Farmers, Landcare groups, educators and individuals who have shown excellence or innovation in environmental work have been recognised in the Namoi Regional Landcare Awards.

Jim McDonald, Chairman of the Namoi Catchment Management Authority said “the Landcare Awards are an important way of recognising the valuable contributions of individuals and groups in caring for the land and helping to protect fragile resources, waterways and native plants and animals.

“The Awards are a chance to showcase achievements by landholders, community groups and organisations in sustainable land management practices in the Namoi Catchment.

“The Award winners in each category will now be eligible to go on to the State Awards to be presented at the Namoi Landscape Management Forum in Tamworth in October this year,” he said.

Although entries were down from the last Regional Landcare Awards, mainly due to the drought, nine entries from across the Namoi Valley were received.

The winners are:

- Individual: Fred Colwell, Walgett
- Nature Conservation: Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee
- Community Group: Narrabri Community Bushcare
- Education: Judy Lee and Don Tunningley, Gunnedah TAFE

Lindsay Doyle & Tina McTavish from Bective received an Encouragement Award for the Primary Producer category.

Winners and other nominees celebrated their achievements at a presentation night at the Civic Theatre in Gunnedah on Thursday, 21 June.

Property Planning Workshop to be held on Wednesday November 7.
For further information please contact Stacey Avard - 02 6742 9211
A project between the Namoi Catchment Management Authority (Namoi CMA) and the Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS) has been established with the signing of a contract worth almost $140,000.

George Truman, Catchment Officer for Salinity, said “the project, 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 which will be used to target investments for intervention and salinity management.

Namoi CMA has contracted Penny Haire to undertake the project. Penny has a long history with water activities in the Namoi Catchment. Ms Haire said that “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 lower catchment in April 2007. Although a number of creeks were dry for some time recent rain has meant that the program has really been able to get under way with some useful measurements being obtained,” Ms Haire said.

Landholders at identified sites are measuring salinity, pH, turbidity and stream flow monthly with data being uploaded into a web based system. Sites within the Narrabri area include; Bundock Creek, Tallaba Creek, Coghill Creek, Etoo Creek, and Baradine Creek. There has been considerable interest with many landholders undertaking additional readings on nearby creeks.

For further information contact Penny Haire on 0428 827 479 or George Truman – Namoi CMA 02 67429203.

Above: David Broderick with Penny Haire (CSS Coordinator) undertaking measurements on Bundock Creek at Narrabri.

Narrabri Lake treeplantings

Over 300 native trees and shrubs were planted around the foreshore of Narrabri Lake on the western side of town. The lake is a recreational area for many Narrabri Residents and visitors who use it and its foreshores for walking, bird watching, canoeing and fishing.

The lake contains an island which is a safe breeding ground for many local and migratory native bird species. Endemic trees and shrubs have been planted in strategic locations around the lake providing habitat for biodiversity, shade, shelter and aesthetic enjoyment to local residents and also to stabilise areas of erosion. Through planting endemic tree species the group hopes to raise awareness of the enormous biodiversity within local areas.

Through this project Narrabri Community Bushcare Group has been approached by many members of the Narrabri Community about collaboration in future projects and as a result the group has been involved in planting over 2000 trees in the past year alone.

Narrabri Community Bushcare Group Award

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Narrabri Community Bushcare Group Award - Narrabri Community Bushcare

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Trees, pastures, crops, carbon credits and timber all from the same paddock, can it be done?

The Engineered Woodlands Project is about trialling an innovative new land use in the upper Namoi catchment. The project aims to demonstrate a profitable land use with good natural resource management outcomes that integrates the growing of native trees for carbon and timber within agricultural production systems.

The aim is for the resulting engineered woodlands to mimic the original native vegetation in form and structure, and be sufficiently cost effective to foster large scale adoption to reverse the past trend of rural tree decline in affected landscapes. The woodlands are likely to have improved biodiversity, nutrient cycling, water-use efficiency, landscape aesthetics and shade and shelter values over current pasture or crop - only land use. But be designed to allow the continued efficient operation of the agricultural enterprises at the same time.

Key features of this new approach include:

- The use of entire paddocks for tree establishment to minimise fencing costs, hence substantially reduce establishment costs;
- Use wide-spaced belts of trees to allow agricultural activity to continue between the belts once trees have become sufficiently established (within 1-2 years). Tree rows are established at spacings to suit farmers’ machinery and pasture and stock management and aligned to maximise microclimate benefits. They can be established in straight rows to simplify the erection of temporary fences if needed for grazing mgmt, or they can be established in curved contour plantings to suit the landscape. Indeed landholder partners to the project are likely to invent their own designs to suit their operations and innovations are expected;
- Use native species which have been identified with good straight form and fast growth rates in the upper Namoi region and use best practice establishment techniques to optimise growth rates;
- Have the participating landholders established in the carbon market and receiving (or are set up to receive) carbon credit payments;

Six landholders from the Namoi have agreed to become part of the project with trial sites ranging from 10ha to 50ha in size. They are located at Kentucky and Woolbrook in the upper catchment and at Duri, Loomberah and Gunnedah on the slopes and plains. Field days are planned for autumn 08 to inform landholders of the progress of the project, showcase the participating landholders various designs and, in particular, to report on the development of the carbon market for farmers.

Engineered Woodlands Project – initiative of the Northern Inland Forestry Investment Group (NIFIG) a sub-committee of the Northern Inland Regional Development Board – Co funded by the Board, Namoi CMA and Border Rivers Gwydir CMA.

