Severe bed lowering has been identified as a major concern in the upper reaches of Quirindi Creek. A new bridge was recently constructed between Quirindi and Wallabadah. The footings of the bridge provided a useful monitoring site to determine bed movement within the creek. The first substantial flow exposed the footings indicating a 0.5m lowering of the bed in that one event. The change is very hard to identify visually.

The landholders upstream of the bridge are very concerned with the loss of water holes and the degradation of the creek.

The major expense in many riparian projects is the cost of suitable large woody debris or adequate sized rocks. Suitable rock material was able to be sourced close at hand as a result of a new fibre optic cable being laid through nearby rocky country. The landholders, Peter and Jacqui Scanlon were quite happy to enter into a project that enabled them to fence both Quirindi Creek and the junction to Kangaroo Creek. This allowed them to be able to manage stock grazing and encourage natural recruitment of vegetation.

To assist in the bed stabilisation a rock ramp has been constructed with assistance from Namoi CMA. The structure will help re-establish a large pool and its adjoining riffle sequence. The ramp was constructed by individually placing large rocks to form an interlocking self supporting structure on a grade that provides pools of water deep enough to allow for fish passage during low flows.

The project fits in with several other projects in the area helping to build up a significant reach of the upper Quirindi Creek that is being managed for environmental outcomes.
Natural Sequence Farming project on Yarramanbah Creek, Mount Parry

Following on from a very well received "Australian Story" on Natural Sequence Farming, Peter Andrews put a proposal to Namoi CMA to participate in a trial project in this area. The river systems are quite different to the sand bed systems where Peter’s previous work has been undertaken.

A series of structures have been constructed under the guidance of Peter Andrews on two properties in the Mount Parry area. The aim was to slow down the flow of water when it does eventually flow and allow more infiltration in the surrounding landscape. The result should be an increase in the riparian vegetation transforming the creek system from a bare channel to a large connected wetland area working more like a large sponge than a drain.

It is proposed to hold a farm walk in spring, hopefully following a few flows in the creek.

$140,000 funding for Salinity Stream Sampling Project

Namoi Catchment Management Authority and the Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS) has established a project with the signing of a contract worth almost $140,000.

George Truman, Namoi Catchment Officer for Salinity, said "the project will be funded through the Australian Government’s National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, aims to build on existing salinity data with the acquisition of new stream sampling in the Namoi Catchment. This will deliver a dataset on salinity that can be used to target investments for intervention and salinity management."

"The primary focus of this project will be to assist farmers, communities, regional Natural Resource Management (NRA) bodies and Namoi CMA to identify priority salinity areas for action. BRS will also develop a web-based database to aid in decision-making for future investment and to help in the design of on-ground mitigation and remedial programs," George said.

Recent studies undertaken by BRS have shown that while salt can be widespread in the Australian landscape, not all of this salt represents a threat to the environment. In many cases, salt is stored in well-defined locations and much of it will never move.

"If we can identify salt ‘hotspots’ where the salt has been mobilised and represents a threat to the environment or farming, we can then consider actions to prevent the salt from moving and causing problems," George said.

Namoi CMA has contracted Penny Haire to undertake the project. Penny has a long history with water activities in the Namoi Catchment. She has previously worked as a Community Support Officer with Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee and was a Water Use Efficiency Officer and Cotton Industry Development Officer with NSW Department Primary Industries. Penny said: "Landholders within identified areas have been contacted and briefed and are involved in the data collection process. Sampling at 30 identified sites across the catchment commenced in November 2006 and will take place monthly until June 2008. There have been a number of extension and awareness sessions held with a session in the upper catchment held earlier this year as part of the Upper Namoi Cotton Growers and field day.

"The outcomes from this project will be driven by community involvement through the engagement of landholders, Namoi CMA and natural resource management bodies."

"Areas where salt stores are negatively affecting river quality will be identified along with sub-catchments that are discharging saline water. The web-based database that will be developed will allow access to stream salinity data, while mapping will aid decisions for future investment and the health of not only the Namoi Catchment but the overall management of the Murray Darling Basin," Penny said.

Areas in the Upper Mooki Catchment include Warrah Creek, Quirindi Creek, Werris Creek, Quipolly Creek, Yarramanbah Creek, Native Dog Gully, Yarraman Creek, and Coonamble Creek.

For further information contact

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The Heights of Success

When Josephine Walton of Millers Creek Station, south of Quirindi, contacted Namoi CMA, she was interested in managing the natural resources on her property which skirts the western fringe of the Great Dividing Range for long term improvements in the natural environment and production on the property.

Josephine wanted to address two primary challenges on Millers Creek Station through collaboration with Namoi CMA. Stock management in the steep, thickly vegetated hilltops was causing concern, and feral animals were also heavily infesting the area, causing damage to the natural values of mature remnant vegetation.

Over-utilisation of the fertile land adjacent to Millers Creek by stock throughout the drought had caused erosion from tracking and removed protective ground cover. This had left the area exposed to the risk of severe soil loss in subsequent rain events.

Millers Creek Station contains extensive remnant vegetation on the heights of the Ranges. This vegetation covers nearly 1000ha and consists of large stands of mature Eucalypt forest with a range of mid-storey flora species, with Dry Temperate Rainforest remnants ensconced in damp valleys and ravines. Of particular natural value was the large amount of intact ground story species including lomandra, ground orchids and native lilies.

While the vegetation is in good condition, there were obvious pressures on the area. As part of the Namoi CMA project, Josephine will be fencing the remnant vegetation to control stock access, and undertaking comprehensive feral animal control in the area, in order to greatly improve the natural values of this area.

The project also involved fencing 2.4km creek running through the property, and planting of native trees and shrubs to compliment existing native vegetation. An off-stream water supply will also be installed to facilitate the removal of stock from the creek system. This combination of protection and enhancement will enable the creek system to stabilise and regenerate – reducing erosion, and slowing water movement through the property.

Recycled Water in the Future

Jim McDonald, the Namoi CMA Chairman has supported the Chairman of the Chaffey Dam safety upgrade committee, Cr Phil Betts who says the city of Tamworth may have to place greater reliance on recycled water in the future.

After attending the national water summit in Sydney recently, Cr Betts said experts from arid regions of the United States have told the conference American State have told the conference American Story" on water recycling has to be an option that is seriously explored. Clearly, every drop of water has to be valued. Most people would agree we are living in a world of new paradigms when it comes to one of our most basic resources."

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