

ground cover



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

www.nccma.vic.gov.au

February 10

*Keeping
you up-to-
date with all
the Landcare
news*

A message from the Acting Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

Happy New Year and welcome to the first big bumper edition of Groundcover for 2010. We have plenty of news to share with you – February and March always seem to be such busy months after the (relative) quiet of January. There's plenty in this edition, from news and events, to training days and workshops, so take a break with a cuppa and sit down and catch up on all the news across the region.

Congratulations to all of those groups who were successful in receiving a Second Generation Landcare grant in the latest round. Once again the quality of applications was high and it's great to see such a diverse range of interesting and innovative projects being undertaken across the region. We are now busily processing payment for groups that have returned their paperwork - if your group hasn't done so yet, please do and we can get your payment out to you. A full list of successful applications is now available on our website – go to our home page at www.nccma.vic.gov.au and follow the links. A round up of grants across the region can also be found on page 9 of this newsletter.

Some of you may have attended the 'Landcare is for Everyone' expo last year in Melbourne. Well it's back again, only bigger and better in 2010, now with a Landcare precinct at Melbourne's Sustainable Living Festival on 19, 20 and 21 February, in the heart of the city at Federation Square. If you'd like to be involved, please contact me. Further information on the expo can be found on page 6.

Finally, I'd like to highlight the National Landcare Forum 'Landcare celebrates - 20 years of achievements and future challenges', being held from 23-25 March in Adelaide. North Central CMA is keen to ensure that there is community input from our region at the Forum, and to this end we are sponsoring two community members to attend. Please see page 6 for more details and how to apply.

Recruitment is now well underway for a new Regional Landcare Coordinator – we should be able to let you know who the lucky person is in our next newsletter. It's been a pleasure and a privilege for me to be able to work with Landcare over the recent months, and I'll be here until April working with the new coordinator, after which I'll be heading off to have my first baby. Thanks to everyone – and until I bump into you at the next Landcare event, good luck and keep on Landcaring!

Warm regards,

Melanie Taube

Acting Regional Landcare Coordinator

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And the winner is...

Congratulations to the Lake Boga and District Landcare group which has won our prize of \$500 worth of tools/equipment for completing the national Landcare survey conducted annually by Professor Allan Curtis of Charles Sturt University.

Lake Boga and District Landcare group was one of the 47 NRM groups in the North Central region which completed the survey. Thank you very much to all who took the time to participate –

your information is invaluable for planning and delivering the support you need at local, regional and state levels, now and in the future.

Our own Landcare team will be asking all groups to complete an important second survey shortly – and another \$500 worth of tools or equipment is up for grabs. Your group can be in the running to win one of two \$250 prizes just by participating in the survey. For more details on how to be in it to win it, see the article 'Not just another survey' on page 2.



NEWS

Second Gen congratulations

Congratulations to the 53 Landcare and Friends groups and networks that successfully applied for Second Generation Landcare Grants. A total of \$268,263 has so far been distributed throughout the North Central CMA region under "the program, which is funded by the Victorian Government.

As always, revegetation, and pest plant and animal control were the focus for many Major Integrated Projects, with about half the successful applicants working to improve and protect the condition of our waterways.

There was a pleasing number of applications for funding of biodiversity linkages and corridors, including projects at Axe Creek, Callawadda, Banyena, Muckleford/Walmer and around the Kerang Lakes.

There is also a great deal of excellent work going on to protect and enhance indigenous remnants, including endangered and rare species and communities such as Black Gums, White Box woodland, sand ridge woodland, Black Box communities and creek-line grassy woodland.

One more unusual project is the creation of wildlife biodiversity ponds, using disused irrigation channels and dams. Well done Jeffcott North Landcare Group for coming up with this one, which may inspire some other groups to do the same.

All 13 Promotion and Education projects demonstrated plenty of creative thinking, not to mention a diverse range of methods. Funded items included newsletters, brochures, bus tours, signs, relationship-building events, establishment of a trial site to demonstrate the rehabilitation of degraded land and – well done to you strategic thinkers – several planning workshops.

This year we provided technical feedback to many groups and requested changes to some projects prior to final funding approval. We hope the groups concerned found this helpful. In another change, we will send final reports in October to all groups, to be completed by December 2010.

If – as sometimes happens – you encounter hitches or delays with your project, please notify the Regional Landcare Coordinator as soon as possible. Explaining your circumstances earlier rather than later makes it much easier for us to grant extensions of time.

A full list of successful applications can be accessed on the North Central CMA website at www.nccma.vic.gov.au

Not just another survey!

"Not another survey", we hear you saying. "We're too busy doing the real work on the ground. We're sick of paperwork. We're volunteers, you know!"

