

Across the OUTBACK

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Meet Geoff Mills, the Pastoral Board's new Presiding Member

The Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation appointed Geoff Mills as Presiding Member of the Pastoral Board in November 2011, on the basis of his experience in administration of pastoral leases. We introduce Geoff, a long time resident of the region, here.

Geoff has lived all his life on or near the family property 'Myola', a wool producing property adjacent to the Middleback Ranges west of Whyalla which he bought with his wife Helen in 1979 and where they raised their three children.

Geoff is honoured to be appointed as the Presiding Member of the Pastoral Board.

'I am proud to be a part of the pastoral industry and its history, the biodiversity of the pastoral region and the sustainability of both the industry and the region's ecosystems which is a result of extraordinary and responsible stewardship on behalf of land managers since the pastoral industry began.'

'Maintaining the sustainability of the pastoral industry and the natural ecosystems along with

open, transparent and effective communications and effort with lessees, associated Boards and government departments will be key areas of focus during my time as Presiding Member.'

Having served on a number of other Boards and committees, Geoff brings a wealth of experience in land management to the position.

He was an inaugural (1989) member and chair (1995-2001) of the Gawler Ranges Soil Conservation Board; a seven-year member of the Rangelands Soil Board Executive Committee; a five-year member of the South Australian Rangelands Integrated Natural Resource Management Group; a five-year member of the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board; and a former President of the Port Augusta branch of the SA Farmers Federation.

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A successful field day was held on Todmorden Station in November to showcase the EMU™ project (see p. 9)

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Geoff is keen to acknowledge the contribution that former Presiding Member Michael McBride made to the region:

‘Michael’s knowledge of the region’s physical environment, the industry and the people who live within it is quite remarkable – as I settle into this new position it is a comfort to be able to seek guidance from him as well as other long serving Board members and experienced Department of Environment and Natural Resources staff.’

And he sees a number of challenges ahead.

‘The pastoral region of South Australia is in transition with increased demand for a wider range of land uses including mining, tourism and conservation purposes which requires both the Board and the region’s land

managers to be adaptable.

‘Pest plants and animals are an ever present threat and therefore I believe it is desirable to consolidate the efforts of the Pastoral Board, the SAAL NRM Board and the Native Vegetation Council.’

Geoff’s other job

Geoff took a position with OneSteel in 2007 as an Environmental Scientist and is now the Environment Assurance Manager for OneSteel Whyalla Mines.

He is responsible for understanding the potential impacts that the mines may have on the biodiversity of the area, working with the engineers to minimise the risks, contributing to the development of management plans for approval by government regulators, and assuring compliance to those approvals during the life of the mines.

‘I consider myself very lucky that I can live and operate a pastoral lease in an area that is experiencing extensive mining activity during my lifetime and be involved in the responsible development, operation and eventual rehabilitation of those mines.’

‘My time with the SAAL NRM Board and with OneSteel has helped develop many skills including knowledge of management systems, strategic planning, auditing, and legislation. which I believe will assist me in the role as Presiding Member of the Pastoral Board.’ ■

CONTACT GEOFF

Geoff’s full time employment will limit opportunities for him to meet with lessees where they live, but he encourages people to contact him by phone 0428 371 684 or email mills@onesteel.com

Meet the Board... ...and newest member Julie-Ann Mould

The Board

Geoff Mills (Presiding Member)

Julie-Ann Mould

Roger Wickes

Douglas Lillecrapp

Iris Iwanicki

Vicki Linton (DENR)

Deputy Members

Helen Lamont (PIRSA)

Ann Oldfield

Fraser Vickery

Lisien Loan (DENR)

Brenda Anderson

Joch MacLaughlin

Julie-Ann Mould has lived and worked on Coondambo Station with her husband Rick for the past 22 years.

Julie-Ann worked with the Kingoonya Soil Conservation Board for four years and has been the Chairperson of the Kingoonya NRM Group since its inception. Over the years, Julie-Ann has also contributed to essential community work with the Glendambo Progress Association, Country Fire Service, Isolated Children’s Parents Association (North West Branch), and the Kingoonya race club, and she continues to serve as a Justice of the Peace.

Julie’s skills, experience and knowledge of pastoral sheep operations and community life within the region bring a very valuable contribution to the Pastoral Board. She identifies changing land use as the most significant challenge for pastoral management in the future and highlights the importance for the Board to be highly respected and easily approachable for information and advice. ■

From L to R: Geoff Mills, Julie-Ann Mould, Douglas Lillecrapp, Vicki Linton, Roger Wickes, Iris Iwanicki



PASTORAL BOARD SUPPORT STAFF – NEW ARRANGEMENTS

Pastoral Unit staff commenced working within the same management structure as staff supporting the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board in February. This new integrated approach brings some obvious advantages.

These changes are part of the establishment of the new Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in 2010 which brought together staff from the Outback office of the former Department of Environment and Heritage and the staff supporting the SAAL NRM Board and Pastoral Board.

Pastoral Unit staff will continue to support the Pastoral Board but will be able to tap into the knowledge and skills of other staff within DENR – including those supporting the SAAL NRM Board – giving rise to a more collaborative and coordinated approach to work which will improve support to land managers.

KEY PASTORAL UNIT STAFF INCLUDE:

- » Chris Turner (Acting Team Leader)
- » Craig Boulderstone (Principal Scientific Officer)
- » John Maconochie (Project Officer)
- » Caroline Woods (Assessment Officer)
- » Francisco Facelli (Assessment Officer)
- » Gavin Baird (Assessment Officer)
- » Andrew Sheath (Assessment Officer)
- » Lynette Taylor (Tenure and Lease Operations Officer)
- » Monique Farrell (Administration Officer)
- » Jeff Stringer (Pastoral Inspector)
- » David Oag (Pastoral Inspector/ Public Access)

David Hanna currently provides executive support for the Pastoral Board.

