



Maroochy Waterwatch Inc

ANNUAL REPORT

July 2010 to June 2011



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Presidents Overview

Last Friday, on your behalf, I attended a small gathering of landcare and catchment management people at Pomona to look at past Queensland government assistance and how this should be provided in the future. It was described as a focus group, which is a pity in view of how this approach has been degraded by our recent political history and the populous reactions of our politicians.

Our CEO and I talked about the survey which was circulated several weeks before the event to all groups. On the one hand it looked like the same old questions as we had been asked in the past and neither of us were confident that this would lead anywhere. Government departments just do not seem to understand that they are not the leaders in the field and we don't need their wings to shelter under.

On the other hand the running of the event was contracted out to Wombat Creative, which is a business run by a sensible person who is experienced in community groups and the conservation movement. I attended because there seemed to be some chance that past dithering may change and constructive and forward looking ideas may emerge.

In the event the group was open and forthright in their praise and criticism of government, regional bodies and local government. Several constructive ideas were put forward including that a fixed percentage of the money flowing to regional bodies be quarantined to go straight to on ground work. The emphasis was on ensuring that groups had the recurrent funding required to operate effectively and in a businesslike manner.

The downside was that the recommendations from the focus group and others in Townsville and Toowoomba will first go to Landcare Queensland, QWALC and the Regional Groups Cooperative before they make their way to DERM. One can only guess at the way these bodies may deal with them. To add to the insult, several of those present wear more than one hat including those of the three bodies mentioned.

What it boils down to is that you have to be there to have any influence, but the politics gets in the way of community group ideas and inputs. You may be wondering why I have reported to you on this experience. My message is that the success or failure of community landcare and waterwatch groups is up to the organisations themselves on their own initiative.

Community and the environment are the foci of our organisation. This is encapsulated in our **Vision** which reaches out and states that we are –

Striving for a river catchment and region that is managed for a sustainable future by an active and knowledgeable community.

The organisation was built on volunteering and still relies on volunteers in many fields to achieve its objectives. Volunteers undertake the monthly water testing on the streams of the catchment. Our river patrollers are all volunteers. The administration of the organisation depends on our office volunteers, and board members provide their skill and experience to guide the organisation through the minefield of governance requirements without the sitting fees that boards in the private and government sector expect. Numerous others offer their time and experience when the needs arise.

I cannot stress strongly enough the appreciation that the board, our CEO and staff, as well as the members of our organisation feel for all our "vollies".

Our Regional Council has recognised the contribution of the organisation to the environment and provides partnership funding which is much appreciated. We also have several partners in industry whose assistance is highly valued.

The past year has been difficult from a financial and business perspective. We have had to tighten up our administration of environmental services and this area is highly competitive and needs continuous attention. On the other hand the training wing of our endeavours has expanded with several Green Army teams and administrative trainees. Our involvement with schools is strong and recognised by the education department with funding for the QESSI program. We have also developed and are delivering fee for service education tools to several local schools.

Our board now includes members with a broad cross section of skill and experience which is necessary in today's world for effective decision making, policy development and strategic planning. We have spent considerable time developing and refining the platform of policies and protocols the governance of the organisation demands. This may appear somewhat boring for those who focus on on-the-ground action, but it takes thinking as well as doing to make our organisation a success.

We have reached the stage where the CEO and the board are asking 2 fundamental questions:

Who are we as an organisation?

Where are we going?

Our activities are no longer confined to the Maroochy River and certainly go beyond 'waterwatch'. We now manage water, land and vegetation for a sustainable future and we engage in education and training in schools and with adults. We are developing strategic business alliances, such as that with Coolum Coast Care. Even our name and logo needs to be looked at.

The board is starting to come to grips with these issues and questions by looking at our corporate structure, activities, financing, business structure and community outreach from the point of view of the early days of the organisation, what it looks like now, drivers for change and the options for the future.

It is very early days and there may be pain along the way, but to survive, the organisation needs to recognise change and deal with it in whatever manner is necessary.