Yes, we do know, and the aim of an important upcoming questionnaire – which we are designing to be as painless

as possible – is not to annoy you, but to find out how we can help you in a very practical way.

The 'Supporting Your Group' survey, to be distributed in late February, will be asking you about your training wish list, and also about your 'group health'.

In response to what you told us at community consultation sessions last year, North Central CMA has allocated a generous amount of funding to run a variety of training opportunities for Landcare and NRM groups over the next six months.

Topics, formats and locations will be determined by YOUR responses to the questionnaire.

Likewise, information about how your group is travelling will be used to plan and deliver appropriate support. It is NOT used to rank or compare groups, or as a basis for including or excluding groups from support and opportunities.

We understand groups often run in cycles, and it's quite okay for groups to have lower activity levels or even to take a rest. Our objective is to effectively support ALL groups.

By the way, those groups that have in the past discussed and completed the 'group health scale' at an all-members meeting have found the process very helpful and useful.

As an extra incentive, we are again offering \$500 worth of tools and/or equipment - your group can be in the running to win one of two \$250 prizes simply by participating in the survey, so stay tuned. We will be contacting groups directly to participate in the survey soon.

Community a focus in White Paper

Following a consultation process which began in April 2007 and continued through the Green Paper phase in 2008 - attracting nearly 1800 submissions in addition to input from 13 workshops - the Victorian Government released its keenly awaited Land and Biodiversity White Paper in December.

'Securing Our Natural Future: A white paper for land and biodiversity at a time of climate change' is a long-term, strategic framework to secure the health of Victoria's land, water and biodiversity in the face of on-going pressures and a changing climate.

Landcare and other volunteer NRM groups will be pleased to know that community engagement and capacity building feature strongly in the paper, with an entire chapter devoted to community action.

One of the paper's stated underlying principles is: "Community engagement and involving landholders is crucial to effective implementation of NRM programs".

As well, the paper proposes that landholders be rewarded for protecting biodiversity and providing environmental goods and services; increased support for stewardship on private land; and identification of and support for regional economic opportunities around sustainable management and landscape repair.



Just a few of the actions of relevance and interest to the Landcare and Friends community are:

- Development of a five-year strategic plan that builds on the Landcare model to strengthen community participation in NRM
- Streamlining of reporting mechanisms and funding application processes for community-based groups (hooray!)
- The establishment of 13 “flagship” areas, including the Goldfields and Mega Murray areas, for provision of ecosystem services
- The establishment of regional-scale biolinks, including a major riparian link between the Murray River and the goldfields, via the Loddon and Goulburn rivers
- The identification of suitable landscapes for the establishment of new conservation management networks, with a focus on building landscape connectivity

Victorian Government investment will be targeted towards groups and networks working in flagship areas, or on projects that contribute to biolinks and ecosystem resilience.

The paper also includes a policy to replace the existing Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) with Natural Resource and Catchment Authorities by June 2011. The Northern Rivers Natural Resource and Catchment Authority will be responsible for the North Central, Goulburn-Broken and North East CMA regions.

It proposes that the new Natural Resource and Catchment Authorities will have a strategic role and a much greater say in land use, development and planning, and water extraction and use, and will work more closely with both local government and water corporations.

The paper is interesting reading and pretty user-friendly. To read on line or download a copy, go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrence.nsf

Local groups amongst the Action

Congratulations to the Campaspe River Land Management Group (Kyneton), and the Jeffcott North, Ashbourne, Sutton Grange, Axe Creek, McKenzie Hill and Newstead Landcare groups, which successfully applied for Australian Government Caring for our Country Community Action Grants.

They were among the 51 projects funded in Victoria to the tune of \$863,370. Funding amounts for our successful groups ranged from \$5,600 to \$19,000.

Campaspe River, Ashbourne and Newstead groups will focus their efforts on protecting and restoring the Campaspe and Loddon rivers, respectively, while the Jeffcott North, Axe Creek and Sutton Grange groups will extend their work on landscape links through corridors and copses, with a focus on linking old growth remnants.

Announcing the successful applicants in January, the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, said the government wanted to make sure that smaller, community-based Landcare groups continued to thrive.

The success of these local groups' applications in a competitive national arena shows that it can be done! Applications for the next round of Community Action Grants are expected to open in July. For further information go to www.nrm.gov.au

New PPA strategy

Pest Plant and Animal (PPA) issues are dear to the hearts of most Landcarers, and here's a rare opportunity to provide your input into the next regional strategy for tackling our many local varieties of 'the plague'.

The North Central CMA is currently developing a new regional Invasive Plants and Animals (IPA) strategy to replace the previous regional weed and rabbit action plans. The new strategy will set priorities and goals for cost-effective PPA management across both private and public land, and guidelines for a coordinated approach to protecting our environments and farms from the introduction, establishment and spread of pest plants and animals.

