

SEARCH CRITERIA

Model	Model A: Empowerment Model
Industry	Community
Focus/Level	Industry, community
Outcomes	Building management skills
Special Interest Groups	Indigenous

1. PROJECT NAME:

Increasing Adoption of Best Management Practices in the Fitzroy Basin Region

2. FUNDERS:

National Heritage Trust

3. PROVIDERS:

Fitzroy Basin Association Inc.

4. KEY CONTACTS:

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5. INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY:

The project primarily involved landholders in the grazing industry in Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability Area (CQSS) – Fitzroy Basin, Boyne/Caalioppe and other coastal catchments. The key issue was best management practices for riparian zones and remnant vegetation. However local government and community groups also participated in the management of Council reserves. The project was based in Rockhampton, Central Queensland, however FBA staff were also located in Moura, Clermont, and Emerald.

6. PROJECT CONTEXT:

The project took place within the CQSS area as defined above. The CQSS follows the principles identified in the National Strategy for Ecological Sustainable Development (NSED) and Queensland's Integrated Catchment Management Strategy, in particular for regional approaches.

The CQSS places high value on regional approaches because the Central Queensland (CQ) environment is unique - the climate, ecosystems, history and land use found within the region occur nowhere else in Queensland or Australia. Therefore the region's use of its natural resources is unique.

Central Queensland needed to develop an approach to sustainability that is specific to its region. The CQSS also argued that the value placed on their rural communities, primary industry, larger urban centres, regional ecosystems and mineral wealth means that these things, among others, must be built into a picture of sustainability for the Central Queensland region.

The CQSS was developed over a five-year period with significant investment of community, industry, state government, and the Natural Heritage Trust. The process included technical information gathering, community workshops, and feedback processes such as the Sustainable Futures Symposium. Details of the process are outlined in the Strategy. The outcome was an across stakeholder agreed plan for the management of the resources and environments of the river catchments of the Central Queensland region. It is endorsed under the Queensland Government ICM Program and NHT Regional Strategy.

The CQSS has identified the social, economic, and environmental sustainability issues of the region and aims to - provide a framework for achieving the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the natural environment in Central Queensland; encourage the active participation of all stakeholders in natural resource and environmental planning, decision-making and management; and guide investment in natural resource and environmental management in Central Queensland.

The CQSS was developed through the period of Natural Heritage Trust. It has since been reviewed and updated to meet new requirements (target setting) in the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ) and NHT2. The updated CQSS2 sets has identified targets (short, medium, long term) to manage regional water quality, salinity and biodiversity with the CQSS being the basis of the Regional Plan for the Fitzroy Basin.

7. PROJECT NICHE (SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES):

The “Increasing Adoption of Best management Practices in the Fitzroy Basin Region NHT Application” identifies the main short-term objectives being the on-ground delivery of the project through:

1. Fitzroy Basin BMPs Devolved Grant (Q. 12 (a) Project Outputs).
2. Neighbourhood Catchment Management Plans (Q.12 (b) Project Outputs).
3. Promotion of Fitzroy Basin BMPs, in particular farmer experiences with adoption (Q. 12 (b) Project Outputs).

It was proposed that the project would facilitate the on-ground implementation of the CQSS at an effective and relevant scale by increasing adoption of BMPs at the property and Neighbourhood Catchment Management scale. It would also aim increase community capacity to manage natural resources, communicate the best available natural resource management knowledge, and be in partnership with existing initiatives and organisations. Specific CQSS strategies included: (regional priorities*)

- Biodiversity Strategy 1 – Improve community awareness and promote community involvement in protecting the region’s natural environment, and assist people to develop a sound working knowledge of ecological concepts.
- Biodiversity Strategy 6 – Conserve a comprehensive and representative range of regional ecosystems (both on and off official reserve) and establish a network of connected native vegetation remnants, riparian zones, wetlands and estuaries.
- *Land Use Strategy 2 – Protect and enhance riparian vegetation throughout Central Qld.
- *Land Use Strategy 6 – Develop and implement best management practice guidelines for land use activities and industries on all land types, in particular soil conservation and timber and native pasture management.

