more integrated, regionally driven approach which can explore a range of relevant issues of and the interaction between them. It does this by:

1. Directly supporting regional stakeholder groups to do their own regional planning with respect to NRM issues; and
2. Supporting regional stakeholder groups to get together in a structured way to negotiate regional solutions to common resource use problems.

Thirteen regional interest groups are recognised as the stakeholders in the planning of resource use in this region. These "sectors" elect or in some way identify a representative and a proxy that attend three Regional Coordinating Committee meetings (RCC meetings). RCC meetings provide a forum for the discussion of

regional issues and for negotiation of regionally agreed solutions or processes to address the issues.

The State, Local and Federal Governments are recognised as sectors with equal standing along side the more recognisable regional groups such as primary production, mining and conservation sectors.

Although CHRRUPP is a planning project, the development of one single regional plan was not identified as a milestone of this project. However one could emerge if negotiated by regional groups. The view within the RCC was that by continuing a dialogue together about the regionally important issues, a consensus about a way of addressing the issue might then emerge.

A CHRRUPP Regional Strategic Plan has been developed with an agreed regional vision for the sustainable use of natural resources. The Plan consists of a collation of the full set of regional strategies being developed by CHRRUPP sectors and other regional groups not formally associated with CHRRUPP. It also incorporates those strategies upon which all sectors have agreed to progress in partnership through the Regional Coordinating Committee. The RCC provides an integrative mechanism for the sectoral plans.

In August 2001, the RCC decided to continue the work of CHRRUPP by forming a cooperative under the Queensland Cooperatives Act.

#### **8. PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH:** *Group Facilitation/empowerment model*

The RCC operating principals support a process where all sectors are empowered to participate equally.

Dale and Bellamy (1998) identified three principals that should underpin effective regional planning for sustainable natural resource planning. They are based on building the vitality of the existing regional planning systems, rather than imposing a new system upon a complex set of existing regional arrangements. This means building the vitality and understanding of the people involved in regional planning.

Community Capacity Building has become almost a “bad” word in current discussion about community involvement in NRM planning. It is seen to imply that the community has no capacity to begin with and reminds me of a similar discussion about “the deserving poor” receiving welfare from a benevolent society. Capacity building is an essential element of achieving any change in the way regions undertake planning and it has been interpreted in this project as:

- the need to develop sectoral understanding of planning issue (including legislation, impacts and tools) development of skills in negotiation, conflict resolution, leadership;
- building sectoral mandates for representatives; and
- access to resources that enable sector representatives to communicate with their sector members (cost of fax streams, newsletters, teleconferences on critical issues).

#### **9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES:**

An allocation of \$30,000 was made to undertake capacity building, skills development and communication activities. This was subsequently reduced to \$15,000 under the funding received by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (NR & M).

The project team consists of a group of researchers and technical people based in Brisbane and a project facilitator based in Emerald.

Thirteen regional interest groups are recognised as the stakeholders in the planning of resource use in this region. These groups are communities of interest and can exist around one or more organisations e.g. Fitzroy Basin Food and Fibre Group or are comprised of individuals that share a common interest or “stake” in an issue e.g. Human Services Sector.

Generally, each regional stakeholder group consists of a small working group of up to 12 or 13 people and a larger, less engaged group of people. These “sectors” elect or in some way identify a representative and a proxy that attend three Regional Coordinating Committee meetings (RCC meetings). RCC meetings provide a forum for the discussion of regional issues and for negotiation of regionally agreed solutions or processes to address the issues.

Funding for the pilot concluded in August 2001. Changed funding and management structures were put into place after this date.

#### **10.PROCESS/METHODS USED:**

The role of the Project Facilitator is to provide:

1. Facilitation and coordination of the sectoral planning of regional issues (including State Government agencies involved in CHRRUPP);
2. Facilitation of the development of sector capacity to participate in regional planning activities;
3. Facilitate communication within and between sectors; and
4. Progressing and facilitating regionally agreed projects to address the common NRM issue of the region.

The role of the project facilitator is pivotal to CHRRUPP as it provides the linkage between the technical and research support that is provided by the distant project team and the regional sectors. The project team initially identified a range of skills required for this role. They were focussed on the more technical areas in NRM issues and specifically in strategic planning across a range of sectors. As the project evolved, the skills used were in the area of communication, understanding personal interactions, group dynamics and group processes

Equal participation is achieved by:

- Providing resources to ensure appropriate representation especially for under-resourced sectors such as the conservation and indigenous sectors;
- Decisions that are made by developing a consensus;
- Meetings that are strongly facilitated to achieve equality of “air time” between sectors and to develop “common ground” during difficult negotiations; and
- Supporting all sectors to access information that improves their input into regional planning activities.

