

Caravan of Collaboration

South West NRM's Caravan of Collaboration events for Autumn 2016 have concluded their regional tour, having visited Bollon, Charleville and Quilpie. This year, the format was changed a little from previous years, based on your feedback from a survey conducted earlier this year and from the Regional Landcare Facilitator's visits around the region. Each event was still run over a single day, however the day was themed around drought resilience and the NRM Spatial Hub. Other agencies were invited to set up stands and be available for discussion during extended breaks, which allowed participants the a chance to catch up with the agency representatives, network amongst themselves and discuss personal questions with the guest speakers.

Some of the agencies present were;

- Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA)
- Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squad
- Centacare
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- Department of Human Services

The new format was very well received and the feedback satisfaction scoring was very high from participants. Thanks to all those that came along. For those wishing to recap the day, and for the information of those unable to attend, here is a quick rundown of the day:

First Speaker: Col Paton from EcoRich Grazing

Firstly, Col Paton from EcoRich Grazing discussed ground cover along with pasture and mulga budgeting. One key message Col passed on was from Bill Burrows' (Department of Agriculture & Fisheries) retirement speech where he stated *"From my lifelong career, what I have learnt is that you should aim to come out of a dry spell with stubble on the ground"*.

Col discussed the "3P" grasses (palatable, perennial and productive) and land condition. Grazing land condition was defined as the capacity of grazing land to respond to rain and produce useful forage, and therefore it is a measure of how well the grazing ecosystem is functioning. Another key lesson was that it is much easier to improve from B condition to A condition than it is to improve from C to B.



Above: Col Paton playing "Guess the grass" with the Charleville audience.



Left: Can you identify these "3P" grasses?

After morning tea we hit the paddock to learn how to undertake a forage budget on pasture and then on mulga. Col provided the attendees with tools to assist with this process so that participants can undertake the process on their own properties.



Above: Col demonstrating the use of two highly technical tools for conducting mulga assessments: a stick, and a reference branch.



Above: Col measuring mulga forage availability.

Second Speaker: Lee Blacklock from NRM Spatial Hub

After lunch Lee Blacklock from the NRM Spatial Hub introduced the Spatial Hub product, and then showed how it can be used for the following:

- Infrastructure mapping
- Asset registers and reporting
- Land type mapping
- Water access analysis (grazing circles)
- Infrastructure planning
- Ground cover analysis
- Benchmarking
- Safe carrying capacity



Lee then moved into a live demonstration of the functions, and after afternoon tea worked with individuals who required more information on specific aspects.

Above right: Lee Blacklock presenting a slide on ground cover seasonal analysis in Quilpie.

Right: Lee explaining the key characteristics of the NRM Spatial Hub to the Charleville audience.



Caravan of Collaboration Continued...

A recent user survey of the NRM Spatial Hub found the following:

- 90% of respondents said they found the Hub easy to use.
- 95% said the Hub has the potential to measurably improve the productivity, profitability and sustainability of their property.
- More than 50% felt the Hub would save them between 10 and 30 labour days a year.
- 75% said it would measurably increase safe carrying capacity through better pasture utilisation.
- 72% rated this type of technology as important to making their business both viable and sustainable in the future.

The survey also revealed that about half the respondents considered their properties to be around 50% developed. They could conservatively increase annual revenue by more than 35% through improved pasture utilisation and increased stocking rates. This increase does not include the improvements in property value, risk management and labour savings that would also result.

If you would like more information on the NRM Spatial Hub, come along to one of our training sessions (see details on the next page), take a look at www.nrmhub.com.au or give Darren Jennings a call on **0428 220 136**.

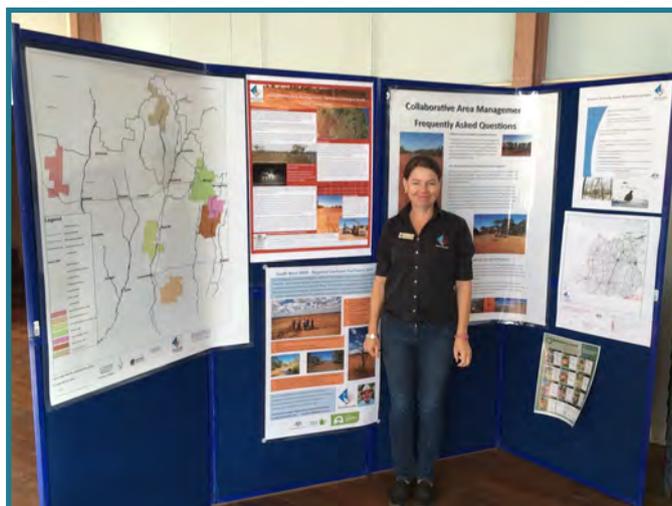
A big thanks must go to Col Paton and Lee Blacklock for the work they undertook at each event.



Clockwise from bottom left: Col Paton with an attentive audience in Bollon, Charleville participants receiving instructions before the forage budgeting demo, cutting Quilpie's grass before weighing it for forage budgeting, Charleville participants making good use of SWNRM hats ready to collect grass samples, and a close up of cutting grass at Charleville.



Caravan of Collaboration Continued...



Clockwise, from bottom left: Stall holders helping to make each event a success: Angie Bowden from Rural Financial Counselling Services, Kath Sack from the Department of Human Services, Jennie Sealy from Centacare, and Tony Koch from QRAA; Sergeant Warren Baker from the Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squad; Julie Frousheger manning the South West NRM stand; and participants enjoying a cuppa and having a chat with stall holders at the Quilpie Caravan of Collaboration.

SAVE THE DATE!

WHAT: NRM Spatial Hub Training

WHERE: Charleville (location to be advised)

WHEN: Three session options, maximum 10 participants each:
 Tuesday 12th July: 1-5pm, Wednesday 13th July: 8am-12pm, and 1-5pm

RSVP: Darren Jennings, South West NRM: rlf@swnrm.org.au or 0428 220 136