Pastoral Lease Assessments update

Craig Boulderstone, Principal Scientific Officer

Pastoral Lease Assessments in the North East Pastoral District of the SA Arid Lands region are almost complete, with only three stations requiring completion of fieldwork.

All reports should be finalised in the first half of the year after which district analysis of findings will be made and lease renewal and stock maximum offers made by the Pastoral Board.

Work will commence in the Eastern Districts of the SA Murray-Darling Basin region this year and with a comparatively smaller number of stations it is expected this will be largely complete by the end of 2012.

Following this the northern Flinders Ranges and Far North cattle districts will be done to complete the second round of Lease Assessments.

Changing conditions

There have been some great changes in the physical environment and the way we go about our work over the last few years. We started the first round of pastoral lease assessments in the North East Pastoral District in 2009 and under some of the worst drought conditions ever experienced. Dramatic dust storms had widespread impacts, but were followed by beneficial steady rain events in 2010-11.

Our assessments have shown where excellent land management has demonstrated the resilience of this country and the ability of some of our worst degraded land to achieve long term recovery despite the drought.

In contrast to this we have also seen where the most conservative management could not prevent the effects of the drought with widespread Bladder Saltbush (*Atriplex vesicaria*) death and loss of soil and cover.

We have also greatly changed the way we go about our business and gained greater efficiencies. The work was started well by Rural Solutions who were joined in late 2009 by two Pastoral Program officers. The following year we brought the team in-house with two more officers appointed in late 2010. In 2011 we further boosted our output with the introduction of field data entry tablets late in the year and our first paperless assessments (see the next edition of *Across the Outback* for more details). ■

WHAT IS A PASTORAL LEASE ASSESSMENT?

Pastoral leases give pastoralists access to Crown land in South Australia's rangelands for the main purpose of raising livestock and developing related infrastructure. Pastoral leases are required to be managed sustainably to prevent degradation and, where possible, to improve the condition of the land. Pastoral properties are monitored for compliance with lease conditions every two to five years. A program of lease assessments are carried out on a 14 year cycle that allows for ongoing lease extension based on an assessment of land condition. Lease assessments work in conjunction with the shorter term inspections and using consistent methodology.



A healthy stand of Bladder Saltbush

Pastoral rent notices

Over the last two years the Valuer-General, with support from Department of Environment and Natural Resources staff, has been conducting a comprehensive review of the unimproved value of all pastoral leases – and preliminary results show leases are undervalued.

This has been a major undertaking that included extensive field work and updated spatial information on the land types of each lease. The land types were reviewed regarding their carrying capacity, and this has been linked to property sales information from South Australia and interstate.

Initial results from the 2010 review showed that leases were considerably undervalued, especially the cattle stations, and therefore a partial increase in property values and rents was passed on at that time.

Rents have increased again for the year ended October 2011, as part of a process to enable the overall anticipated increase to be spread

over a couple of years and to allow for further improvements in the information and data.

For payment for the rental period 1 November 2010 through to 31 October 2011, leaseholders will receive a rent notice in February 2012.

The Valuer-General will continue to monitor the unimproved value of pastoral leases as additional information on sales, carrying capacities, markets and land types becomes available. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on how an unimproved value for a lease and rental was determined please contact Mark Kay at the State Valuation Office 0427 112 844 or the State Valuation Office Call Centre 8226 3972

PASTORAL BOARD AND UNIT CONTACTS

The Pastoral Board of SA
Level 1, 1 Richmond Road
KESWICK SA 5035
(GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001)

General enquiries

Phone (08) 8303 9751
Fax (08) 8303 9320
Freecall 1800 678 447

Presiding Member

Geoff Mills

Pastoral Board matters

David Hanna (08) 8226 2127

Public access to pastoral lands

David Oag (08) 8648 5174

Lease assessments

Craig Boulderstone (08) 8303 9752

Lease inspections and tenure

Chris Turner (08) 8303 9755

PASTORAL BOARD 2012 MEETING DATES

Meeting 129	Tuesday 17 April Hawker
Meeting 130	Thursday 21 June. Adelaide
Meeting 131	Wednesday 15 August Adelaide
Meeting 132	Thursday 11 October Adelaide
Meeting 133	Thursday 13 December Adelaide

HOW IS YOUR RENT DETERMINED?

South Australian pastoral leaseholders pay rent under Section 23 of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* with the Valuer-General determining the rental amount and annual rents notices sent out by the Pastoral Board.

The annual rental for a pastoral lease is set as a percentage of the unimproved value of the land. The percentage represents the rate of return for the land taking into account the purpose for which the land is being used.

In general terms, the unimproved value of a pastoral lease is the market value of the lease minus the depreciated replacement costs of any improvements such as homesteads, buildings, sheds, yards, fences, roads, tanks, wells, dams, and bores.

A range of factors are taken into account in determining the unimproved value of a pastoral lease including:

- » the purposes for which the land is used and the inherent capacity of the land to be used for those purposes
- » any prevailing climatic conditions currently affecting the productivity of the land
- » the proximity and accessibility of markets and other facilities to the extent that they affect the profitability of the lessee's enterprise
- » the most recent land type classifications and associated information
- » livestock carrying capacities and land potential
- » property location
- » property sales and price movements within the pastoral industry.



Mark Kay



GABSI3 is capping free-flowing bores in the western margin of the Great Artesian Basin

Impacts of Big Blyth closure

Henry Mancini, Senior Water Projects Officer

The SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board is investigating the environmental and production benefits of the closure of Big Blyth, a free-flowing bore with associated artificial wetland that was sealed in October under the GABSI3 program.

In its non-rehabilitated state, Big Blyth had negligible productive benefits to the pastoral industry and low ecological value – but it is a major source population of *Gambusia*, an introduced pest fish.

This population is thought to be a source of re-infestation into the Neales and Peake river system after flood events, and the capping of Big Blyth is expected to substantially reduce *Gambusia* numbers and increase the health of waterholes like Algebuckina – the most important permanent waterhole in the Neales-Peake River catchment.

