



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2013 - 2014



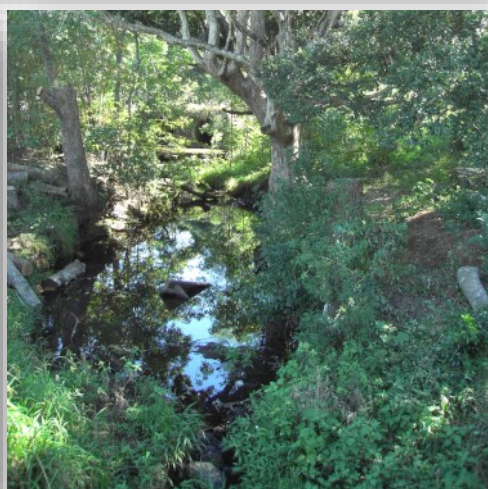


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# ***President's Overview***

I introduced my overview presentation to you at our AGM last year by noting that a strategic planning session was to commence at the close of the meeting. The Board was focussed on taking charge of the future of our organisation, instead of being reactive and driven by changes in the circumstances under which we operate. Charting our own future has been a strong driving influence on our activities since that time.

It has become increasingly evident that the State and Federal governments are preoccupied with the implementation of the policies and ideologies they presented to us as voters at the last elections. These are generally dismissive of the amount of effort, skills and financial resources community groups and individuals devote to the environment, its conservation, restoration and management for the future.

Local government on the Sunshine Coast to its credit is strongly supportive of individual and community action. However, it has recently significantly reduced partnership funding to individual groups citing a need for equitable distribution amongst the many involved, instead of being guided by return on investment.

Utilisation of the River Prize won by the Sunshine Coast Rivers Initiative largely stalled until Waterwatch pushed for action on the twinning component. There is still a danger of losing the funding involved because of inaction. A meeting of the Steering Committee was recently held which may lead to the formulation of a proposal and partnership, but we await a firm commitment.

While all this has been going on or failing to go on around us we have kept a clear eye on seeking to establish a resilient and productive organisation, in spite of the difficulties which surround us. The commitment of our Staff, Board and individual members remains strong and effective.

You will be aware that we now operate under a new banner known as ECOllaboration. A letter to all members was circulated which explained what is happening and there was general comfort with the direction being taken. This is a significant part of our path to the future.

Steps are underway to realign the legal arrangements under which we operate. We will remain a community based not for profit incorporated group as we move across from the State legislation to a company limited by guarantee under Commonwealth legislation. These steps, of course, will be the subject of a special meeting and agreement by members before we proceed.

A draft constitution has been developed and we are searching for a lawyer who can assist us to ensure it meets all legal requirements and our goals. This constitution establishes Maroochy Waterwatch as the inaugural branch of ECOllaboration and provides for others to join us in a similar way. Scope for self determination will be devolved to branches via specific charters developed via consultation. Activities which underpin our financial position such as our contracting arm are already operating as business units of ECOllaboration.

As part of strengthening our resilience we have achieved a significantly improved situation in relation to understanding our financial position. This has partly been driven by accounting procedures which provide the Staff and Board with better information to chart and

understand what is happening and set realistic budgets. Coupled with this through the efforts of our Staff we have been more successful in a number of important areas.

Our contracting arm has achieved an increasing number of significant jobs and cash return. Recognition by the Council that we are highly skilled and provide good value for money has been an important aspect in obtaining contracts and expanding the Council's use of the team for the maintenance and development of Voluntary Conservation Agreement properties.

Our Staff have also been innovative and selective in their pursuit of tenders and grants from a broader range of sources. We are presently engaged in the delivery with the State parks authority of ecotourism involving work on site by participants. It is anticipated that this will be an opportunity to test the financial merit of mounting similar programs in our own right. Activities of this kind fit squarely within our mission of fostering increased community understanding of conservation issues and practices.

I have previously expressed some concerns about the question of how well we connect with the community of the region and the success of our outreach. Our vision and mission look forward to an active and knowledgeable community and one with a lifelong commitment to sustainable living. Drifting away from our community of interest and preoccupation with financial stresses could lead to questions of relevance and potential decline.

