

Lower Burdekin Water Futures

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Newsletter

Issue 1 – November 2008

Overview

The Lower Burdekin Water Futures (LBWF) group was set up in 2006 to facilitate a more strategic approach to water management in the Burdekin. The role of managing the district's water resources is performed by several different bodies, operating at various levels. LBWF brings these different bodies together so that there is greater coordination between them, and better alignment of their efforts.

The LBWF MISSION

To support a long-term, strategic, whole-of-system approach to understanding and managing the lower Burdekin water resources and associated systems, and thereby deliver long-term economic, social and environmental outcomes that ensure the region's sustainability

Aims

A primary aim of the Lower Burdekin Water Futures group is to encourage long-term strategic thinking about water management. In working towards this, the group will also:

- address major issues relating to water resources, such as drainage and run-off
- identify needs for research and management action
- be a 'sounding board' for planned projects and major initiatives
- coordinate water and land managers
- integrate the sometimes-competing interests of science, policy, management and the community
- build partnerships between government and private sector organisations
- take the shared views of members to government and other organisations

Members

Dean Sgroi and Wayne Smith (BRIA Irrigators' Committee)
Evan Shannon (BSES Pty Ltd)
Andrew Kelly (North Burdekin Water Board - NBWB)
Gary Everson (SunWater)
Lyn McLaughlin (Mayor, Burdekin Shire Council & Chair, LBWF)
Michael Hoey (NBWB & Deputy Chair, LBWF)
Robin Juffs & Michael Caspanello (South Burdekin Water Board)
Trevor Williams & John Power (Burdekin Shire Council - BSC)
Gary Jensen & Graham Herbert (Natural Resources and Water - NRW)
Scott Crawford (Burdekin Dry Tropics Natural Resource Management - BDT NRM)
Keith Bristow & Jeff Camkin (CSIRO & Cooperative Research Centre for Irrigation Futures – CRC IF)



Contact any of the above members to provide input and/or find out more about the LBWF and its activities.

To learn more about sustainable catchments visit <http://catchmentdetox.net.au/>

Lower Burdekin Knowledge Platform (LBKP)



The Lower Burdekin Knowledge Platform is an evolving web-based information system which will help build a better understanding of the lower Burdekin and its water resources. This information will be used to support decision-making regarding irrigation and water resources in the district. LBWF members are participating in workshops conducted by Justin Story (CSIRO) and Paul Houghton (KT Studios) to further develop the knowledge platform. The focus is on understanding the information needs of the lower Burdekin community and technological developments to help meet those needs.

A website to introduce and test the knowledge platform will be available to the community soon.

Lower Burdekin Groundwater Science Plan

The Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM has given funding for the development of a Lower Burdekin Groundwater Science Plan which, when completed, will provide detailed information on this valuable water resource. The LBWF has prepared a project brief for the study and consultants are now being employed to prepare a business case. This case (including a works program, funding proposals and cost-benefit analysis), is aimed at securing funding for a program of groundwater studies to support the current and future needs of the lower Burdekin.



Managing Sustainable Farming Practices



A report on farming sustainability in the lower Burdekin is due for release in the next few months. The report, by John Williams Scientific Services Pty Ltd, will highlight the specific challenges to sustainable farming in the district and recommend strategies to overcome them. John Williams was engaged by Canegrowers to conduct the study due to growing concerns about rising water tables, increasing salinisation and the sustainability of farming practices in parts of the district. John and his

team are working with individuals, key organisations and government departments to document the issues and concerns of the community and to suggest ways that all stakeholders can work together to address the longer-term needs of the lower Burdekin. The first report (“A Document of Discovery”) was published in November 2007 and is available from the LBWF.

Irrigation Modernisation Plans

SunWater and the North and South Burdekin Water Boards are developing a series of projects to assess social, hydrological, infrastructure, water trading and on-farm issues in the Burdekin. The projects, funded through the Federal Governments Modernisation program, are part of a longer-term upgrade program. Stakeholder input will form a key part of the process.

“The LBWF continues to evolve and build trust amongst members. This has led to improved sharing of information and a greater commitment to working together to ensure a long-term sustainable future for the lower Burdekin.” (Lyn McLaughlin; Mayor, Burdekin Shire Council and Chair, LBWF)