It is also anticipated that Big Blyth's closure will have major benefits for nearby GAB springs.

Big Blyth is located 20 kilometres east of Freeling Springs and its closure is expected to increase the springs' pressure leading to improved flow and wetland health.

The protection of these springs is important.

Freeling Springs is nationally recognised as one of the more biologically-significant spring groups in the GAB and is preceded only by Dalhousie Springs in terms of its ecological values.

Landholders are also expected to benefit through an anticipated increase of pressure and improved water quality at controlled bores, while the conversion of Big Blyth's artificial wetland to more manageable grazing country on the Peake creek floodplain is expected to improve grazing management outcomes. ■

SEALING OF BIG BLYTH

Department for Water

An uncapped bore, Big Blyth was drilled in 1917 and flowed freely for about 90 years, releasing more than 1000 megalitres of water and almost 2500 tonnes of salt each year.

Sealing the well in October was technically complex and very challenging, and the methods used are a first for the Australian water well industry.

The work team, led by the Department for Water, had a difficult start to the decommissioning program, having to locate the original drill-hole within an overgrown artificial wetland and significantly-corroded well casing.

Rods were run 200 metres into the 220-metre deep well, three tonnes of cement pumped in, and the well sealed to the surface.

GABSI Phase 3 is funded through a \$2 million commitment by the Australian and State Governments.

It includes capping of bores to reduce uncontrolled flow of water and improve the health of important groundwater-dependent ecosystems associated with GAB springs, and to ensure continued access to artesian water by pastoralists.

Work to seal 'Johnsons No. 3' well is in progress and a number of other high-pressure wells will also be targeted for rehabilitation this year.

ATTEND A COMMUNITY GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP...

ROXBY DOWNS

19 March, 12-2pm
Roxby Downs Council Office
Richardson Place

PORT AUGUSTA

20 March, 12-2pm
SAAL NRM Office
Railway Station, turnoff Stirling Road

Community groups operating in the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) region who are interested in improving their local environment are encouraged to attend practical grant writing workshops to be held in Roxby Downs and Port Augusta on 19-20 March.

The workshops will assist community groups to successfully apply for grant funding in the natural resources management arena.

They will cover how to successfully plan a project, identify funding sources, write a solid grant application, address assessment criteria, and manage a funded project.

They will be ideal for members of Progress Associations, Friends of Parks, Aboriginal communities, or volunteer and landcare groups – anyone involved in caring for our land, water resources and native plants and animals.

The workshops are a joint initiative of the regional NRM Boards, State Government, Australian Government and Conservation Council SA.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Perri Carter, Community Engagement Officer, 8648 5977, to book your place.

...THEN APPLY FOR A COMMUNITY ACTION GRANT

Progress Associations, Aboriginal communities, environmental and other landcare groups are encouraged to apply for grants of between \$5,000 and \$20,000 through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative so they can help conserve, restore and protect Australia's natural resources and environment.

Community groups interested in submitting an application to the Community Action Grants scheme are strongly encouraged to visit www.nrm.gov.au/funding/cag/index.html.

Applications close 27 March 2012.

Inspecting infected wheel cactus plants at Cochineal Field Day



Biocontrol trial delivers promising results in the Flinders Ranges

Lorraine Edmunds, *Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group*

Following a Cochineal Field Day on Gum Creek Station in November 2011 and encouraging results from a trial, the Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group (BPPPCG) will develop strategies to introduce cochineal to a core population of Wheel Cactus in the Flinders Ranges.

For the past eight years, the BPPPCG – a group of landholders in the Blinman district – has been working together to control invasive wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) infestations on their properties.

Since 2004, the BPPPCG have received Australian Government funding through the Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board, enabling them to hire contractors to treat 70 per cent of the 400 square kilometre project area. However, the core population remains untreated in a remote 25 square kilometre area straddling two pastoral properties.

One of the controls the Group has been exploring is the use of cochineal (*Dactylopius opuntiae*), a natural biological control which attaches to the outside of the host plant and feeds by sucking moisture from the plant.

Four years ago contractor Frank Bernhardt set up a small cochineal trial on Gum Creek Station, translocating infected Wheel Cactus plants from several different locations to Wheel Cactus plants on Gum Creek.

Only one strain survived but since 2008 it has spread naturally from two infected pads to 315 plants within the trial area, killing 42 plants.

Cochineal has been found on another 416 plants outside the trial area.

Encouraged by the early results of the trial, 25 people attended the Cochineal Field Day, including landholders, volunteers, contractors, officers from three NRM regions, representatives from SARDI and Biosecurity SA, and a volunteer from the Tarrengower Cactus Control Committee in central Victoria. ■

WHY EXPLORE COCHINEAL?

Knowing that Wheel Cactus takes four years to produce fruit has helped determine how the BPPPCG uses its resources with landholders, volunteers and contractors returning to previously treated areas every four years, to treat any newly recruited plants.

However, the seed of Wheel Cactus persists for two decades and increased awareness of the invasive potential of Wheel Cactus and other *Opuntia* species means that many more groups are now competing for funding.

It is improbable that the BPPPCG will continue to be funded for 20 years and other approaches must be explored if the program is to be sustainable.



Cochineal-infected wheel cactus pad

4WD Club's work on Wheel Cactus recognised

Toyota Landcruiser Club environment officer Vince Monterola won the award for Services to Natural Resources Management at the 2011 Premier's Natural Resources Management Awards in October for his efforts in keeping Wheel Cactus out of the Flinders Ranges National Park.

Vince was nominated by the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board for coordinating the Toyota Landcruiser Club involvement in the Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control program where Wheel Cactus plants around Gum Creek Station are removed to prevent their spread into the Flinders Ranges National Park.

Presented by the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation Paul Caica at a ceremony in Adelaide, Vince accepted the award on behalf of the Toyota Landcruiser Club.

By encouraging the involvement of the Toyota Landcruiser Club and other four-wheel-drive clubs in the control program, Vince has made an enormous impact on preventing the spread of Wheel Cactus in the Flinders Ranges.