It will be informed by the Victorian Government's current biosecurity approach, where efforts are focused on high-risk species, prevention, eradication, containment and priority asset protection. Under this approach, widespread and established pests are not a funding priority unless they are impacting on priority natural assets, although of course they are not – and should not be – ignored at the local level.

You are invited to comment on PPA issues on and off your property, the pest species of greatest concern, causes of spread, the type of support that would be most helpful, and how pest management in our region can be improved.

Go to the questionnaire on the North Central CMA web site www.nccma.vic.gov.au and follow the links, or phone North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124 if you would like a paper copy to be posted to you. Please complete or return your questionnaire by Friday 5 March. For more information, contact Project Officer Wendy Shea on 03 5440 1887.

As much input as we can muster from landholders and Landcarers will ensure this document reflects and incorporates our communities' views, including valuable local knowledge and experience.

Please note that not all PPA issues will be resolved in the new strategy. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) sets state policy direction, and some issues such as roadside management and native pest control involve policies and legislation outside North Central CMA's authority.

A draft strategy will be available for public comment later in the year. For more information on the Victorian Government approach see the “Biosecurity Strategy for



Victoria" and the "Draft Victorian Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework" on the Victorian DPI web site www.dpi.vic.gov.au

Second Gen input wanted

The last four years of the Victorian Action Plan for Second General Landcare (VAPSGL) is currently being evaluated. This is the program that brings you Second Generation Landcare grants, support for networks, awards, publications, and a range of useful workshops and events such as regional forums.

To make this evaluation meaningful – and future plans useful to the Landcare community – the State Landcare team would love your feedback.

All you have to do is complete the on-line survey, which takes about 15 minutes, at www.keysurvey.com/survey/287694/1815/

Your feedback will inform the next two years of the VAPSGL, which is the key guiding document for Victorian Government Landcare support, and the direction of state Landcare into the future.

All responses will remain anonymous and will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

Landcare Council reinstated

The Australian Government has reactivated the former Australian Landcare Council, appointing former Western Australia Agriculture Minister Kim Chance as chair. Other members are now being appointed.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke said the move would be another step forward in "building a strong partnership between the Australian Government and the Landcare movement".

The Council will work collaboratively with community, farmers, Indigenous land managers and urban groups to facilitate sustainable natural resource management solutions and identify priorities for protection. The council will also support the development of the National Landcare Framework and provide advice to Australian Government ministers.

For more information on the framework go to www.daff.gov.au/Landcare

Farm funding success

Several groups from our region have been successful in gaining funding from the Woolworths Sustainable Farming Program.

Well done to the Nuggetty Land Protection Group and the Salisbury West Landcare Group, as well as the Macedon Ranges Vignerons Association and Swan Hill Vineyards Pty Ltd.

The program is a collaboration between Landcare Australia and Woolworths to develop, improve and encourage sustainable farming practices. The objective is to support farmers to develop or implement good ideas to improve farm sustainability.

Projects develop or support the adoption of improved farming practices, production techniques, technology or products, and should be of interest and value to other farmers. Funding of up to \$22,000 per project is available.

The 2009 round closed in November. Watch this newsletter or check the Landcare Australia website for details of future rounds. The case studies of previous winners on the Landcare Australia website make interesting reading www.landcare.gov.au

Sun moth spotted

The Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*) – a nationally critically endangered species – has recently been sighted in the Muckleford and Spring Gully areas. This good news comes from Nathan Wong at Trust for Nature.

He says potentially this moth could be found anywhere in North Central Victoria on the volcanic plains or areas with clay soils, especially the riverine plains. The key requirement is long-term, consistent perennial indigenous or exotic grass cover, with little or no history of ploughing.

The January sightings were on prior grassy woodland, but the moth has been recorded in indigenous grassland, very weedy sites dominated by exotic grasses, and stony areas. Moths tend to patrol at or just above grass height.

The most favourable conditions for Golden Sun Moth spotting are a warm to hot, relatively still summer day with little or no cloud cover. Look for a medium-sized, day-flying moth, with a wingspan of between 3.1 and 3.4 cm. Clubbed antennae are a key identification feature. Females have dark grey upper wings and yellow/orange hind wings. Males have dark brown upper wings and bronze/brown hind wings.

If you are lucky enough to see one of these rare critters, or to request further help with identification, please contact Nathan at nathanw@tfn.org.au or phone 0458 965 329 or 03 5476 2239.