John Dillon

Operational Overview

2011 has been a year of triumphs, trials and tribulations in implementing our strategic plan. The Summer of Sorrow certainly in January 2011 focussed people's attention on the waterways and we witnessed mother nature at her worst.

However, the enthusiasm with which the community supports our activities never ceases to amaze me. Although our primary motive is improving the environment, the key is engaging people by enabling them to understand the importance of the environment to

everyday life. This is the challenge and I firmly believe that the key to our success are the values we have as an organisation which are underpinned in our vision and the strategic plan.

Vision: we strive for river catchments that are managed by an active and knowledgeable community

Mission: to provide support and learning tools the community needs to build lifelong commitment to sustainable living and participation in natural resource management.

Key Priorities:

- Excellence in business, governance and administration
- Supporting a learning community that leads to change
- developing a centre of excellence in environmental management
- transforming our catchment and regional community.

Excellence in Business, Governance and Administration

Maroochy Catchment Services

Maroochy Catchment Services is a revegetation consulting unit owned entirely by Maroochy Waterwatch and has been in operation since 2007. In that time we were able to run the unit as a profitable venture, however 2010 saw a significant trading loss. The business model was examined to determine if this was the core problem. Unfortunately the problem extended to management issues and processes were put in place to stem the loss situation.

Maroochy Catchment Services was turned around in 2011 and made a small profit of around \$6000. The future of the service in the current financial climate will be that of opportunity. Major competitors have moved to the coast and with development at a standstill, there is not a lot of large scale projects on offer.

We remain on the panel of providers for Sunshine Coast Council, Transport and main Roads and DERM's Koala Habitat plant supply.



Coolum Community Native Nursery

24 months has passed since the CCNN management was taken over by the Coolum District Coast Care Group Inc – Maroochy Waterwatch Inc partnership. This financial year has seen a growth in both expenses (with employment of nursery assistant) and corresponding growth in income. Since July 2010, and after a very quiet summer, the budget is holding a profit of \$2300. Overall income at 31 May 2011 is \$100 000, where the previous year was \$82 000 at the same moment. The employment of a nursery assistant to improve seed propagation (now 15 hours per week), along with the expanded propagation facility, and extended trading hours, has boosted sales considerably by allowing large wholesale

lots to be available to repeat bulk-purchasers (mostly nurseries and revegetation contractors). Core customers in both retail and wholesale have been retained, with Sunshine Coast Council and Hyatt Regency Coolum providing excellent regular sales. Retailing has been developed with signage and bagged products.

Volunteer interest and positions have been maintained and diversified, with 3 full days of volunteering now available. Numbers stand around 60 registered individuals, some occasional and approximately 30 regular or semi-regular. The volunteering culture thrives on a social, sharing atmosphere, and the region around Coolum contains a wealth of characters keen to participate and learn. Individuals travel from as far as Caloundra, Kenilworth, and Black Mountain to be involved. Considering the work they undertake and the plant stock produced and sold, volunteers require very little to keep coming back.

Accreditation has been achieved in both NIASA and ECOBIZ. This helps both in improving nursery practices, and in our public and commercial image. Our involvement in QLD Home Garden EXPO 2011 should build on this, with the help of our promotional bookmarks and plant vouchers.

The nursery is ideally placed to become a working model of sustainability by utilising only renewable energy sources for onsite and transport means, with the planned introduction of grid-interactive solar panels, and use of a full-electric vehicle as they are introduced onto the Australian market. By making changes to daily nursery operations and actively choosing ethical products and services, we not only educate ourselves but our customers too.

Training opportunities with a range of formal training groups, school groups, the nursery workshop series, and further involvement in special events, coupled with online presence and grass-roots community involvement should see public awareness and appreciation of the fragile natural environment improve in the Coolum district, and hopefully across the Sunshine Coast and beyond.



Education Services

The Education Service is providing a free for service to schools, delivering ecology workshops based on school needs. This is also an additional component for delivering school environmental management plans as a fee for service.

2011 was a year of consolidating this service and ensuring our pricing structure was feasible. Next year will see an active marketing campaign to schools across the region with emphasis on the new national curriculum and how this service can meet their needs.