He assigns roles to utilise members' existing skills, trains members in map reading and using a GPS, drills and chemical units, and follows up each visit with detailed reports on the activities undertaken.

Vince was keen to highlight the Toyota Landcruiser Club's other environmental achievements.

'We won the award for cactus eradication around the Flinders Ranges National Park but the club has been volunteering on various environmental projects around South Australia for more than 16 years, including track maintenance, tree planting and conservation of heritage buildings.'

'Four-wheel-drive motorists are sometimes criticised, but members of clubs are trained to look after the environment to ensure it isn't spoilt and the Toyota Landcruiser Club aims to take that further and do something practical to conserve the environment.' ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on volunteering opportunities or to obtain assistance with funding small community-based NRM projects, please contact Perri Carter, Community Engagement Officer 8648 5977.

TRACKS AND SCATS WORKSHOP AT TARCOOLA

Perri Carter, Community Engagement Officer

Twelve students from across the region came together at Tarcoola in November for a School Of The Air mini-school – and took part in a Tracks and Scats workshop.

The students, from years 3-7, were taken to two areas of sand dunes where the tracks of scuttling critters are commonplace.

They had lots of fun running through the sand dunes in search of different tracks.

Once they got their eye in they couldn't stop spotting them, learning a range of different tracks from lizard to cat, and even spotting tracks and signs of animals that we didn't notice.

The students also studied their own tracks, walking, running and even dancing over the sand to understand how our tracks may change depending on what we're doing – and that this is also so for animals.

For the finale, students made their own scats using modelling compound and other materials in a range of colours.

They could make herbivore scats using grass or they could make carnivore scats using hair.

Amidst all the fun, there were some very creative outcomes and some very life-like kangaroo scats.

Thank you to everyone who attended the workshop.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If your school would like to take part in a Tracks and Scats workshop, contact Perri Carter, Community Engagement Officer, 8648 5977.

A very life-like kangaroo scat



Tracks and Scats workshops help people to read the landscape and detect signs of resident animals through the tracks they leave in the sand or through their scats (or poos!) Being able to identify tracks and scats, burrows and diggings, can increase our understanding of the distribution and abundance of a range of threatened and introduced animals in the arid zone.



Vince Monterola (left) receives the award from Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation, Paul Caica



DINGO UPDATE

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The *Biteback* program is currently undertaking the first of its biannual bait injection services. As an added incentive, landholders who attend will receive a free bucket of Doggone® manufactured baits. There have been a number of dingo sightings due to the good season and landholders need to remain vigilant with their dingo control.

NORTH FLINDERS/MARREE

25 March	Holowiliena	9am
	Glenlyle	3pm
26 March	Oraparinna	8am
27 March	Wertaloona	8am
	Angepena	2pm
28 March	Mt Lyndhurst	8am
	Callana	2pm
29 March	Edeowie	9am

NORTH EAST

Rescheduled due to rain in late February

GAWLERS

14 March	Wilkatana	10am
	South Gap turnoff	3pm
15 March	Mt Ive	10am
	Lincoln Gap	3pm

KINGOONYA

April Dates to be confirmed

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact the Dingo Management team 8648 5977

Carbon Farming Initiative

The Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board, is keen to bring you news of the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) and what it means for the region's landholders. The program is new and opportunities for the rangelands are still being investigated – but we can give you some background and tell you where you can get more information.

The CFI is a voluntary carbon offsets scheme being established by the Australian Government to encourage land-based activities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide opportunities for farmers and landholders to participate in carbon markets.

Launched in December 2011, the CFI will allow farmers to generate carbon credits through a range of land-based activities that reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon storage or 'sequestration', including revegetation, manure management, fertiliser management, reduced livestock emissions, and improved rangeland and cropland management.

The primary role for farmers, landholders, forest growers and community groups will be to carry out activities that can create carbon offsets.

A carbon offset is a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to compensate for emissions generated elsewhere.

Examples of the activities which are being considered across the rangelands of Australia are carbon storage in plants through the management of grazing pressure and decreasing emissions through the management of fire regimes and destruction of feral ruminants. ■

Further information

Department of Agriculture
Fisheries and Forestry

www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/cfi
or call 1800 156 858

INFORMATION SESSIONS COMING SOON!

The SAAL NRM Board has received funding from the Australian Government to assist in raising awareness of the CFI program. Keep an eye out for an information sessions to be run in conjunction with NRM Group meetings over the next 12 months.

PEST ALERTS WORKSHOP – SAVE THE DATE!

INNAMINCKA 13-14 APRIL

A pest alerts workshop planned for Innamincka in April is an opportunity for all landholders, residents and visitors to the Marree-Innamincka district to find out the latest information on key pests in the Cooper Creek catchment.

Planning is still underway but presentations are likely to cover feral pigs, buffel grass, prickly bushes, and aquatic pests, such as gambusia, goldfish and cane toads.

Currently planned to occur over two days, the event is also an opportunity to learn about the SAAL NRM Board's 'Cooper Creek project' which is investigating the key values and threats to the catchment's waterholes and wetlands.

The Board also intends to launch its cane toad awareness pack, an informative and stimulating audio-visual display to assist the general public in recognising cane toads as they move into the Cooper Creek catchment towards South Australia.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Locals to the Innamincka district are encouraged to take part in volunteer activities that will be run in conjunction with the workshop. This is a terrific opportunity to participate in fieldwork activities including fish monitoring at the catchment's most ecologically important waterhole – Cullyamurra – only a short drive from Innamincka.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Henry Mancini, Senior Water Projects
Officer, 8648 5977

Lunch and dinner will be provided but participants will need to organise their travel and accommodation, including camping needs.



Cullyamurra waterhole



Attendees take part in the longest ever Mexican wave in the Marla-Oodnadatta district

Emu™ field day on Todmorden

A field day held at Todmorden Station in November and hosted by manager Douglas Lillecrapp showcased the Ecosystem Management Understanding™ project (or EMU™) and attracted 45 people, despite the remote location.