On the other hand we still attract many volunteers and we struggle to provide them with the attention and engagement that they warrant. The Board has recently decided that we should employ a volunteer coordinator to take on this very important task. My hope is that this will also prove to be an important pathway for us to find the right balance in our activities and expand our outreach.

I wish you all well for the coming year of Waterwatching and ECOllaborating.

**John Dillon**



# Chief Executive Officers Report



The certainty of uncertainty in the not for profit environmental sector is a given. With each change in government we see programs and funding changed, morphed, abolished and created depending on the priorities and policies of the government departments. While Maroochy Waterwatch members appreciate the need to work with government to strategically deliver programs on their behalf, to be reliant on such income is not sustainable for longevity.

The decision to invest time and resources into improved business development has been our long term strategy for survival. After years of research, planning and communicating to members, this has now begun in earnest with our restructure and rebranding efforts to date. Maroochy Waterwatch will still continue providing support for localised community action in monitoring and improving the condition of the Maroochy River. Catchment Services (formerly Maroochy Catchment Services) will continue to build on the existing contracts and expand and broaden natural area management work. The new entity, ECOllaboration, is still in its infancy, has managed to secure several tenders during the year and our Eco Education Service is growing in scope of service delivery.

The new nested logo concept took quite some time to develop in consultation with the Board, Staff and Membership. We have had some great feedback on the new look, the colours and the overall concept with the nesting of the various operating units.

Additionally, we have started making significant progress in implementing an accredited integrated management system with environmental management systems, quality assurance and occupational health and safety. Our business processes have also been streamlined with our financial management now utilising cloud based technology and this year coming will see a new document control system implemented to aid our quality assurance processes.

Amongst all this change has been keeping the wheels of the organisation turning. Our partnership with council gave us the unique opportunity to value add the community based support for the organisation. This has been a very rewarding partnership over the last 5 years by supporting some of the administrative costs of the organisation. Unfortunately there is a commonplace perception in community grant funding that administration and management support is not important.

The support from council has enabled the organisation to grow and put in practice better business systems that are not covered in traditional grant funding arrangements whilst supporting our community based activities and engagement in volunteer water testing, frog monitoring, the River Patrol, support and advice for landholders in natural area management and the printing of the newsletter.

We also undertook some unique projects for council. The Stewards of the Future Report was a gap analysis and recommendation report on environmental education activities coast wide.



We also supported the Living Smart program by identifying where biodiversity links could be incorporated into the website. Additionally, Catchment Services helped managed council natural areas as part of our service panel arrangement and also supported four community conservation groups on the weekends.

Our Friends of Parks program with Qld Park and Wildlife Service was launched during the year. We have started exploring voluntourism adventures on Fraser Island as part of this program and have been delighted with the response so far with the target market being students and young people wanting an affordable and meaningful holiday. We have also been coordinating volunteers in campground hosting and in track and vegetation management in the Sunshine and Frazer Coast regions.

Our work with SEQ Catchments consisted of support for the volunteer water quality monitoring along with a couple of trial programs with the release of the leaf mining jewel beetle for the biocontrol of Cat's Claw Creeper and the use of goats for the control of Japanese Sunflower in the Hunchy hills. We were also engaged to monitor nitrous oxide emissions on a cane farm as part of a Carbon Farming Initiative.

Our partnership with Coolum District Coast Care Group to manage the Coolum Community Native Nursery remains strong and fruitful. This year saw the changing of the guard with a new manager appointed and a new relationship developed with Sekisui House. The nursery is in a precarious position with expiration of the five year lease and we continue to work together for a sustainable future for the nursery.

A renewed focus on fee for service delivery has resulted in a very busy year for environmental monitoring, natural area management and education. To name a few, we have undertaken leachate monitoring and water quality compliance monitoring on infrastructure projects, project managed natural area contractors for SEQ Water, trialled Eco Tours and written lesson plans for students visiting the Sewerage Treatment Plant at Murrumba Downs for Unity Water to name a few activities.

Our education program continues to thrive with regular engagements with schools with both incursions and excursions. The development of a school holiday program for children is another exciting development and we remain a quality resource for council's school holiday program.