Innovation

In our endeavours to be self sustaining and not be reliant on fickle government funding for operation and project support, there has been open communication about other possible business and project ventures. These ventures need to have robust debate and planning before any implementation and I thank the Board for their input into new ideas and ventures.

Governance

The Waterwatch Board have spent considerable time in ensuring our activities match with the strategic direction of the organisation and that we are compliant in all our endeavours.

All governance and operational policies were reviewed. A Board skills audit was undertaken and a suitable qualified and experienced member was found to match the legal need. In addition, workplace health and safety policy and procedures were reviewed along with the yearly budget. A risk analysis and management plan was also developed and endorsed. All employment contracts were re-written by a solicitor to ensure compliance.

Administration

Some may think that this is a strange priority to be reporting on in an annual report. The fact of the matter is that we receive little administration funding to support our programs, projects and volunteering and as such, it is a key challenge each year. We are appreciative of council support with some administration funding and this keeps the doors open, however to support our volunteers and to provide the leadership role in the community that is expected of us, we need considerably more funds each year. Government, industry and community perceptions need to change. It is widely accepted that because we are 'not for profit' we will give of our time graciously. This would be the case if we were funded appropriately, however, as we do not have that luxury we need to be proactive in charging for services rendered.

In addition, our office is referred to as 'the office of inadequacy'. People fry in summer and freeze in winter. We have one phone line and a VOIP system that doesn't work unless it is a sunny 21°C day. The wireless networking causes considerable downtime and if you are last in for the day, you'll be lucky to have a chair. If you get one that works, you are very lucky indeed!

Things however are on the improve, with a grant from the Community Gaming Benefit Fund and Sunshine Coast Council to upgrade our furniture and computer systems in order to meet WH&S requirements.

Supporting a learning community that leads to change

Training

Although we were spared the full brunt of the flooding we were still considered to be in a flood affected region and as such saw significant funds invested into creek rehabilitation and resilience works throughout 2011. The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) has approved almost \$1.15 million in flood recovery Green Army projects since the floods. This was further augmented with materials funding from various sources. We look forward to continuing our good relationship we have with DEEDI into the future.

In supporting a learning community that leads to change, we were able to employ a school based trainee, had four recent immigrants with English as a second language in business administration traineeships with Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre and also had two National Green Corps programs with Conservation Volunteers Australia.

In addition we had supported formal learning placements with six school based industry placements and seven university industry placements, and one placement from the Australian Experiential Leadership Centre. We also strive to support volunteer learning and professional development with several people obtaining a Cert III in Water testing.

Professional development for staff has consisted of Certificate IV in Cultural Awareness, Certificate IV in Volunteer Management, Educating for

Environmental Sustainability, and Implementing Sustainable Workplaces. I am currently studying an Executive Master of Business Administration. Other staff and volunteer training consisted of GIS, GPS and BOA workshops, grant writing workshops and Speech Craft courses.



Community Outreach

Our outreach into the general community also led to many learning opportunities with workshops delivered on a variety of topics including botanical tours, worm farming, recycling, and revegetation. We were also an organisation of choice for corporate learning opportunities with Lend Lease, NAB and Energex. In addition we were invited as guest speakers to several forums including an AusAid forum and the launch of the Maroochy River Trail. We also had a continual presence in the media with subjects wide and varied including volunteering, River Patrol and litter, fishing, toads and the summer floods with landslip. Highlights were being asked to join Coast ABC for the start of summer cruising the river as guest speaker and being invited to do a podcast on the value of the river.



Qld Environmental Sustainable Schools Initiative

Highlights

The fourteen state primary schools we've been working with this year have now developed School Environmental Management Plans (SEMP), are implementing actions determined through this planning process and are thereby reducing the ecological footprint of their schools along with influencing households associated with the schools to do the same. This is reflected in the post Earth Smart program Indicators for a Sustainable School where all schools we've been working with this year have advanced across a number of the indicators.