Douglas was one of the State's first rangelands pastoralists to take part in EMU™ in 2009, with funding from the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board and Centralian Land Management Association.

It has changed the way he manages the 7168 square kilometre pastoral lease situated along the Oodnadatta Track in a region where productivity relies on healthy native fodder for cattle production – and he was keen to share his experience with pastoralists and other landholders

The field day was attended by a cross-section of community including pastoralists, indigenous community members, representatives of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, the SAAL NRM Board, Pastoral Board, and the Australian Government.

And it was encouraging to see a variety of ages present and succession planning at work.

After a light lunch and introduction from Douglas, a convoy of over 20 4WDs toured six sites around the station to view the EMU™ project in action.

Landscape ecologist and EMU™ director, Hugh Pringle, fielded

discussions surrounding landscape function while Col Stanton (Soils Conservation Officer, NRETAS, Alice Springs) entertained his group sharing his expertise and knowledge on soil conservation – and initiated the longest ever Mexican wave in the Marla-Oodnadatta district!

The group first went to the homestead to visit track works designed to mitigate floods, then travelled to the site of the January 2011 fire to compare vegetation in burnt and unburnt country.

Attendees could see the loss of the Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) canopy and a variety of palatable, high protein shrubs in the burnt area. While rain had brought up grasses the long-term value of the burnt area had been reduced raising a lot of discussion about the relationship between productivity and fire.

The group also investigated track maintenance techniques considering those that have low and high impacts when it comes to soil conservation and vegetation stability, then moved on to the Wooldridge catchment where a number of diversion and check banks have been strategically placed in the floodplain to slow the water in the environment, reduce erosion, and prevent landscape droughting expanding up the catchment.



Douglas Lillecrapp

The SAAL NRM Board would like to thank Douglas for enthusiastically hosting the event, NRM Officer Janet Walton for coordinating the day, the Marla-Oodnadatta NRM Group for their support for the EMU™ project, and all those in attendance. ■

Further information
Janet Walton, NRM Officer,
8648 5977

PMRR APPLICATIONS WELCOME

Applications for the Pest Management and Rangelands Rehabilitation Program will now be welcome throughout the year. There are a range of activities that will be considered for funding including a number of priority pest animal and weed species that are serious threats to rangelands condition. Land rehabilitation projects may include erosion control and revegetation, contour furrowing, water ponding, and revegetation.

ALL APPLICATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED

Approved applications should still be completed by 31 May 2012.

Visit www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au to read how Gary Fuller from Wabircoola and David and Carol Warwick from Holowiliena South Station have used funds from the program to get on top of rabbit control and weed issues on their properties, and to download a factsheet and application form.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Lisa Taylor, NRM Officer 8648 5977

George Cooley recognised at Premier's NRM Awards



George Cooley at the LEB Aboriginal Forum in Tibooburra, NSW

Long-time Umoona Council member and Coober Pedy resident George Cooley was a finalist in the 2011 Premier's Natural Resources Management Awards in October for his efforts in promoting Aboriginal participation in natural resources management in the South Australian Arid Lands region.

Nominated by the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board for the Services to Natural Resources Management award, George has been a key advocate for natural resources management in the SAAL region particularly through his involvement with the Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee (LEBCAC), First Peoples' Water Engagement Council, and as a previous member of the Aboriginal Lands Trust Board.

'George has been a member of the Council since its inception in May 2010,' said Phil Duncan, Chair of the First People's Water Engagement Council, a seven-member Aboriginal committee that provides advice to the National Water Commission about Aboriginal engagement in water planning and management throughout Australia.

'He has been able to draw on his experiences in the Lake Eyre Basin, applying them to national deliberations about Aboriginal water planning and management and influencing the Council to focus on the integration of NRM with water planning and management.'

Angus Emmott, Chair of LEBCAC, a seventeen member committee that feeds advice and feedback from people living and working in the Lake Eyre Basin to the LEB Ministerial Forum, also supported George's nomination.

'The key task of the LEB Ministerial Forum is to ensure that the river systems and natural resources of the Basin are looked after in the long-term, and in particular to reduce impacts that occur across state borders.'

'George's non-confrontational and collaborative approach to all water and NRM issues in the LEB have allowed him to establish and strengthen positive working relationships, both within the LEB

Community Advisory Committee, and with other agencies and groups.'

George has been a member of LEBCAC since 2003.

He played a key role in seeking support for and instigating the biennial LEB Aboriginal Forums, helping to plan and facilitate the four Forums held to date including the most recent held in Tibooburra, New South Wales in September.

George is also acknowledged for his role in increasing the Aboriginal membership of the LEBCAC from two to six members in 2007, thereby increasing the committee's capacity to work with Aboriginal people in the LEB, and for his active participation in various conferences, steering groups and projects where he has advocated Aboriginal involvement in the protection of the LEB's natural resources.

Mr Cooley was delighted by the nomination and recognition of his efforts.

'There are many people out there who love this country, spend a lifetime caring for the environment and have great respect for the land that they live and walk upon daily, but only a few are recognised for their lifetime efforts.'

Vince Monterola, a volunteer also nominated by the SAAL NRM Board for his work in controlling Wheel Cactus in the Flinders Ranges ultimately won the award for Services to Natural Resources Management at the ceremony in Adelaide (see p. 7). ■

For further information on LEBCAC, the LEB Ministerial Forum or the biennial LEB Aboriginal Forum visit www.lebmf.gov.au

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Our goals as Aboriginal Engagement Officers are to help the SAAL NRM Board better engage with Aboriginal communities in the Arid Lands and to provide an opportunity for Aboriginal communities to successfully achieve their project outcomes. Does your community have a project in mind? Call 8648 5977 or look out for the car when we are on community. Ask for Ros or Jon.

IN OTHER NEWS...