All of this activity however cannot be undertaken without people power. Our volunteers are the backbone of the organisation and I would like to thank all those who have contributed their time and expertise. Supporting the programs and activities are our wonderful Staff. Without their commitment to the organisation we would have a hard time organising everyone. Thankyou to everyone who made a difference this year and I look forward to continuing in our quest for resilient landscapes managed by resilient communities.

***Cerran Fawns***

# ***Environmental Project Officers Report***



## **Summary of the year's activities**

The growing momentum that has been developing as we move toward the ECOllaboration model is encouraging. For an organisation in its infancy of commercial scientific activity, this is a significant achievement and I believe is due to the level of dedication and professionalism of our Staff and volunteers.

## **Water Quality Testing**

Overall, volunteer numbers have increased over the last 12 months. We lost three volunteers from the program due to poor health, but we picked up 3 young volunteers as well as 3 community groups.

As funding is continually cut for this program it is difficult to maintain existing numbers and sites, in addition my time has been spread thinly due to competing priorities. I hope that with a Community Engagement Officer being appointed over the next month, this funding program can continue to be supported by the community.

Overall the water quality results we have collected over the last 12 months have shown a slight improvement. Historically, in many sites, dissolved oxygen levels have been dangerously high, yet these sites have now shown a decrease in dissolved oxygen levels. It is difficult to make assumptions about what is causing these drops, but my educated assumption would be that macrophyte and algal growth has decreased, further assessments of nutrient testing would help clarify this.

We are pleased to be involved in the Sunshine Coast Regional Council's Stormwater Quality Program in 2014/2015 and I hope that further improvements to the ambient water quality across the region may result from this monitoring and improvement program.

## **Salvinia**

The Salvinia project was disappointing in 2013/2014. With minimal, to no support from Council. The contact we have had at council for the supply of weevils did not make himself or the weevils available to us. I had heard from other Council contacts that the weevils were all being used on Council properties and there was no surplus for landholders. Therefore, we conducted a number of translocation treatments. This meant taking weevil infested Salvinia from a previously treated property and relocating it at the property requiring treatment. This was done for two landowners that were desperate to take action.

We are now approaching this program as a fee for service. I am charging four hours of my time for each weevil treatment. Landholders are signing a waiver so they understand that there is no guarantee of success and that treatment may take up to 12 months to have an impact.

## **Frog Monitoring**

The 2013/2014 survey has shown that there continues to be some decline in frog species on the Sunshine Coast. The same 5 sites will be monitored in the 2014/2015 survey, enabling us to gain further data on the rate of decline. On a positive note, the Cane Toad has shown a strong decline across our five survey sites.

Maroochy Waterwatch aims to continue to raise awareness in the community about amphibian conservation and the important role frogs play in our environment.



## **ECollaboration**

I have enjoyed developing ECollaboration over the last year and I am excited about opportunities to come. We offer a niche product - well-priced experienced labour in both vegetation monitoring and ecology fields. In the next 12 months I want to continue to focus on further developing our relationship with consultancies, contractors and construction companies with a presence in SE Queensland.

## **Stormwater Monitoring**

This project has the scope of extension over the coming 12 months. By building on the relationship with the stormwater team from council I envisage there is additional scope for projects associated with this \$25K program. I will ensure a professional and robust project is delivered to the SCRC Stormwater team which may develop into other opportunities.

## **Friends of Parks**

As the first successful tender under the ECollaboration banner, it is important we deliver on all KPI's. There is the possibility that this program will be extended at the end of the financial year, subject to the Rangers and other QPWS Staff being satisfied with the product we deliver. We have been meeting our targets by utilising a mix of ecotourism initiatives as well as regular volunteering days. This will be extended even further, once the Green Armies are on the ground.

## **Ecotourism**

Over the last few months we have extended our products and service to include ecotourism ventures. This has grown from the Parks and Wildlife tender, however we have identified that even as a commercial venture, this product could be commercially viable. We will continue to run this programs whilst we have QPWS support. This will give us the chance to learn from our mistakes as well as develop our reputation in this field.

We are also looking at extending our geographical reach for ecotourism opportunities by applying for a tender in the Northern Territory.