- *Weeds Management 2 – Integrate pest management with other natural resource management and community projects.
- *Economic Viability Strategy 1 – Promote best management practices, property management planning, risk management processes in the region to boost producer's preparedness for difficult times.
- *Economic Viability Strategy 2 - Support and promote financial assistance and cost sharing options for landholders where the implementation of natural resource and environmental management strategies result in public gain, reduces private production capacity.

8. PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH:

The approach of this project was to use targeted activities at the property and neighbourhood catchment scale. First, landholders were to be engaged to develop and implement of Neighbourhood Catchment Management Plans that integrate land, water and vegetation management across adjoining properties. Second, a Fitzroy Basin Best Management Practices Devolved Grant aimed to support on-ground action to better manage land, water and vegetation resources at the property scale.

Public benefits outlined in the project proposal were to include biodiversity conservation, habitat enhancement, soil conservation, weed control, water quality protection, coordination of natural resource service providers, a more sustainable farming and grazing industry, increased adoption and awareness of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES:

NHT funding for the project was \$700 800. A break down of funds are in the table below.

The project team included Tony Nunan (Officer), Michael Bent (Project Leader), Shane Marsterson (Officer), Stephen Riches (NC Officer), Kristian Smith (Support Officer), and Patricia Bock (FBA Waterwatch). The following table shows the major stakeholder groups in the project and their type of involvement in the project.

	Proponent Contribution (agency and community projects use this column)			Other Contributor 1* (Funds & In-kind)	Other Contributor 2* (Funds & In-kind)	NHT Funds	Total Project Funds
	Cash	Labour and other in –kind	Total				
Approved	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Paid employment costs (a)	-	-	-	-	-	108 800	108 800
In-kind employment costs (b)	-	487 000	487 000	-	-	-	487 000
Operating costs (b)	389 500	-	389 500	105 000	55 000	592 000	1 141 500
Capital costs (c)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL Approved	389 500	487 000	876 500	105 000	55 000	700,80 0	1 737 300
Expended	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Paid employment costs (a)	-	-	-	-	-	47 096	47 096
In-kind employment costs (b)	-	506 325	506 325	-	-	-	506 325
Operating costs (b)	506 325	-	506 325	105 000	55 000	662 130	1 328 455
Capital costs (c)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL Expended	506 325	506 325	1 012 650	105 000	55 000	709 226	1 881 876
Profit/Loss¹	116 825	19 325	136 150	0	0	84260	144 576

¹ Total Expended vs. Total Approved indicates an additional \$136 150 Proponent Contribution was expended principally through in-kind cash/labour through the Devolved Grant projects. An additional \$8 880 NHT Funds was expended that was interest earned on NHT Funds banked in term deposits until spent.

Category	Name of Group	Type of Involvement	Number of Participants
Various stakeholders	Various groups	Project planning	20
Neighbourhood Catchment Team and Waterwatch	Fitzroy Basin Association	Implemented project activities from project development through to monitoring	5
Neighbourhood Catchment Team	Natural Resources & Mines	Neighbourhood Catchment monitoring data, modelling, communication, and extension	4
Bushcare Support	Greening Australia	Technical and on-ground vegetation management support	1
Regional Bushcare Coordinator	Environmental Protection Agency/QPWS	Technical support, Assessment panel, Bushcare program communication	1
Technical Group	Environmental Protection Agency; Department of Primary Industries; Natural Resources & Mines	Technical on-farm support, Assessment panel, Nature refuge agreement	7
Community	Fitzroy Basin Association – Management Committee members	Project management advice, Assessment panel, communication	2
Community	Landholders	Investment in on-ground projects, Project monitoring, Neighbourhood catchment planning, Communication with neighbours	120
Community	Landholders	Landholders not doing a devolved grant project, but have had some participation via Monitoring field days etc	40
Community	Lake Elphinstone Alliance	Lake Elphinstone Action Project	30
Local Government	Nebo Shire Council, Emerald Shire Council, Peak Downs Shire Council, Banana Shire Council	Lake Elphinstone Action Project, Rifle Range Reserve Action Project, Belcong Creek Parkinsonia Control Project, Don River Parkinsonia Control Project	20
Pest Management Groups	Central Highlands Pest Management Group, Capricorn Pest Management Group, Parthenium Action Group	Identification of strategic parkinsonian control projects, Support local government involvement	20
Industry	Agforce, OneSteel	Project communication	3
Volunteers	Conservation Volunteers Australia	Lake Elphinstone Action Project	15
Community	General	Gumoo Bullaroo – Where the Rivers Meet Catchment Gathering	200