Contact the NIFIG – Shane Andrews, Project Co-ordinator 0427 753808, David Thompson, Project Manager 0419 681 818

See more information on the Boards website: www.nio.com.au and use the forestry links.

Funds for Namoi Cotton Farmers

The Cotton Catchments Community CRC (Cotton CRC) in conjunction with the Namoi Catchment Management Authority have incentive funds available for Namoi Valley cotton growers. Funding is available for a range of on-ground activities within the Namoi Catchment.

Funding is available for activities in the following areas:

- Riparian Management
  Many activities can be undertaken in riparian areas including erosion control structures, fencing, re-vegetation, weed and pest control, alternative stock water supply and on-going site management.
- Native Vegetation
  Native vegetation plantings which can provide biodiversity outcomes as well as production in terms of shelter for stock, wind breaks, and spray drift buffers. Funding is also available for the maintenance of existing native vegetation.
- Water Management
  It is important to continually improve water use efficiencies, but to do this, growers often need to understand current efficiencies. Funding is available to assist growers determine current efficiencies and implement activities to improve these efficiencies.

Salinity Management

A number of activities depending on your type of farming enterprise could assist in managing a salinity problem on farm such as water quality monitoring, erosion control, tree interception lines, grazing management or introduction of perennial pastures.

Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC Catchment Officer Jan Macfarlane said “I encourage all the Namoi Cotton farmers to contact the Cotton CRC and see how this funding may be able to assist them. This funding has the potential to vastly improve Catchment health as well as cotton production in the Namoi.”

“As each cotton farm differs I advise growers to get in contact so the consultation process can get started”. If you are interested in a project or would like to know more about the funding programs please phone Jane Macfarlane on 02 67992417 or 0447 261014.
Improving Water Use Efficiency on Namoi Valley Cotton Farms

The Cotton Catchments Community CRC (Cotton CRC) in conjunction with the Namoi Catchment Management Authority (Namoi CMA) is working with cotton growers in the Namoi Valley to assist landholders improve their water use efficiency.

The Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA is providing financial assistance to help with benchmarking current water use and irrigation efficiency, making irrigation management changes and assessing the efficiency gains at the end of the program.

The benefits of this program are growers can make management changes that result in improved productivity and profitability, improved sustainability of irrigated farming enterprises, industry best practice is implemented on farm and the risk of salinity is reduced by reducing the potential for deep drainage.

Some of the financial assistance from the Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA has already been used to:
- install moisture probes and storage seepage equipment
- purchase software to measure and evaluate water storage and delivery systems
- monitor field efficiencies and potential deep drainage.

To find out more about this program and how to get involved or to see what else the Cotton CRC and Namoi CMA has to offer, call Jane Macfarlane on 02 67992417 or 0447 261 014.

While Stacey Spanswick is on maternity leave, Jane Macfarlane is the Namoi CMA and Cotton CRC Catchment Officer situated at the Cotton Catchment and Communities CRC located at the Australian Cotton Research Institute.

Jane has most recently been living in Brisbane working for the Queensland Environmental Protection Authority on national and state biodiversity planning and policy issues. Both Jane and her husband are originally from Narrabri and are enjoying living in this beautiful area with the local community.

Jane has nearly 10 years government experience in managing natural areas and conserving biodiversity, our native plants and animals as well as sustainable landscapes and has been employed by local and state government in NSW and QLD.

The Namoi Catchment can expect an increase in support relating to the implementation of the Australian Cotton Industries best management practices (BMP) programme, with the appointment of Kate Lightfoot as the Namoi BMP Officer.

Kate’s role is to encourage the responsible management of on-farm environmental activities, through the implementation of the BMP programme.

As the Namoi BMP officer, Kate will be working closely with Cotton Australia’s Grower Service Managers and Namoi growers to identify and manage environmental issues through the BMP programme, particularly the land and water module.

Focussing on practical aspects such as efficient irrigation, good soil management and on-farm vegetation which not only lead to a more sustainable and viable cotton industry, but also contribute to enhanced environmental outcomes.

Previously working in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) as an Implementation Officer for the Land and Water Management Plan known as ‘MIA Envirowise’, Kate has had the opportunity to work with a wide range of farming systems including rice through to horticultural crops. Kate’s involvement on the committee of the Murrumbidgee branch of Young Irrigation Network and being a graduate from the 2006 Rice Growers Association’s Environmental Champions Leadership and Development Program has developed the skills and confidence to complement her position in the Namoi.

A former local in the Namoi area Kate looks forward to being back in northern NSW and is looking forward to helping the local farmers. This position was made possible by a joint initiative of the Cotton Catchment Communities Cooperative Research Centre, Namoi Catchment Management Authority, Cotton Australia and Cotton Research and Development Corporation.

“It’s all about farming smarter, not harder” concluded Kate.

She can be found in the Cotton Australia office, Narrabri or contact Kate on 0408 972 516, email Kate. Lightfoot@csiro.au.

Property Planning comes to town

Namoi CMA will be holding a series of Property Planning Workshops in September this year for all interested landholders and land managers in the Narrabri area. All workshop and field days include morning tea, lunch and materials at no charge.

Expressions of interest are currently being taken for the four day workshop which covers
- Mapping farm resources and infrastructure on an aerial photograph
- Identifying soil types, land capability and salinity
- Water resource management
- Pasture and crop management
- Pasture assessment and ground cover
- Native vegetation management
- Riparian area management
- Indigenous and European Cultural Heritage
- Risk management planning

If you are interested in these workshops or would like further information please contact Stace Avard on 6742 9211 or Angela Baker on 6742 9209.