Your views on assets

The North Central CMA held nine community meetings from September to November 2009 to work with the community to identify the region's assets i.e. our most valued environmental features. Further assets have been identified outside of these community meetings, such as through the completion of forms available on the North Central CMA website. A list of all nominated assets is currently being compiled.

It was intended that this information would be used to renew the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy. Since these meetings, it has been announced through the Victoria's Government's Securing Our Natural Future



White Paper that the North Central, Goulburn Broken and North East CMAs will form a new Northern Rivers Natural Resource and Catchment Authority by June 2011. As a result, our Regional Catchment Strategy will now be part of a broader Strategy to take in the Northern Rivers region (i.e. the current North Central, Goulburn Broken and North East CMA regions). Importantly, community information obtained to date, such as assets identified through the community meetings, will be considered in the Strategy's development.

You can still take part in this important process of identifying local assets until 1 March.

Go to the North Central CMA website www.nccma.vic.gov.au and access the following documents: fact sheet, environmental asset information sheet and asset identification recording sheet. Then send the completed asset identification recording sheet to North Central CMA, PO Box 181, Huntly 3551, email info@nccma.vic.gov.au or fax 03 5448 7148.

Summaries of the community meetings will soon be available on the web site.

Loddon Stressed River Project update

A total of 113 community members attended four community meetings late last year to hear about, discuss and present community views about the North Central CMA's Loddon Stressed River Project. Each meeting included brief presentations, a guest speaker and a facilitated workshop session.

Project officer Emma Wolters reports there was good open discussion on a number of topics. Key areas of public interest included riparian zone management, pest plant and animal control, environmental flows, fish and flooding.

Meanwhile, project on-ground works have included removal of 10 ha of tamarisk or athel pine (*Tamarix aphylla*) at Lake Meran. Tamarisk, a Weed of National Significance, is a highly invasive weed that crowds out native plants, consumes more water than native plants, reduces habitat values and can rapidly colonise waterways.

An indigenous crew of 16 trainees, who are undertaking the North West Indigenous Natural Resource Management Traineeship Program, completed these on-ground works.

Further south on the Loddon at Baringhup, the Baringhup Landcare Group organised a very successful schools event the "Revive the Loddon River Expo" in late 2009.

A photography competition held in conjunction with the expo attracted 43 high quality entries. The winners were: open section: Libby Jones; secondary section: Frances Lovel; judges' award: Shirley Little.

The winning and highly commended photos will be exhibited at Dig Café in Newstead in February; following which, they will be on display in the foyer of the North Central CMA office at 628-634 Midland Hwy, Huntly. Some of the expo photos will also feature in a 2011 calendar.

The Loddon Stressed River project is a large-scale river health project jointly delivered by the North Central CMA and the Department of Primary Industries, and funded by the Victorian Government's Large Scale River Restoration Program.

Working with landholders along the Loddon between Cairn Curran and the Murray River, the project has already protected over 200 km of river through fencing and revegetation, as well as controlling willows and bank erosion, and improving habitat conditions for native fish. The project will continue into 2010-2011.

For more information on the project contact Emma Wolters on 03 5448 7124 or email emma.wolters@nccma.vic.gov.au

Let's strengthen the Links

Well the kids are back at school and it's the time of year when Landcare groups are getting back into gear with activities and events.

When it comes to these, it's usually a case of "the more (people) the merrier", and we use every avenue we have to promote our local events. But there is one great promotional tool in our region that is presently under-utilised.

LandcareLinks automatic emails are sent to every Landcare and Friends group in the region. Any individual can also receive the emails simply by advising North Central CMA to put them on the distribution list (tell your members to get on the list, too).

If you would like to publicise your event, just jot down two or three paragraphs (in plain Word format please) and email landcare@nccma.vic.gov.au with a request to "please post this on LandcareLinks".

Hey presto – in a day or two hundreds of Landcarers around the region will be reading about your event – and even planning to attend!

EVENTS

Saving our soils

With the upsurge of interest in soil health, soil carbon and farm productivity, and growing concern about the effects of ongoing dry conditions, an upcoming local forum on soils is both important and timely.

To be held on 31 March in Bendigo, the North Central CMA's Regional Soils Forum will focus on managing and rebuilding our regional soils, soil carbon and communities building healthy landscapes. The day will also include presentations from six regional natural resource management groups, a session on future hypotheticals (scary stuff), and plenty of time for discussion and networking.



To get everyone thinking and talking, organisers have secured two top-flight speakers: Andrew Campbell and Dr Christine Jones.

Mr Campbell was instrumental in the development of Landcare, and has been on the cutting edge of NRM management for 25 years. He will address soil conservation past and present, the risks of doing nothing, future productive capacity and what we need to learn.