## **Education Services**

Education workshops have continued to be successful over the last 12 months. I have held 21 workshops in total, including 4 half day programs under the school holiday program initiative. I hope that I will have more time during this coming year to further develop this program and expand into public schools, resorts and holiday camps.

## **Plans for the 2014-2015 Financial Year**

To support the extension of our voluntourism programs, we feel it is worthwhile pursuing Ecotourism Accreditation. It will provide us with the recognition required to stand out in any relevant tenders and the process of applying will ensure we have all of the process in place to move the ecotourism products out into a competitive marketplace.

Continue to increase the reach, and scope of ECollaboration.

To grow the in-house Staff and volunteers expertise base to enable a wider range of biodiversity related projects to be delivered for the benefit of the regional environment.

***Jacqui Smythe***

# Catchment Services Report



From the headwaters and springs of the Hunchy valley through wetlands and lowland rainforest, to the coastal sands of Maroochydhore beach, Catchment Services (CS) have enjoyed another prosperous year.

In the first month we hit the ground running, and over the course of the year we have experienced a large variety of projects. With continued support from our clients and the local community CS have successfully completed projects including erosion control, weed control using manual, chemical and biological methods, revegetation projects small and large, workshops and community engagement and supervision.

The majority of our work has revolved around manual and chemical weed control. Day in and day out we tackle weeds from all over the world, that require all our expertise and skill to manage, in a way that not only reduces the impact of the weeds but also has a positive impact on the surrounding natural environment.

Our biological weed control projects included goats eating weeds in treacherous terrain and releasing Jewel beetles on Cat's Claw creeper in precious riparian zones. The numerous revegetation projects have seen over 17,000 natives planted in the ground with the help of individual volunteers and community groups.

Our volunteer and community engagement has consisted of hosting high school students doing work experience, to volunteers wanting to get their hands dirty and learn about our natural environment.

We have continued Supervision of the weekend warrior community groups doing weed control throughout the catchment and group numbers are slowly on the rise. The opportunity to work side by side other community groups has encouraged a flow of knowledge and feel of community collaboration that not many contactors have the chance to embrace.

The crew have received glowing reports from Council and Private Landowners continually impressed by their work ethic and enthusiasm. The crew have also enjoyed continued improvement and professional development, the most exciting of which was a 4x4 driving course.

Thanks to our supporters Sunshine Coast Council, SEQ Catchments, SEQwater, Unitywater, Maroochy Landcare Group, private landowners and our volunteers!

We look forward to another successful year.

Cheers **Hetti Malone**





# ***River Patrol Report***

## **Overview**

The Maroochy Waterwatch River Patrol operates under the direction of Maroochy Waterwatch with logistical and administration support provided by the Maroochy Waterwatch office in Donaldson Street, Nambour. The River Patrol has been operational since February 2007 with the craft, equipment, boat ramp, and rubbish disposal facilities located at the Waterfront Resort, David Low Way, Bli Bli. We also have the assistance of Swan Boat Hire for spare key storage and emergency help.

## **Operations**

A 4.44 metre punt powered by a 50hp outBoard operates on the Maroochy River, Eudlo and Petrie Creeks, and on several occasions the Mooloolah River. The craft operates under Australian Marine Safety Authority guidelines. A daily service River Patrol is provided whenever possible.

## **Logistics**

Teams of two or three crew from a total volunteer base of twenty one participants (many of them original 2007 crew members) actively patrol the waterways on a daily basis, weather and maintenance permitting. A daily log is required to be completed after each outing recording all relevant information for that day and appropriate collection details. There have been no recorded safety or accident incidents during this reporting period.

## **Statistics**

During the twelve months (July 2013-June 2014) the RIVER PATROL has:

- averaged 3.9 mornings on the river weekly
- removed 27900 litres (a 5% decrease on 2012-2013 period)
- approximate weight of collections 2867kg
- accumulated 1741 volunteer hours (same as 2012-2013 period)
- accrued 376 outBoard hours (including Coolum Creek revegetation hours)
- recycled approximately 18% of the total collected
- provided 28 public information contacts
- provided water transport for several environmental projects
- reported 12 unusual activities to Council
- removed five illegal camp sites
- made the craft available for a revegetation project at Coolum Creek
- removed several dangerous water obstructions
- provided towing to several disabled craft

Not included in the above statistics are larger items including 100 plus derelict crab pots, farm machinery, electrical goods, household furniture, push bikes, shopping trolleys, building materials and abandoned or drifting craft.