10. PROCESS/METHODS USED:

In the Final NHT report of the project, the following methods were described as being used throughout the project:

- Regional workshops – several workshops, 120 people;
- Community groups – several groups, 120 people;
- Rural Weekly Central Queensland Edition – 2 page spread, several thousand copies in regional papers;
- Central Queensland Healthy Waterways – project segment, broadcast daily, several thousand viewers;
- WIN TV 6:00 PM Central Queensland News Bulletin – 2 stories, several thousand viewers;
- Fitzroy Catch-Up – one article in each quarter, 400 copies x 4 editions;
- Gumoo Bullaroo - Where the Rivers Meet – 4 field days/bus trips, 150 participants;
- Devolved Grant Monitoring Workshops – 8 workshops in conjunction with other groups, 150 people;
- Dawson Catchment Water Quality Forum – 60 forum participants;
- Fitzroy Basin Association Annual Report – 200 copies, 70 distributed at Annual General Meeting;
- Fitzroy Basin Association Stakeholders Council – PowerPoint @ 6 months & 12 months, 60 people;
- Project Technical Report & Future Directions – 50 copies.
- Time constraints limited out ability to make distribute project signs, this will be addressed ASAP.

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

The evaluation process was conducted by either telephone or face-to-face interviews of 12 assessment panel personnel, other Agency and Project Officers and 12 Landholder applicants over a 3 week period during July and August 2002. All responses were transcribed verbatim and all respondents were assured of anonymity. (from independent evaluation.)

A major task of the project was the identification of devolved grant project sites. An independent evaluation concluded that this first priority task has been completed. 81 applications were submitted and 71 have been approved. These applications were reviewed by an assessment panel comprising technical and landholder representatives. A number of applications required further development but were eventually approved. Project agreement, on-ground works, monitoring and grant payments are currently being completed.

The second major area of activity identified in the independent evaluation was implementing the neighbourhood catchment concept and development of plans. Due to the tight project timeframes this has had to wait until devolved grant activities were progressed. However devolved grant applications were sought on a neighbourhood catchment basis and the result has been the development of informal catchment groups. Fitzroy Basin Association has also set up GIS mapping to support this planning activity. The project has further developed practical working partnerships between government agencies and community groups.

12. EFFECTIVENESS:

With 488 people being actively involved in the project, the 2003 Final Report of the *Fitzroy Basin Neighbourhood Catchment Action Project* summarised the outcomes and effectiveness of the project as follows:

- It is estimated that 488 people participated in project activities including FBA Monitoring Booklet, field days and workshops, Isaac/Connors Bird Survey, Weeds of National Significance, Gumoo Bullaroo Forum, Dawson Salinity Talk, and numerous other extension activities.
- Increased activity and involvement in regional natural resource management in geographic gaps areas like Isaac/Connors and assisted evolution and development of community neighbourhood catchments.
- 81 Devolved Grant projects were developed and assessed in total.
- 72 projects were approved for funding - several required a 2nd assessment.
- 61 projects have been implemented, 4 declined the grant offer after approval, and 6 were deferred for future funding (due to drought), and 10 were not approved.
- Of the 61 projects implemented:
 - \$612,927 Devolved Grant (GST Exc) were allocated (\$10,048/project)
 - \$1,012,650 In-kind (GST Exc) were contributed (\$16,6001/project)
 - 316 km of fencing was + 108 off-stream water points were constructed
 - 30,291 Ha of land will be managed by the project (\$20/ha DG + 34/ha In-kind = \$54/ha) including:
 - Voluntary Management Agreements covering 24,745 Ha of remnant and riparian zone vegetation.
 - 1 Nature Refuge Proposal - Kemmis Creek Station, Nebo (1750 ha)
 - 2 Strategic Weed (Parkinsonia) Control Projects including 30 Property Pest Management Agreements (5546 Ha)
 - 2 projects in Wetlands of National Significance