Dr Jones, who hails from Armidale NSW, is an internationally renowned ground cover and soils ecologist who has worked extensively with farmers. She recently launched the Amazing Carbon website www.amazingcarbon.com

She will address some of the emerging issues for our land managers such as microbes, organic carbon, rebuilding soils in a time of climate change, and soils and the emissions trading scheme.

The forum, which is a component of the North Central CMA's Sustainable Soils Project, runs from 9am to 5pm, at the Bendigo Club (Park Street, Bendigo) with lunch and refreshments provided. There is no cost for participants but places are limited.

To register, please phone North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124 or email info@nccma.vic.gov.au by 12 March. Be quick – numbers for this interesting and informative event will be restricted to 200 people.

It could be you at the forum

The National Landcare Forum, 'Landcare celebrates - 20 years of achievements and future challenges', is on in Adelaide in March – and the North Central CMA Landcare team is sponsoring two community delegates to attend.

All you have to do is fill in an expression of interest form. We will then select two lucky people who will have their full registration costs paid, and receive a \$200 contribution each towards travel and accommodation expenses

To obtain a form, contact Acting Regional Landcare Coordinator Melanie Taube on 03 5440 1883 or email melanie.taube@nccma.vic.gov.au

The forum, which runs from 23-25 March, will bring together Landcare and community groups, regional bodies, and industry and government representatives from across Australia.

Delegates will have the opportunity to learn about the latest research developments in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture, develop new networks and learn new skills.

The program includes presentations from leading scientists; sessions on networking and communications; how groups function and work together; succession planning; the achievements of award-winning Landcare groups; and current issues including climate change, carbon sequestration and food security. The new proposed National Landcare Framework will also be discussed.

There is a wonderful range of enticing field trips on 25 March, including visits to a range of Landcare projects and restoration sites in the Barossa Valley, the Lower Lakes and urban areas.

The cost is \$300 for community members. Field trips and accommodation cost extra. For more information or to register go to www.nationalLandcareforum.com.au

Landcare is for 'Living'

Following on from the great success of last year's 'Landcare is for Everyone' expo held in April, Landcare is again hitting the big smoke with a big presence at Melbourne's Sustainable Living Festival on 19 - 21 February.

The Landcare precinct – with no fewer than 11 marquees – will be at the entrance to Federation Square on the corner of Flinders and Swanston streets. Among our regional representatives will be the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network and Chewton landholder Karen Baker.

The festival aims to raise awareness and provide tools for change by showcasing tangible solutions to our ecological and social challenges. It will feature over 150 exhibitors and includes talks, workshops, art, films and performances that bring together and nurture solutions, new ideas, community, energy, inspiration and optimism.

The Landcare Precinct themes cover the gamut of what we do (and that's a lot!), with a focus on hands-on activities and practical information, incentives and opportunities, and of course swelling the ranks of urban volunteers.

Themes are Landcare education, including Junior Landcare; urban Landcare; biodiversity and threatened species; volunteering, including opportunities to get involved; sustainability and climate change; connecting communities; Coastcare; and Landcare farming.

Women head for Inglewood

It's on again! And this year the 21st annual Women on Farms Gathering will be held right here in the North Central region at Inglewood, so it's a great opportunity for our local women to take some much-deserved 'time out'.

To be held from the evening of Friday 10 March to lunchtime on Sunday 21 March, the gathering offers a feast of fun and informative workshops and tours, as well as the opportunity to share your stories and experiences.

Topics offer something for every woman, including Bollywood music and dance, makeup, women's health, climate change, leadership, agroforestry, selling on eBay, a photographers' tour and a ceramics workshop. Some fabulous local tours will take in history, local arts, crafts, wine and food, and environmental sites. The North Central CMA is sponsoring the wetland workshop that is one of the great environmental tours on offer.

Costs are: weekend \$160, Saturday only \$90, celebration dinner \$50 and Sunday only \$25. Accommodation is extra but billeting is available. Organisers say they don't want



difficult circumstances to stop anyone attending and invite you to please contact them if you are in such a position.

To register or for more information contact Jenny Hosking on 03 5437 3198 or email hosking@bigpond.com

Workshops to identify PPA 'hot spots'

Acknowledging that landholders and environmental groups can offer valuable local knowledge, Landcarers in the Cohuna and Kerang areas are being asked to help identify "hot spots" for Pest Plants and Animals (PPA).

Anyone with an interest in controlling PPA (that's all of us, isn't it?) is invited to attend one of two interactive workshops being organised by the North Central CMA.

The nominated hot spots will then be further assessed and prioritised. North Central CMA will then coordinate and fund the control and eradication efforts, which will be carried out by contractors, Indigenous work crews and/or partner agencies.

Dinner and refreshments will be provided at both workshops, which are components of two projects funded through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program and the Victorian Government.