HISTORIC AGREEMENT FOR FLINDERS RANGES NATIONAL PARK

An Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) and Co-Management Agreement (CMA) for the Flinders Ranges National Park were co-signed by Minister for Environment and Conservation Paul Caica and the Chairman of the Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) Vince Coulthard at an October ceremony near the Old Wilpena Homestead.

The ILUA recognises the traditional owners' rights over the park, allows them to carry out activities on the land and offers better protection of Aboriginal heritage, while the CMA provides the framework for ATLA and the State Government to share responsibility in managing the park.

The ceremony was attended by about 200 members of the Adnyamathanha community.

HERITAGE GRANTS

Applications for the 2012-2013 South Australian Heritage Fund Grant Program are now open. The grants fund projects across the state to repair and restore significant state heritage places. Applications close **5pm Friday 23 March 2012**.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Wendy Haylock, DENR Grants Project Officer 8124 4715

RABBIT TRAPS

Landholders in the SA Arid Lands region are reminded that the use of steel-jaw rabbit traps is illegal after a wedge-tailed eagle became caught in a trap near Mannum on the River Murray. The eagle underwent several weeks of rehabilitation at the SA Bird of Prey Rehabilitation Centre and had to have a toe amputated.

Managing feral pigs at Innamincka

Nearly 120 feral pigs have been removed from the Innamincka and Coongie Lakes area as part of a collaborative control program with Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ).

The pigs' removal followed the results of a November 2011 survey across Innamincka and Coongie Lakes which estimated the presence of 85-115 pigs.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) conducts feral pig surveys in this area every year to monitor for changes in the pig population and to decide when a control program is required.

Innamincka and the Coongie Lakes are internationally significant wetlands, and are recognised as important water-bird breeding

grounds by the RAMSAR convention.

In total the DENR/DCQ operation removed over 3000 feral pigs from seven properties along the Cooper Creek, with the operation beginning at Innamincka in South Australia and moving north-east to Mt Howitt Station in Qld.

The program was funded by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program, with valuable support from land managers, S. Kidman & Co. Ltd. Pastoral Company, and Santos. ■



A male pig eats fresh-water mussels on the Cooper Creek at Innamincka



Qld wild rivers declared

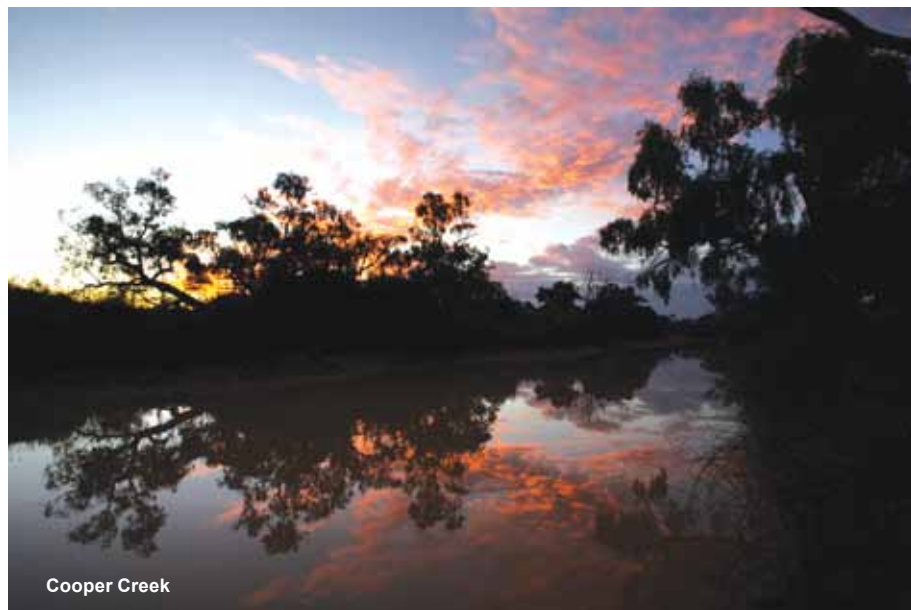
The Queensland Government has declared the Cooper Creek, Georgina and Diamantina rivers protected under its *Wild Rivers Act*.

These rivers flow into Lake Eyre in South Australia and surrounding wetlands. Their irregular flooding, a natural phenomenon, transforms the region for thousands of kilometres sustaining wildlife and attracting enormous numbers of water birds from across the continent to breed and feed.

The declaration made in December will protect 11 million acres in western Queensland while allowing all existing approved activities to continue.

However, watercourses in the most sensitive and valuable areas will be protected from development by buffer zones, striking a balance between conservation and economic development by retaining natural flows and river processes.

The announcement also included a 200 megalitre Indigenous water reserve which can be used for commercial purposes to help Aboriginal people achieve their economic and social aspirations. ■



Cooper Creek

Angus Emmott

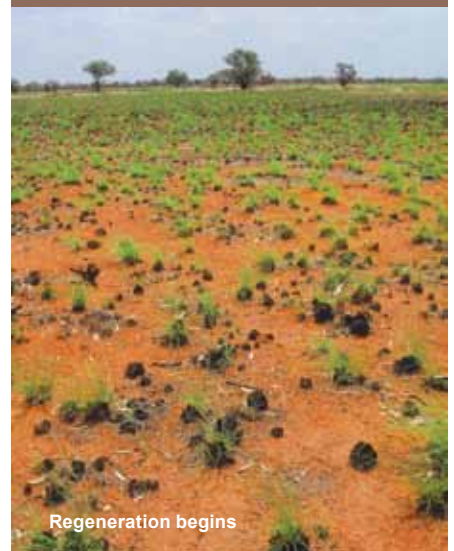
FIRES IN THE SIMPSON DESERT, QLD

Summer is nearly over but these photos of fires in the Simpson Desert in Queensland remind us of what could have been.

Fires burned across large areas of central Australia burning more than five million hectares of spinifex country.