## **Observations**

It has been noted by all crews the excessive build up of sand in the Maroochy River east of Chambers Island making it almost unpassable during a low tide. In addition the mouth of the river has moved closer to Goat Island providing a massive sand bank across most of the river entrance.

In conjunction with this the channel near Twin Waters jetty- Mudjimba car park area has silted up on the upstream end, necessitating a new channel to be surveyed closer to Goat Island. Most of these events have occurred within the last 12 months or so in combination with the lack of flood rains.

Also of interest is the prolific seeding of the Grey Mangroves this season. A previous event several years ago resulted in the extensive success of juvenile plants along most areas of Maroochy River and excellent regeneration of most areas.

In addition the northern banks of the Maroochy River, from the Jet Ski area to Twin Waters jetty, are continuing to suffer severe scouring of the banks exposing litter buried from many years ago.

Occasionally the crews come across endangered wild life, the latest victim being a juvenile male mud crab. The accompanying photo graphically illustrates the consequence of drifting fishing line in the water. The crab was entwined by over 5 metres of braid. However with much dexterity of finger work by crew members the crab was freed and released back into the river.

### **The Future**

About to commence is a service similar to the Maroochy River operation but on the Mooloolah River coordinated under the Maroochy Waterwatch banner. A boat/motor has been provided, new crew members organised, with the service expected to commence mid October. This will be a great asset to yet another Sunshine Coast icon. Meanwhile the Maroochy crews will continue their service daily with no fears of becoming redundant from lack of litter.

***Glenn Bartley***





# ***Coolum Community Native Nursery***

Sales for the year ended 30 June 2014 were up on last year, however gross profit was only slightly higher, due to plants being bought in for a couple of large orders. Sales of bagged products continued to increase, up 50% on the previous year. A higher wages cost and a larger depreciation cost resulted in the nursery making a loss of \$3,432.43 for the year. Retail sales continue to increase as a percentage of total sales. Various measures, including marketing on radio and improved labelling are being trialed to support and increase retail sales.

Volunteer numbers were low on average for the start of 2014, they are however returning to normal. New volunteers are being taken on gradually, to maintain consistent numbers, in order to cover attrition and regular volunteers who are away for extended periods. With another long dry spell in late 2013, which extended through until early April 2014, managing stock production and flow has been difficult. Work is underway on transposing previous years propagation figures into a more usable electronic format.

Free Plants for Schools is underway. The close proximity of National Schools Tree Day to the Garden Expo (less than 2 weeks in between – with a lot of sourcing required for large orders) made it impossible to link the free plants to Tree Day, however this doesn't seem to be a problem and the recent rains are ensuring a better time for planting.

Holding a stall at the Qld Home Garden Expo 2014, for the fourth year running, provided fantastic exposure in the retail market and also generated interest from peer nurseries on the Sunshine Coast and beyond.

Retail prices for mulch, potting mixes etc have been analysed and increased where there has been an increase from the supplier. Wholesale prices of tubestock have been increased to \$1.50 + GST (\$1.65 inclusive).

Gardens have been improved, with excess Lomandras removed. Gardens have since been mulched and new plants are being added to provide more examples of locally native plants and also to improve the overall appearance of the nursery.

The NGIQ Myrtle Rust Pest Management Program continues to be implemented and all myrtaceae stock continually monitored.

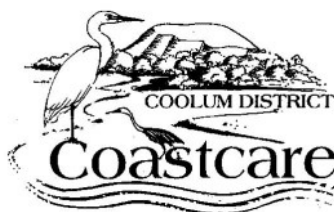
A work-plan and working bee to keep site maintenance up to date is in preparation.

***Rory White***



# Acknowledgments

Maroochy Waterwatch gratefully acknowledges our members, partners, sponsors, funding providers, clients, donations and in-kind support.



Sunshine Coast Rivers Initiative

Nambour Uniting  
Church





SUNSHINE COAST  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL



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[www.ECOLlaboration.org.au](http://www.ECOLlaboration.org.au)