The Kerang workshop, to be held on Wednesday 17 February from 6.00pm to 8.30pm in the Royal Hotel function room, is a component of the North Central CMA's Enhancing the Values of the Kerang Ramsar Wetlands project.

The focus will be on rabbit, fox and weed management, especially Weeds of National Significance such as willows and regionally significant species, including boxthorn. A particular emphasis will be on the Reedy Lakes complex and the Avoca Marshes system.

The Cohuna workshop, to be held on Thursday 18 February, from 6.00pm to 8.30pm in the Bower Tavern function room, is a component of the North Central CMA's Enhancing the Values of Gunbower Ramsar Site project. The workshop will focus on rabbits, foxes and weed management, with particular emphasis on willows, boxthorn, blackberry and bridal creeper in the Gunbower Forest, associated lagoons, and along Gunbower Creek.

Please RSVP by Thursday 11 February to info@nccma.vic.gov.au or phone 03 5448 7124.

Culture, creatures and ecology

Mount Alexander Shire-based initiative Connecting Country is running three interesting evening talks, all on Thursdays at 7.30pm at the Ray Bradfield Room (adjacent to the supermarket car park), Castlemaine. The talks are free.

Wonderful Woodlands, on March 11, will feature renowned landscape ecologist Dr Andrew Bennett; at Cultural Landscapes, on April 8, Robyn Ballinger will talk about the history of our woodland environments; and don't miss world famous bat expert Dr Lindy Lumsden on May 13 at the Creatures of the Sky session.

Focus on dairy fodder

Dairy farmers and farmers growing fodder and feed grain for dairy cattle are invited to the Dairy, Fodder and Grain Farmers Update day at Moama on 25 February.

This is a great opportunity to hear the latest industry overviews and technical news, and for growers and farmers to network and make new contacts, for mutual advantage, prior to the upcoming autumn sowing programs. Lunch is provided and there will be numerous trade displays.

The interesting and relevant program includes: hay market and supply overview; trends in local grain markets; knowing what you are buying and selling; managing weeds; the value of hay and silage; forage crop options for local farmers; growing fodder for the dairy industry; tips and pitfalls for feed traders; a dairy economic overview; and networking, competition and cooperation between farmers.

The update, which is being organised by the State Department of Primary Industries, Murray Dairy, Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council and the Australian Fodder Industry Association, costs just \$25 if you register by 23 February or \$40 if you pay on the day.

The venue is the Rich River Golf Club and the activities run from 10am (registration from 9.15am) to 4.45 pm. For more information or to register email pru@afia.org.au or phone 03 9530 2199 or go to events at www.afia.org.au

Forum for dairy women

All women involved in the dairy industry are invited to the one-day Women in Dairy National Forum, to be held in Melbourne on 24 March.

The forum will focus on leadership, and will feature inspiring speakers including Dr Sally Shortall, from Queen's University, Ireland. Dr Shortall has been at the forefront of research in social changes in farming practice, and the roles of women on farms and in rural development.

As well as hearing a range of inspiring speakers, those attending will have opportunities to develop networks, share ideas and perspectives, and enjoy lunch together.

The venue is the RACV Club, Melbourne. There will be a pre-forum dinner at the same venue on the Tuesday evening. The cost is \$50. Please register by 17 March. For a registration form or more information contact Karen Davies at Genetics Australia on 1800 039 047 or email kdavies@genaust.com.au

Put these in your calendar

While we tend to base our activities around our own seasonal requirements and on-ground works, being part of national events is a great way to raise your profile, and work with other groups and organisations.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, and with all the wonderful revegetation and conservation work going



on in the North Central region, there really is plenty to celebrate and showcase to the wider community.

Other special dates for 2010 may inspire you to participate or celebrate: 22 April – Earth Day; 7 March – Clean up Australia Day; 11-17 May – National Volunteer Week (don't forget to give yourselves a big pat on the back then!); 5 June – World Environment Day; 30 July – Schools Tree Day; 1 August – National Tree Day; 6-12 September – Landcare Week and National Water Week in October.

And remember – if you have (or know of) any planned events, let us know at North Central CMA so that we can add to our Calendar. Email christine.taylor@nccma.vic.gov.au or call 03 5440 1870.

COURSES

Ready to help you learn

Just a reminder to all farmers that you can still attend an approved training course and have your fees paid through the Australian Government's FarmReady Reimbursement Grants Scheme.

Under the scheme, which ends in May 2012, up to \$1,500 is available, and you may also be eligible for additional support for travel, accommodation and child care expenses. You need to apply before you attend the course. You then submit the claim for reimbursement within 30 days of completion.