#### **11. IMPACTS TO DATE (AND EVALUATION APPROACHES USED):**

There has been two comprehensive evaluations undertaken by the CSIRO team, they are both available at [www.chrrupp.tag.csiro.au](http://www.chrrupp.tag.csiro.au). These evaluation consisted of individual interviews as well as more anecdotal feedback on the success of the project.

CHRRUPP has precipitated significant changes in the way this region finds solutions to critical NRM issues. It has done this by influencing decision-makers and process designers within all sectors.

The project’s focus on capacity building and creating an environment for a genuine dialogue between all members, has caused fundamental changes within people. At the beginning of the project RCC members were operating in a “combatant” way;

concerned about the numbers of one sector or another at the table. By building personal relationships and modelling a process of developing consensus on issues, the RCC now operates effectively and has reached a degree of maturity. It is becoming apparent that there is also a "ripple effect" occurring where RCC members are influencing the organizations they participate in.

#### **12. EFFECTIVENESS:**

The pilot resulted in establishing a cooperative in August 2001, with a manager and Board of Directors. It is now called the Central Highland Regional Resource Use Planning Cooperative. The only external funds coming into the Cooperative come through specific one-off funds from DNRM for specific projects. The Cooperative is negotiating with State Government agencies to provide a regional consultation function for them.

#### **13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:**

Pollock L (2002) **Building a System of Regional Planning for Sustainability by Developing a Regional Dialogue Between Regional Interest Groups Successes I NRM Stakeholder Collaboration Workshop 8 June, Griffith University**

A list of related publications are available on the website [www.chrrupp.tag.csiro.au](http://www.chrrupp.tag.csiro.au)

#### **14. ISSUES:**

CHRRUPP ceased to be a research project funded by CSIRO at the end of June 2000. Agreement had been reached by the regional stakeholders that CHRRUPP should continue to exist after the completion of the research component and funding was secured from DNR&M to continue the operation of CHRRUPP for an additional 12 months. Only part funding has since been secured for the next 12 months and to position itself to receive funding, CHRRUPP needed to become a legal identity.

The RCC agreed to pursue the cooperative model for incorporation since it offered the best translation of the CHRRUPP principles. In this model the RCC sector representatives become the directors of the cooperative board, elected by the sector members. Members of the cooperative identify as being members of their preferred sector and elect their director nominee prior to the AGM. At the AGM the director nominees are endorsed by the board as the new directors.

There are some issues that have yet to be explored concerning the membership of corporate members such as Agforce and how individual members who are not Agforce members can have input.

The issue of involvement of State Government as directors of a board were overcome by including state government as an independent director without voting rights. It is possible that this might also be the situation for the federal government rep.

The project facilitator will become the managing director so that there is a management responsibility but also the capacity for the MD to represent the board on other boards or organisations. The Managing Director has the day-to-day operational responsibility of the organisation and may use a small committee of 2-3 other directors to provide executive direction. A Chair is identified by the Board on a meeting-by-meeting basis.

All else will remain relatively similar to the way business is conducted by the RCC now in that it is envisaged that the operational side of CHRRUPP will be addressed in a business session prior to the technical planning session (either by teleconference or by short and sharp business meeting on the same day).

This is a new path that CHRRUPP is going down and one that has created some excitement amongst the stakeholders and many outside observers. DNR&M are interested to see how this model will work given that there is a need to do business differently in the region with National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

**15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:**

CHRRUPP has illustrated that achieving sustainability is not as simple as adopting a regional approach. Managing complex social, economic and biophysical systems in an integrated and sustainable way requires taking a systems approach to planning and appreciating that the “cog” in the system is the people. By focusing on the people and encouraging an on-going dialogue about the issues and possible solutions, an important element can be addressed simultaneously with the other elements of the planning system.

There is no alternative to all regional stakeholders collectively deciding that they have a mutual interest in managing the regional landscape in an integrated way. This requires Government acceptance that they are actually dealing with a complex system. It also requires Government acceptance that improving planning for the system requires building the capacity (and the power base) of all key regional stakeholders. Government needs to move from responding to regional needs through ad hoc programs, and actually explore new models of responding to regional need based on direct negotiations with regional stakeholders in a collective environment.

**16. REVIEW METHODS:**

Based on paper by Lynda Pollock, Regional Facilitator, Central Highlands Resource Planning Project, Emerald & an unpublished paper on an organisational overview of the project.

Iterations with key project personnel.