For five weeks in October/November Bush Heritage's reserves in the Simpson Desert – Cravens Peak and Ethabuka – were hit, bringing a new set of challenges for the protection of its vulnerable flora and fauna.

Fire management plans are now in place for Bush Heritage's South Australian properties, with fire preparation – including the maintenance of existing access on the reserve and the upgrading of fire breaks – recently completed for Bon Bon Station Reserve, south of Coober Pedy.



Regeneration begins

Al Derner



Backburning

David Akers

17TH AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

23-27 SEPTEMBER 2012

The 17th Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conference will be held in Kununurra, Western Australia in September, bringing together managers, users and researchers of rangelands for discussion of current rangeland issues.

The conference will feature the latest research and development and the synthesis and application of knowledge.

The theme is 'celebrating diversity: people, places, purpose'.

Proposed topics for discussion include:

- » strategic land and water use planning in northern Australia
- » balancing pastoral, tourism, mining and conservation uses in the rangelands
- » Indigenous land use and management
- » latest techniques in grazing, biodiversity, fire and carbon management
- » new science for rangeland management in a multiple use framework
- » case studies in land restoration and land use change

FURTHER INFORMATION

paul.novelly@agric.wa.gov.au

Arkaroola legislation passes

The *Arkaroola Protection Bill 2011* that will ban all types of mining in Arkaroola forever was passed through the Upper House in February.

In one of his last actions as Premier, Mike Rann was joined by Minister for Environment and Conservation Paul Caica in Arkaroola in November where the special purpose draft legislation was introduced to protect the cultural, natural and landscape values of Arkaroola in perpetuity.

A formal application is also underway for National and World Heritage listing.

The State Government made the decision to give the area the highest level of protection that can be afforded by the Parliament of South Australia after extensive consultation showed there was overwhelming support to protect Arkaroola. ■

ARE YOU ON THE ACROSS THE OUTBACK MAILING LIST?

Across The Outback is a free publication that is issued to over 1200 individuals or organisations with a stake or interest in the Arid Lands region.

If you would like to join the mailing list or update your details please contact the editor jenny.barker@sa.gov.au.

Please include your name, mailing address and email address (to receive electronic notification).

CALL FOR CONTENT

Across the Outback
April 2012 edition

Content due by COB
Friday 23 March 2012

Contact the editor (details on back page) for further information.

OLYMPIC DAM EXPANSION

Since the last edition of *Across The Outback* the State Government has passed the *Roxby Downs (Indenture Ratification) (Amendment of Indenture) Amendment Bill 2011* through the South Australian Parliament paving the way for BHP's proposed expansion of its existing copper, gold and uranium mine.

The Indenture is a legally binding agreement between the State of South Australia and BHP Billiton that facilitates the conduct of mining operations and processing at Olympic Dam as well as the construction and operation of infrastructure necessary for this purpose.

BHP Billiton's Board are currently considering whether to approve the mine expansion.

The indenture can be viewed at www.legislation.sa.gov.au

FERALSCAN

FeralScan is a group of websites set-up to support landholders, community groups, and anyone with a feral or pest animal problem to access essential information and resources to help control feral and pest species, and report information about pests in their local area.

Websites include RabbitScan, CamelScan, FoxScan, FeralPigScan, MynaScan and ToadScan.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.feralscan.org.au/

THIS SPACE COULD BE YOURS!

Across The Outback remains committed to reporting on government activities in the region in the single publication and we welcome contributions from other agencies. We'd also like to hear from non-government organisations, Progress Associations or Friends groups operating in the area. Tell us what you're doing to support your community and if we have space we'll try to accommodate you.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

contact the editor
jenny.barker@sa.gov.au
or 8463 3354.

A fee per article may apply.



Parachilna roadworks

Roadsides will be strengthened and two new concrete floodways installed to improve storm water drainage in the Snake Bend area in Parachilna Gorge, Flinders Ranges, reducing the inconvenience experienced by motorists during flooding and rain related road closures.

The Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure advises that Parachilna Gorge will be closed to all traffic between Blinman and the Angorichina Tourist Village with a detour via Glass Gorge.

Access to Angorichina Tourist Village will remain open at all times.

It is anticipated that one floodway will be completed prior to Easter, allowing Parachilna Gorge to be reopened to traffic for the Easter and

school holiday period. The Parachilna Gorge road closure and detour via Glass Gorge will then be in operation again following the school holidays from 16 April.

The \$350,000 works are funded by the State Government's *Flood Damage to Roads Program* and expected to be completed by the end of May, weather permitting. ■

Further information
8648 5211

New road safety strategy

The Minister for Road Safety has released the South Australian Road Safety Strategy 2020 – *Towards Zero Together and Road Safety Action Plan*.

Towards Zero Together reflects the absolute priority the State Government will be giving to road safety. It focuses on four key areas: safer people, safer speeds, safer roads and safer vehicles.

Towards Zero Together and the *Road Safety Action Plan* provide a framework for the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure to lead a series of reforms in an effort to significantly reduce the road toll and stop people being seriously injured in crashes.

The publications and the accompanying video are available at www.dpti.sa.gov.au/towardszerotogether ■



OUTBACK ROADS INSPECTION

As part of the ongoing management of outback roads, executive and ministerial staff from the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) travelled to the Outback in September 2011.

Attendees travelled the Strzelecki, Cordillo and Birdsville Tracks which all took severe punishment with the recent rains.

The group met with road crews, inspected the recently sealed overtaking lanes on the Strzelecki Track, the Burke and Wills Bridge and the Innamincka Causeway before travelling on the Cordillo Downs road.

The effect of heavy rains for prolonged periods was clearly evident during an inspection of the Simpson Desert National Park roads.

The group inspected the Birdsville Track, calling into borrow pits and water supplies, and catching up with the Birdsville Patrol, before travelling on the Cooper Creek ferry to meet with its crew, and then onto where the Frome Resheeting Gang are headquartered.

For the last five years the DPTI Chief Executive and other senior staff have visited the region to visit works gangs, to discuss issues around outback road maintenance, and gain an appreciation of what life is like in the Outback.