Feedback from participants attending our 3 full day Earth Smart Program PD sessions – “*A wealth of useful information – how to get started and where to now – Awesome!*”

Working with a number of the schools and staff who showed initiative and a great willingness to participate fully in the Earth Smart Program

The Qld Sustainable Schools website now provides a great SEM building tool and a large range of sustainability education resources. Observing their excitement and willingness to embrace resources offered.

Partnerships with: Sunshine Coast Regional Council - STARS Waste to Resources Council Waste program; Science Sparks Program – Ed Qld; Leonie Shanahan – Edible School Gardens; NICA What Local Native Plant is That; Wondering About Weeds – DPI; Backyard Explorer – Qld Museum; WaterWise program - DERM; Noosa Parks Association; Travel Smart – Dept of Transport; Do the Right Thing Project – DERM; Solar Schools; SCEC – Froggy Awards; University of Sunshine Coast;

Significant Events

- Attended the Noosa Biosphere Day in conjunction with NICA and the Schools Education Tent
- Queensland Kids Teaching Kids Conference in October
- Qld Sustainable Schools input into TAFE Sustainability Interpretive Centre through us
- State Earth Smart & Science Sparks Conference in February – provided an opportunity for participants of both programs to understand each other's program better and to set up regional networking strategies

Coming Up & Reflections

Our target number of schools for 2012 is 17 schools. It has come to our attention a new school will be opening on the Sunshine Coast next year, called Brightwater State School at Bundilla and we've been encouraged to make contact once they open and provide SEM support with this new school also. A few of the final 17 schools are showing a reluctance to be part of the program and we'll be discussing this with our State Coordinator in the coming weeks.

With the National Curriculum starting officially next year, schools are very focussed on this major change in the core business of their organisation. Three cross-curriculum priorities are embedded

as expectations – Sustainability, Indigenous perspectives and Asia Pacific. First two are deeply connected. The quality of our preferred outcomes (that sustainability will be embedded across all curriculum from P - 12) will depend on schools capabilities to understand (after only one year with SEMP process and Educating for Sustainability support) the sustainability connections in all subject areas. 95% of schools are directed to use C2C curriculum plans embedded in OneSchool (for which we have no access). Challenging.

Our challenge continues to be communicating with our schools and helping them find a place for environmental sustainability in their very busy schedules and curriculum. We often have to send multiple emails and then numerous follow up phone calls to reach the school's designated Earth Smart program coordinator. Schools are a target for many agendas that compete for their limited time.

The above is being managed as best as we can with our two part-time roles.



Developing a Centre of Excellence in Environmental Management

Water Monitoring

Our community based water quality monitoring funded by council and SEQ Catchments, has long been the envy of many catchment organisations in Australia. Our network of monitors, with some spanning over 15 years service, show community dedication to watching and improving our waterways. This action can be used as the litmus test for community concern for the waterways. The data is quality assured and is true and accurate and is used by the Bureau of Meteorology. However, the value of having community members from all walks of life involved in the program cannot be underestimated. 'Involve me and I will understand' is a paramount objective of the monitoring and is the building block to all we do.

The event based monitoring program was very busy this year with the substantial rain over the summer period. Hundreds of samples were collected and analysed by DERM. The program's future now remains in limbo with a review being undertaken to determine the need for future sampling.



Miscellaneous Projects

Funded through council, this year we once again coordinated the delivery of weevils for the Salvinia biocontrol project. The process has been significantly streamlined with faster delivery. However we do face problems getting enough weevils to support all the landowners as the program just keeps growing.

Frog monitoring also occurred throughout the summer at various locations. No endangered species were found this year. The community are becoming very aware of frogs in the environment due to this program and we are continually being asked questions about the little critters.



Transforming the Catchment

Riverbank Revegetation Projects

These continue to occur on an individual basis depending on landowners needs and abilities and we are currently supporting around 40 landowners. This year we have been able to support many landowners with labour due to the Green Army program. Materials funding has been sourced from a variety of sources including Caring for Our Country and SEQ Catchments E - Trees. In addition we have worked with DERM to rehabilitate a bat colony site near Nambour to urge the bats back.

Our current visionary project is the Petrie Creek canelands and we are currently establishing a visual reference site near the highway. Negotiations are about to begin with contributing investors with significant interest already displayed from one entity with it being such a visible area.

