



Water Works

AUTUMN 2009

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Landcare Awards

At the recent Murrumbidgee Regional Landcare awards for 2009, MIA EnviroWise were **highly commended** for our MIA EnviroWise Education Program. Education and training are essential components of MIA EnviroWise. Our education program includes:

URBAN workshops addressing issues relating to community water use and drought resistant gardens.

SCHOOL fun workshops and excursions run by our qualified environment team.

FARM courses tailored to this region, aimed at the needs and sustainability of farming. They are free to MI customers through the Education Incentive program. Landholders who complete the FarmWise course and Whole Farm Plan may be also eligible for a range of incentives to assist with on-farm works. From 2001 to 2008 over 1,350 farmers in the region have completed the FarmWise course.

Rice Water Use Target

The Rice Water Use Target calculated from 1st October 2008 to 22nd February 2009 is 15.7ML/ha. This target includes 4ML/ha for filling up and draining the soil profile. As you may be aware, there is no Rice Environmental Monitoring (REM) program this year. The Rice Water Use Target will be calculated again at the end of February 2010 and will increase with increased ETO and reduced rainfall.

We will send out a letter to inform everyone of their individual rice water use against the rice water use target by the end of March. If you have any questions, please contact Grant Gyles on (02) 6962 0200.

Landholders interested in upgrading their on-farm irrigation infrastructure are reminded that they may be eligible for INCENTIVE FUNDING.

MIA EnviroWise has financial incentives available for improving your irrigation systems, including Horticulturalists converting to drip irrigation & installation of drainage recycling systems on Large area farms.

Please contact Grant Gyles for more information on 02 6962 0200.

Pasture Cropping - Another piece of the jigsaw.



Over 30 farmers attended the first Pasture Cropping workshop hosted by Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) on March 2. Many attendees travelled large distances to learn the finer details of incorporating the pasture management technique into their farming operations.

Pasture Cropping attempts to maintain a year-round groundcover approach to reduce wind and water erosion, improve soil structure, reduce weed pressure, increase nutrient availability and increase levels of soil organic carbon. It is a technique of sowing crops into living perennial (usually native) pastures and having these crops grow symbiotically with existing pastures.

The workshop was run by Colin Seis, one of the original pioneers of the practice. Being a farmer himself, Colin gave lots of practical on-farm advice. The feedback from all participants was very positive and many now plan to incorporate pasture cropping into their farming activities. One course participant has already started a 40 hectare trial site, with the view to a large scale program.

The course is valued at \$200/person or \$150/person for more than one from the same enterprise, which may be fully covered for MI customers by the MIA EnviroWise Education Incentive. The course is very popular with **another workshop set for May 28** which is filling quickly.

ABOVE: Participants in the first Pasture Cropping workshop attend an afternoon field trip to identify local native pastures.

A two-day Pasture Cropping intensive workshop is also being organised for late June where farmers have the opportunity to travel to Dubbo and stay overnight to see first-hand the success of the method.

If you wish to enrol or register your interest contact Kerri-Anne Keely, MIA EnviroWise Education Co-ordinator on 6962 0200.

Fencing

The MIA EnviroWise bulk fencing tender was recently awarded to Trevor Dodd Engineering, Leeton and the first loads of fencing supplies have been delivered and will be distributed to landholders with a current Property Vegetation Plan. These landholders have committed areas on farm either for revegetation of native trees and shrubs or areas of remnant vegetation for regeneration and conservation. Fencing allows for protection and maintenance of these areas. The MIA EnviroWise biodiversity incentive covers 100% of the cost of these supplies, whilst the landholder's contribution is the construction and ongoing maintenance of the fence.

Mirrool Creek Tenures and Rehabilitation

The Mirrool Creek project is now nearing completion of the restructure phase and is progressing with revegetation planning for both Mirrool and Little Mirrool Creeks.

Landholders along the creeks were invited to a meeting on 25 February to discuss the project, the rescinding of current tenures and the vision for the role of the creek as a Green Corridor through the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA).

Following this meeting landholders were invited to contact Bonnie Lessels, PVP & Projects Officer, to begin planning revegetation along the creek,

which will be incorporated into new licenses when they are issued. Before these licences are issued a temporary licence will be issued for the planning period. Please remember that until a new licence is issued no activities are permitted on any of the Crown land.

For landholders along the creeks who are interested in beginning revegetation planning, contact Bonnie Lessels on 02 6962 0200.

Changing irrigation strategies & biodiversity workshop

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS. (A new project funded by the National Program for Sustainable Irrigation.) Irrigation has changed a lot over the last 15 years, with rapid increases in efficiency at both a farm and regional level, and is likely to continue changing into the future with modification of infrastructure and cropping mixes. Such modifications alter things not only for agriculture, but for the biodiversity (plants and animals) of the area, which is an important part of farming systems. Managing these changes without compromising environmental sustainability requires knowledge of how irrigation interacts with local and regional biodiversity.