FINAL FERRY FIGURES

The Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure decommissioned the Cooper Creek ferry on 12 January after nearly seven months of service and 9970 crossings. Since it was commissioned on 22 June 2011, nearly 17,000 passengers were ferried across the Cooper along with 6291 vehicles (including 1298 trailers/camp trailers).



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A SICK HORSE?

- » Isolate the animal from other horses that appear to be okay
- » Wear gloves/mask/glasses if you need to handle the horse
- » Wash your hands in soapy water after handling sick horses; change and wash clothes and take a shower; and

Contact your private vet or Biosecurity SA vet/animal health officer if your horse shows signs of illness. Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline 1800 675 888.

BIOSECURITY SA

Aerial dingo baiting trial

The first ever coordinated aerial baiting trial to tackle a build up of dingoes below the Dog Fence, will soon get underway in the South Australian Arid Lands region.

Thanks to funding from Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) Flinders Ranges wool producer Bill McIntosh has been contracted to team with Biosecurity SA to plan, implement and evaluate the program.

Bill is currently working closely with wild dog groups and individuals using local knowledge to identify dingo hot spots and design baiting flight paths.

The SA Sheep Industry Fund and Biosecurity SA will also contribute funds for baits and for an experienced aerial operator.

The location of every bait will be GPS logged and local navigators will ensure that baits are only laid in areas agreed to by property managers.

The aerial baiting, proposed for late April 2012, will target inaccessible areas such as the rugged north Flinders Ranges and sandy margins of salt lakes where ground baiting is difficult. No baiting will occur on properties without the approval of the manager.

Aerial baiting of dingoes is still prohibited north of the Dog Fence.

The program will dovetail with existing programs for dingo (*Biteback*) and fox (*Bounceback*) control to ensure widespread coverage of areas where dingoes are present. ■

HORSE HEALTH UPDATE

HENDRA VIRUS

Landholders in the SA Arid Lands region who are introducing horses from Queensland or northern New South Wales where there have been horse deaths and illness as a result of Hendra virus need to be alert for signs of this virus.

Hendra virus is a zoonotic disease meaning it causes disease in both animals and humans.

Its incubation period – the time from infection to becoming sick – is five to sixteen days and the clinical signs of infection are very vague. Horses infected with Hendra virus can excrete the virus for several days before showing signs of being unwell.

There have been no reports of Hendra virus in South Australia, but any horse recently (within three weeks) transported here from Queensland or New South Wales should be isolated for three weeks, handled after other horses on the property, and treated with extra caution and hygiene measures to minimise human contact.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

The following signs should be investigated further:

- » Neurological signs (including abnormal muscle twitching, weakness and loss of balance)
- » Respiratory signs (nasal discharge, coughing or breathing difficulty)
- » Acute onset illness
- » Depression/loss of appetite
- » Discomfort/weight shifting between legs
- » Increased body temperature
- » Increased heart rate
- » Rapid progression of illness (or death).

FLAVIVIRUS IN NORTHERN SA

A recent South Australian disease survey in horses included two pastoral properties from the north of the state.

Both properties had a high number of horses test positive to flavivirus antibody with some of the horses testing positive to the mosquito-borne Kunjin and/or Murray Valley Encephalitis virus.

The rate of infection was high compared to other areas of the state but only a small number of properties were tested and this level of antibody may not occur in other areas of the pastoral region.

A positive result only indicates a previous exposure to the virus and not necessarily a recent exposure and only a small percentage of horses that are infected will develop neurological signs such as ataxia (wobbliness in the legs and difficulty walking), muscle tremors and sensitivity to touch.

There is still a lot we don't know about flavivirus infection and spread.

The infections detected in 2011 may have been a one-off event due to rainfall and climatic conditions or may occur every year. Given the high rate of infections, the local horse population is likely to have immunity for this coming season and possibly longer.



Government
of South Australia

Across the Outback is prepared and edited by Jenny Barker (SAAL NRM Board). It is published every second month for the Outback SA Government and Community Alliances.

It is currently jointly funded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources; the Pastoral Board; Biosecurity SA (a division of Primary Industries and Resources SA) and the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board.

Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Please contact jenny.barker@sa.gov.au or 8463 3354



Have you seen this plant?

Across the Outback has had a request from Bob Parsons, a Victorian botanist, for any information on the history and distribution of a South African plant introduced to the SA Arid Lands region in the 1920s.

Pentzia incana (Karoo Bush or African Sheep Bush), a plant grazed by sheep, was introduced to the Koonamore Vegetation Reserve north of Yunta by Professor J.G. Wood when the University of Adelaide was working on ways to revegetate denuded and drifting areas in the arid zone.

According to a published report, the plants survived for five years before dying in the 1934 drought.

However, herbarium records show that plants of this species were collected over 30 years later some 250 kilometres away in the North Flinders – six kilometres east of Angepena homestead in 1964 and one kilometre north-west of Mt Serle

homestead in 1977. Collections were also made at Koonamore Vegetation Reserve in 1973.

Bob is assessing the present distribution of the plant and whether deliberate planting has played any part in its spread, while an examination of the seeds will help assess the relative importance of dispersal by wind or animals.

The information will be published in an Australian plant ecology journal and, if the species is spreading, the relevant authorities and landholders will be alerted.

Pentzia incana is a woody daisy to 40 centimetres high with yellow flowers in small heads five millimetres across.

Leaves and stems are greyish, with fine hairs.

In Arizona *P. incana* was introduced for grazing purposes in the 1930s partly to stop erosion. It is similar to another South African daisy that was introduced to Arizona which now excludes native species and causes soil erosion so there are concerns about the spread of *P. incana*.

In Australia, the plant has also been recorded in New South Wales but is thought to be extinct there. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have information that can help please contact:
Robert F. Parsons,
Department of Botany,
La Trobe University, Victoria
r.parsons@latrobe.edu.au
03 9479 2216