The range of approved courses is huge and includes: business skills, planning and analysis; sustainable water and land use; farm planning; succession planning; grazing systems; soil management; water trading; ecology and biodiversity and even our own Box Ironbark Ecology Course. Approved providers include Bendigo TAFE.

For application and claim forms, and the full lists of courses and providers, go to www.farmready.gov.au or phone 1800 087 670.

Love your woodlands

Mount Alexander Shire-based initiative Connecting Country is set to launch its inaugural Woodlands Restoration Training Program, comprising six interesting field trips and a cast of expert presenters.

Landholders are invited to take up this great opportunity to learn about protecting and enhancing their woodlands. But be quick as places are limited and applications close on 28 February.

All sessions are on Sundays from 9am to 1pm. The bus leaves from the Ray Bradfield Room, Castlemaine.

Here's the program: 14 and 28 March: Introduction to woodland landscapes; identifying native plants and animals. 11 April: Exploring the cultural heritage

of woodlands. Presenters include Jaara elder Uncle Brien Nelson. 25 April: Restoring waterways. 9 May: Controlling pest plants and animals. 23 May: Revegetating and promoting natural regeneration. For more information go to www.connectingcountry.org.au

The cost for all six sessions is only \$60 or \$20 concession, which includes transport and morning tea. You will also receive a free nest box if you attend all sessions. To book contact Krista Patterson-Majoor on 0466 012 030 or email krista@connectingcountry.org.au

Get the 'Bug'

The Waterbug Workshop 2010 will be held at Monash University on 7-9 April. Attendees will learn how to become proficient at identifying water bugs, and are invited to bring along their own critters. The cost is \$390 + GST. For more information or to register go to www.thewaterbug.net or email flatworm@ozemail.com.au or phone 0447 893 519.

Making the most of your water

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is planning to repeat its popular irrigation and risk management course 'How to make the most of your available water' in the Murray dairy region.

The location(s) of the course, to start sometime in March, will be determined by the location(s) of those who register.

Organisers report that feedback from last year's course, which ran at Kerang and Kyabram, was very good, with many farmers saying that the information helped them get through uncertain times.

The course runs for one day per week (between milkings) for four weeks. Topics include:

the science of irrigation, including soil types, infiltration rates and water holding capacity; the latest information on crop responses; irrigation modernisation technology and programs; water trading; and water policy. Content is designed to be practical and relevant, and the course includes several farm visits.

For further information or to register please contact Rob O'Connor, dairy extension officer, DPI Echuca, phone 03 5482 0417 or email robert.oconnor@dpi.vic.gov.au



FUNDING NEWS

Caring for our Country opportunities

The Community Action Grants program will be retained, and rural and urban community groups, landholders and organisations will be able to bid for a share of up to \$171 million of Caring for our Country funding under the 2010-2011 business plan, released recently by the Australian Government.

The new plan will continue to target the six national priority areas. The priority areas relevant to the North Central CMA region are: protecting biodiversity and supporting farmers to adopt more sustainable practices. In addition, the Ramsar-listed wetlands of the Barmah Forest area and the volcanic plains are also priorities.

Biodiversity projects that focus on protecting threatened species and communities, tackle Weeds of National Significance, result in large-scale landscape change and connectivity, and which incorporate strong components to develop community skills, knowledge and engagement will also be regarded favourably.

Applications for all categories of funding, with the exception of the Community Action Grants, close on 15 April. The next round of the Community Action Grants, worth between \$5,000 and \$20,000, is expected to open in July.

In addition to the Community Action Grants, groups can apply for funding for single or multi-year projects worth between \$20,000 and \$300,000 that contribute to Caring for our Country targets.

As well, up to five sustainable practices projects worth between \$300,000 and \$1.5 million will be funded nationally via an expression of interest application. Four large projects worth up to \$2 million, with substantial corporate or philanthropic contribution, will also be funded.

Those thinking of applying should read the eligibility criteria carefully. A range of useful maps, as well as application guidelines, are available to assist applicants.

Go to www.nrm.gov.au/business-plan/10-11/apply

Funding for Grassy Woodlands

Individual landholders, and Landcare and Friends groups are invited to apply for financial assistance to protect and enhance White Box, Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum grassy woodlands and derived grassland remnants on private land.

The new Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands project is being run by North Central CMA to improve the condition, connectivity and resilience, and reduce threats to this vegetation community, which is listed as critically endangered nationally.

To be eligible, a site must be a minimum of 0.1 hectare in size; contain at least one of the three tree species currently or historically; have an understorey of mostly native grasses

and wildflowers (some local shrubs are okay); and comprise no more than 50 per cent weeds. Landholders and/or groups working together on adjacent sites, or to link existing remnants, will be favourably regarded.