This influence of changing irrigation strategies on biodiversity project is considering how likely irrigation practice changes will influence biodiversity in the Riverina irrigation districts of NSW, and will explore strategies to reduce any negative effects. As part of this project, the team would like to hold a workshop with interested landholders to discuss the management of black box depression vegetation.

The broad aim of the workshop would be to provide an opportunity for discussion between irrigation farmers, irrigation providers and researchers that considers:

- (1) what features do black box woodlands/wetlands have and how do these features affect farming and biodiversity?
- (2) How are black box woodlands/wetlands currently managed?
- (3) How could they be managed in the future, particularly with respect to the availability of water and how/whether it could integrate with irrigated farming systems? As part of the workshop results from the pilot study would be presented.

To register your interest, please contact Murrumbidgee Irrigation's Education Officer, Kerrie-Anne Keely, on 6962 0200. For more information on the project, please contact Murrumbidgee Irrigation's Wetlands Project Officer, Karen McCann, on 6962 0200.

Plans for an exciting new garden project



The Three Ways community in collaboration with Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) and the Griffith City Council (GCC) are working together to beautify the land adjacent to Kennedy St, Three Ways. Members of the local Aboriginal community explored ideas for a cultural awareness park with the final design incorporating locally native plant species known to have significance to the Wiradjuri people for food, healing, tools or for ceremonial purposes. Information display boards located throughout the park will highlight the history of the local indigenous community. The Three Ways community has a strong desire to take pride and ownership of their community and it is through projects like this they can encourage and foster these relationships.

Works commenced on the first section of the park in Dec 2008 and completion of the project is expected by September 2009. MI has employed the services of a Cultural Heritage project officer who will oversee

the project and three members of the local community to assist in the layout and construction of the design. Trainees will gain skills in natural resource management and parks and gardens maintenance with the completion of a Certificate III in Horticulture (Parks and Gardens).

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The project originated from discussions in late 2006 between elders of the Three Ways community, Griffith Local Aboriginal Lands Council (GALC), MI, and GCC as a result of concerns over the removal of the Three Ways regulator, the general state of the channel reserves and Crown land surrounding the Three Ways, and the increased outbreaks of fire in the grasslands surrounding the homes. As a result of the increased prevalence of fires GCC has become more involved in maintenance of the area.

The outcome of the discussions was to scope the potential for a cultural awareness park on the channel reserve and crown land adjacent to the Three Ways community. This land is currently either owned or under management by MI and GCC. It is a joint project between MI, GCC, and the Three Ways community (via GLALC) and will be open to the entire Griffith community. MI agreed to take the lead role in development of the plan. The elders place a great deal of cultural significance on the Three Ways as for many of them it is considered as "their place" amongst the Wiradjuri people.

MI's Landscaping



The design layout of the landscaping for MI's new business centre was drawn up by Urban Initiatives from Melbourne, based on the brief from MIA. EnviroWise team members Karen McCann and Cathy Semmler. The design incorporates a dry creek bed in the shape of the Rainbow Serpent, natural curves and feature plantings. The original CSIRO individually bred roses were retained in the design to highlight the old with the new. All of the 7,000 plants to be planted are native Australian drought resistant trees, shrubs and groundcovers, with many local species. The plants were supplied from four local suppliers including Coleambally Saltbush, Riverina Nursery, Narrandera Forest Nursery and Sandy Creek Nursery at Yackandandah. The plants are all irrigated under drip irrigation and have thrived under the warm conditions, with the Ruby Saltbush around the front circle currently in full fruit.

Office Meltdown?

Murrumbidgee Irrigation in partnership with NSW PING (Partners in Grain) offered an **office management workshop** on March 12 with over thirty farmers attending. It was facilitated by Jeanette Buegge, a well known presenter from Western Australia who gave useful advice on every aspect of running an efficient office. Many topics were covered, including: office design, essential office equipment, sorting the mail, filing systems, farm meetings, physical farm records, staff and lots more. The workshop received very positive comments and we will be aiming to have another one next year.

Upcoming Courses

Pasture Cropping Workshop

Griffith: 28 May 2009. A one day introductory course on the basics of pasture cropping.

Micro Irrigation Workshops

Griffith: 3 April, 2 July & 24 Sept 2009
Leeton: 2 April, 3 July 2009 Farm drip irrigation systems focusing on monitoring and maintenance.

Precision Irrigation Management

Griffith: 2 April, 2 July, 24 Sept 2009
Leeton: 3 July 2009 Evening course on improving farmers' skills and knowledge of their irrigation controllers.

Living Soils & Compost Conference

Griffith: 9 July 2009 Foundation concepts of biological agriculture and how to get started.

Native Grasses Workshop

Griffith: 26 Oct 2009 Identification and management of native grass pastures.

For any further information or to register interest for any of these courses please ring Kerrie-Anne Keely on 6962 0225 or 0427 228492 or visit www.mirrigration.com.au/EnviroWise