Our historical large scale project, Echidna Creek, celebrated its 10 year anniversary in June and it was a great celebration for all who attended the BBQ and tour.

We also had the opportunity to partner with SEQ Water on a diary rehabilitation project in the South Maroochy catchment and we look forward to future partnering arrangements.



River Patrol

The Maroochy Waterwatch River Patrol has operated successfully under the auspice of Maroochy Waterwatch since January 2007. The craft used for operations is a 1998 model centre console Horizon flood boat, powered by a 2009 Yamaha 50hp outboard motor, transported on a 2008 Redco trailer. The craft operates under Marine Safety Queensland Survey requirements.

The craft/equipment is located at Maroochy River Resort, David Low Way Bli Bli, in a free of charge secure enclosure, with unlimited access to the adjacent private boat ramp.

Operational funding is sourced through Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Maroochy Waterwatch, and fundraising activities.

Individual crews of two/three are on the water four/five mornings weekly, weather permitting, working all navigatable sections of the Maroochy River upstream to the North and South Maroochy Rivers confluence, Paynters, Eudlo, and Petrie Creeks

Collections from the river system are deposited in an industrial skip, provided by Sunshine Coast Regional Council, located at the Resort and emptied twice weekly.

Crews are required to complete a "log of events" after each trip, recording crew members, collection location, maintenance, safety issues, and general comment details. River Patrol now has eight regular volunteer crews, on the water weekly/fortnightly, and a reserve of seven additional members on call when required.

Adverse weather conditions in the early part of 2011 reduced the number of days on the river due to major flooding and unsafe navigational conditions.

No undue problems have been experienced with the equipment with regular servicing and equipment checks conducted as per maintenance schedule. Crew safety remains of paramount importance with no incidents reported during this operational period.

Summary:

During the last six (6) months (Jan 2011-June 2011) covered by this report, the River Patrol has;

- Averaged four mornings per week on the water.
- Collected 16925 litres of litter from the river and surrounding shoreline.
- Approximate weight of total collected 3500 kg.
- Recycled approximately 27% of total collected.
- Removed 435 various larger items not included in the above.
- Removed navigational hazards resulting from floods and tidal events.
- Accumulated 795 volunteer hours.

- Accrued 100 outboard motor hours.
- Dealt with 41 public enquiries.
- Assisted 15 craft in difficulties.
- Assisted Council mangrove nursery and regeneration staff with river transport.
- Assisted various interest groups with river transport.
- Recorded instances of minor pollution in the river.
- Reported several illegal camp sites to authorities.
- Rescued injured wildlife.
- Liaised with similar organisations in Noosa and Caloundra.



Transforming the People

This is the hard item to quantify. You can count numbers of trees, water tests and rubbish collected, but it is the interaction between the science and the social science which is difficult. Are we actually changing the way people think and act towards the environment?

If one looks at the continual growth of the organisation, we must be getting our message out there. We need to be contemporary in our approach to reach the masses, in particular very tech savvy with the website and social media as tools of engagement. However we also still need to talk and interact with the general

community as this is where trust is built and our values are communicated.

It is also important to note that although our efforts are largely focussed on changing people's thinking and behaviours in regard to the environment, we also change lives in other positive ways. For example, unemployed people have the chance to develop real life skills through our training programs and new immigrants to Australia get to understand the Aussie culture and interact with people. Our volunteering opportunities provide for social inclusion which helps to create a healthy community.