Funded activities include, but are not limited to, fencing to protect remnants; revegetating to establish new corridors between remnants or to enhance remnants; and pest plant and animal control. There will be no additional obligations or restrictions on land use for successful applicants.

Box-Gum grassy woodlands in original condition are 'park like', with spreading trees over a grassy understorey, with few shrubs. In 'derived grasslands' (also eligible for funding), trees have been removed but the indigenous understorey persists. They occur throughout central Victoria in the 400-600mm rainfall zone, on granite, basalt, sedimentary and alluvial soils. Other tree species including Grey Box, Yellow Gum and Buloke may also be found in Box-gum grassy woodlands.

For further information, an application form or a copy of the excellent identification sheet and eligibility chart, please contact Landcare Project Officer Robyn McKay on 03 5440 1876 or 0448 578 086. Alternatively email robyn.mckay@nccma.vic.gov.au. Applications close on 26 February.

Just for starters

The state Landcare team's Volunteer Recruitment Initiative Landcare Start Up Grants are still available to support new groups and networks, and to support groups and networks that are reactivating after a recess period of more than 12 months.

Landcare groups in the North Central region can receive \$600 to assist with group start-up (or reactivating) costs, while networks are eligible to receive \$1,200 to assist with their start-up costs. These costs might include incorporation, insurance, venue hire, maps, and administration expenses such as photocopying, laminating, faxing, phone costs and computer hire. Funds must be used within 12 months.

Here's an opportunity to fire up again, or form a network, without additional expense. Please spread the word. You can apply any time prior to 30 June. Contact Acting Regional Landcare Coordinator Melanie Taube on 03 5440 1883 or email melanie.taube@nccma.vic.gov.au

If you are thinking about forming a network with neighbouring groups, Melanie and Landcare Project Officer Robyn McKay are here to support your efforts and ideas. You can contact Robyn on 03 5440 1876 or email robyn.mckay@nccma.vic.gov.au

One for the Birds

Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA) has a small grant scheme to assist environmental groups, individuals and organisations (including schools and other educational institutions) to help protect and conserve Australian native birds, associated flora and fauna, and their habitats.



Small grants of up to \$3,500 (sometimes to \$5,000) are made to support practical conservation work such as revegetation and fencing to maintain, improve or extend habitat.

Funding may also be available for research and surveys of the needs of Australian birds and their habitats; educational and/or research scholarships; to develop management methodologies; public education programs and materials such as brochures, signs and posters; and – here's a good one – educational programs in schools.

But note it is pretty competitive: BOCA says applications always exceed the amount of funds available, although it is trying to increase its total funding pool.

Applications close on 31 May this year. The scheme will run again in 2011. For more information, user-friendly guidelines and an application form, go to www.birdobservers.org.au/conservation or email admin@birdobservers.org.au

Kids and Landcare

Junior Landcare is Landcare Australia's youth program, which funds projects that get kids actively involved in caring for our environment. It's a great way to encourage the next generation of landcarers. The next round of Junior Landcare grants closes on 6 March. There will be three more rounds in 2010, closing on 15 May, 7 August and 23 October.

For more details go to the Landcare Australia website www.landcareonline.com and follow the links under 'funding opportunities'. The Junior Landcare website – www.juniorlandcare.com.au has some great information and resources for those wanting to encourage kids to be involved in Landcare.

Last word on funding ...

If you are wondering where to source funds for your next project, don't forget to check out our comprehensive grants guide, which you should have received in the mail just before Christmas. If anyone missed out, our apologies – please contact Melanie Taube at North Central CMA on 03 5440 1883 or email melanie.taube@nccma.vic.gov.au and she will post one to you. The guide is also now available for download from the North Central CMA website www.nccma.vic.gov.au – follow the links from the home page.

NETWORK NEWS

The Mid-Loddon Landcare Network and Mid Loddon Conservation Management Network successfully completed two large Caring for our Country projects plus several smaller projects in 2009.

Coordinator Judy Crocker hopes that the current project focus will provide more quality habitat for the locally endangered Bush Stone-curlew and other wildlife.

The member Landcare groups, private landholders and 'very supportive' public land partners are working to protect and rehabilitate remnant vegetation in the Lockwood State Forest, Shelbourne Nature Conservation Reserve, Bells Swamp, Dunne's Swamp, Eddington Red Gum Forest and a number of Bullock Creek reserves.

To complement this work, the network ranger is implementing a second annual six-month fox baiting/shooting program. As well, a predator-proof fence is being erected around a quality eight-hectare bush block, which has been donated to the local environment by two generous local residents. This block is a known curlew habitat site and the protective fencing will provide a safe nesting area for the ground dwelling birds.