13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:

Bent M, Increasing Adoption of Best Management Practices in the Fitzroy Basin Region - Natural Heritage Trust 2001-2002, Final Report, Queensland

Bent M, Increasing Adoption of Best Management Practices in the Fitzroy Basin Region - Natural Heritage Trust 2001-2002, New Project Application Form B, Queensland

A. D. McHugh, D. M. Auchettl, 2002, *Fitzroy Basin Neighbourhood Catchment Action Project Evaluation project - A survey of project management issues*, Auchettl & McHugh Consultancy Services, Emerald, Queensland

14. ISSUES:

An independent evaluation of the project included the following issues:

- Prior preparation and planning, communication, well-balanced assessment panel and more staff training would have enhanced the project considerably. Incorporated in these concepts were the issues of timeliness, when and how to approach landholders, what should be targeted and what forms the basis for its selection.
- The project required a structured framework on how the project would progress, which could include an appreciation of time and space and possibly alleviate a number of issues.
- In terms of prior preparation and planning a wider view has to be taken and thus target selection should be related to national and state-wide plans. Therefore the

integration of other programs and support from appropriate agencies should be sought at the earliest opportunity.

- Communication was described as good and open, but was found lacking, if not weak in the initial phases and delivering the *message* to the landholders. If it were not for some experienced officers and previously established associations, the project may not have succeeded, which emphasised the importance of experience and active community groups.
- The concept/project objectives need to be communicated to the communities/landholders in the target areas, utilising the NC approach. Once clear understanding is gained through presentations, such as forums and workshops, field days could be used to showcase what has or can be done. Once perceptions are tested from appropriate feedback and expressions of interest, landholders could then be canvassed for applications.
- The assessment panel should be well balanced, in that, it should include a significant number of landholders, at least equivalent to the sum of FBA officers and agency staff. This should limit inconsistencies and expand understanding of production systems.
- The project failed to provide adequate staff orientation and familiarisation of the many facets of the project ahead. The required levels of expert knowledge, local sub-catchment knowledge, commitment of individuals and community groups and the depth of assistance required by some landholders were underestimated.
- Maximum support and resources (mapping) should be provided to the applicants and Project Officers to ensure applications are well developed and selections are based on merit.
- Landholders and groups that had a previous association with FBA and/or had attended the workshop had a considerable advantage. Those without this advantaged remained unclear on a number of issues until their applications went in and they gained feedback. The lack of familiarity with the NC and overall project concept expressed by a number of respondents and the usefulness of the workshop and field days, suggests that an opportunity was missed at the outset of the project.
- There is a lot of scepticism out there, but networking has been the greatest beneficiary. It would seem the post-project field day has been instrumental in advancing landholder and community involvement. Bearing this in mind, "It would have been better to have had a workshop before we were approached."

15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:

The Increasing Adoption of Best Management Practices in the Fitzroy Basin NHT Project demonstrated that the neighbourhood catchment concept can greatly increase adoption of best management practices. This approach involved approaching all landholders within a neighbourhood catchment with the opportunity to be involved in the project.

The result was a much higher uptake of best management practices than was previously the case due to economic or awareness barriers to adoption. This project focused on providing a devolved grant for Bushcare and Rivercare purposes (eg. Riparian zone management) and increased adoption of this practice from 10% to 75%. This is similar to sustainable farming system adoption achieved in the NR&M Focus Neighbourhood Catchment Project and much greater than the 20% early adopter figure often quoted. The challenge will be to extend best management practice adoption into whole property management.

16. REVIEW METHODS:

- Review of available documentation
- Interaction with Michael Bent