Partnerships

Partnerships are crucial for the operation of the organisation for various projects and activities. Below is a list of partners that help fund or support our activities:

Operational Partners

- Sunshine Coast Council
- Dept of Environment, Water Heritage and the Arts
- Energex

Project Partners

Government

- Bureau of Meteorology
- Dept of Education
- Dept of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation
- Dept of Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of Environment and Resource Management
- Dept of Environment, Water Heritage and the Arts
- Gympie Regional Council
- SEQ Water
- Sunshine Coast Council

Community and Not For Profit Organisations

- Barung Landcare
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Coolum and District Coast Care Group
- Landcare Qld Ltd
- Maroochy Landcare
- Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre
- Mooloolah Waterwatch
- Nambour Toastmasters
- Noosa Landcare
- Palmyra Progress Association
- SEQ Catchments Ltd
- Volunteering Sunshine Coast

Employment and Training Organisations

- Cadet Employment Services
- Campbell Page Employment Services
- Mission Australia Employment Services
- Primary Industry Centre for Secondary Education
- Qld Youth Industry Links
- Salvation Army Employment Services
- Skill Centred

Corporates, Industry and Business

- Heritage Bank
- Lend Lease Developments (Coolum Beachside)
- NAB
- Swan Boat Hire
- UniDap Solutions

Affiliations and Memberships

- Healthy Waterways Ltd
- Qld Litter Prevention Alliance
- Qld Water and Landcarers
- SEQ Catchments Members Assoc
- SEQ Event Monitoring Forum
- Sunshine Coast Environment Council
- Sunshine Coast Litter Collective
- Volunteering Sunshine Coast

- Various state and local government planning committees
- Unity Water

Regional Planning Processes

In order to transform our catchment and regional community, we need to ensure that we have involvement in the planning processes.

Throughout the year we attended numerous government planning, consultation and networking meetings including:

- 17 with Sunshine Coast Council
- 6 with Healthy Waterways
- 3 with LinkWater/Northern Network Alliance
- 1 with SEQ Catchments
- 1 with SEQ Water
- 1 with Unity Water
- 19 other miscellaneous planning and consultation meetings

Board and Staff

Our board consists of community members with a skill set in environmental policy, planning and management, financial administration, risk management, legal, business development and corporate governance, extension and networking.

John Dillon - Chariman
Vernon Flood - Treasurer
Glenn Bartley
Sandra Bartley
John Clemones
Nicola Crutchley
Brad Davenport Mills
Val Ross

Our passionate and knowledgeable staff provide support in administering and managing the projects and activities.

Without their expertise, many of these programs would cease to exist.

Management and Office Support:

Cerran Fawns - CEO
Sandy McBride - QESSI Coordinator
Clare Cox - QESSI Facilitator
Shelly Wilkins - Env Projects Officer
Shayley Allen - Env Projects Officer
Jacqui Smythe - Env Projects Officer
Vaughn Nash - Biodiversity Officer
Marc King - Natural Resource Manager
Angelique Lahey - Natural Resource Manager
Colleen Long - Natural Resource Manager
Shalin Day - Office Administrator & Secretary
Josie Williamson - Office Admin Trainee
Akiko Iwata - Office Admin Trainee
Nidhi Bajaj - Office Admin Trainee
Defy Tsang - Office Admin Trainee
Lenin Raj - Office Admin Trainee

Revegetation Supervisors:

Hetti Malone
Michael Miller
Debra Mountain
Margrit Rechsteiner

Revegetation Officers:

Robert Barningham
Charles Battersby
Jamal Beezley
Kayla Beezley
Christopher Bell
David Bindon Melynda Bishop
Aaron Brunton
Benjamin Bush
Simon Bush
Jessica Campbell
Goeffrey Carra
Donna Cavanage
Mitchell Cooper
Rita Everitt
Niel Ferris
Shane Fowler
Roxanne Frazer
Bryn Gillard
Reuben Gillard
Marilyn Goodyer
Nathan Graham
Jason Hancock
Nicolle Jean
Tony Johnston
Jason Jones

Shasta Keeley
Stephen King
Jason Le Fever
Hannah Lewis
Lennard Lutzke
Raymond Marshall
Darren Martinelli
Alan Mullins
Damon Nomad
Adam Page
Nicholas Page
Russell Penson
Vincint Piscioneri
Scott Rillie
Amy Rosenbrock
Joseph Ross
Paula Savage
Stephen Shackell
Gavin Simmons
Dean Smallwood
Chantelle Smith
Gregory Springer
Melissa Sproules
Melanie Strang
Liam Svensson
Skye Thorby
Toby Tribe
Malika Van Herberghen
Kennedy Webb