

MEDIA RELEASE

20th September 2011

\$92,000 of Wind Erosion Devolved Grant has been made available for on-ground projects across the region

Individual landholders and production groups across the Northern Agricultural Region have been approved \$92,000 to address wind erosion and soil management issues in the region.

Nine individual farm businesses and production groups will receive funding to undertake improved farm practices from this year's Northern Agricultural Catchments Council Wind Erosion Devolved Grants Program.

"According to Marieke Jansen, NACC's Sustainable Farming Program Leader, there were twenty two projects valued at \$208,000 received across the region. The volume of projects received really demonstrates how our farming community values our natural assets and is prepared to take actions to repair, protect and care for these assets" said Ms Jansen.

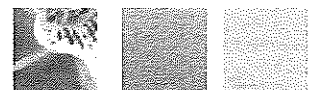
"The nine funded projects covered a wide range of areas, from setting biochar trials (to help farmers adopt improved soil management practices), to incorporation of clay, poultry and green manure to improve soil structure, soil health and water-repellent sandy soils which in turn is vital in reducing the risk of wind erosion in the region", said Ms Jansen.

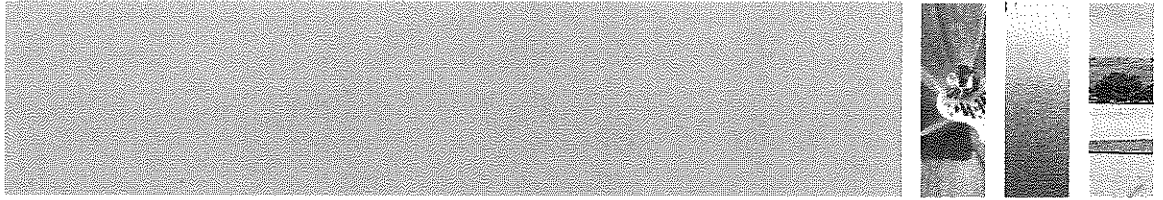
The funded projects were scored high because they have demonstrated highest extension value and sustainable agricultural outcomes. The suitable projects, not recommended for this grants round may be considered in the final devolved grants round to be completed sometimes next year.

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For further information about this article contact Stanley Yokwe, Regional Landcare Facilitator on 08 9938 0105 or email Stanley.Yokwe@nacc.com.au

The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) is supported by the Australian Government through the Caring for our Country Program, and has support from the State Government





MEDIA RELEASE

Sept 11

New era of opportunity for NAR farmers

The legislation that underpins the Carbon Farming Initiative was passed by Parliament on Aug 23rd 2011 and for the first time Australian farmers, foresters, local governments and other landholders will be able to tap into new markets – receiving carbon credits for taking actions that make good economic and environmental sense, like reducing emissions from livestock and fertiliser use, or increasing carbon in soils or vegetation.

The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council in collaboration with the Australian Carbon Traders have already started to identify carbon farming opportunities for farmers in the NAR to assist them make a sound and informed decisions before they embark on carbon abatement projects. CarbonQuest Australia has been developed by NACC and Australian Carbon Traders to provide a low cost entry into the carbon trading market for this region's farmers.

According to Shelley Spriggs NACC's CEO, CarbonQuest Australia is a vehicle for farmers to pool their carbon credits with other farmers to minimise transaction costs. This fully automated trading system will assist farmers in their decision making by modelling returns into the future; manage their projects from planning through to selling. "This automated system will be supported by workbooks and dedicated online resources developed specifically for our region's farmers", Ms Spriggs added.

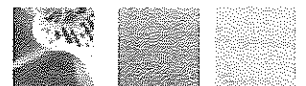
On 29th Sept 2011 at the Perenjori Shire Council, NACC will host a half day event that begins with the launch of the CarbonQuest Australia followed by a presentation by Ben Keogh from the Australian Carbon Traders who will take participants through the mechanics of the Carbon Farming Initiative and the relationship with domestic and international markets and demonstrate how farmers can aggregate their credits and sell to the carbon market.

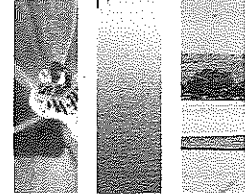
To register your interest for the workshop, please RSVP your intention by 25th Sept, 2011 to either Dene Solomon: 9973 1425; 0427 731425; dene.solomon@iipn.net.au or Stanley Yokwe: 9938 0105; Stanley.yokwe@nacc.com.au

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Landcare workshop on boreholes, bugs and birds

Climate change is having a profound impact on the environment around us and it's not only humans who are beginning to feel the heat, many of the creatures that we don't always notice such as birds and insects are being effected and most of all, the watertable below us is coming under additional pressure too.

A one day workshop and field day titled *Boreholes, Bugs and Birds* on 28 July, 2011 will feature a range of speakers presenting on topics such as hydrology, climate trends in the region and the role invertebrates, birds and remnant vegetation play in farm health.

According to Stanley Yokwe, Regional Landcare Facilitator for the Northern Agricultural Region, farmers are concerned about the sustainability of their businesses and what could be affecting their agricultural production.

"Farmers have recently expressed their concern regarding the effects climate change is having on the region and when one thing changes such as a reduction in rainfall it impacts the whole system", said Mr Yokwe. "This workshop will discuss what impacts are already being noticed in regard to insects and birds and the role they play in agricultural productivity."

The Waddy Forest Land Conservation District Committee will host the day event that begins with morning tea at the Waddy Forest Hall in Coorow and a morning field trip to view remnant vegetation, a paddock that features both crop and revegetation and saline drainage followed by lunch and guest speakers.

Guest speakers at the workshop include Lindsay Bourke who will present on the hydrological and climatic trends in the region and share his observations in the Buntine-Marchegee Catchment hydrology.

Professor Jonathan Majer who has worked extensively with insects and invertebrates and Professor Stephen Davies a specialist on birds and other vertebrates will discuss how these creatures are indicators of environmental health followed by Peter Mangano of the Department of Agriculture and Food WA will present on pests and beneficial insects of crops and pastures. Mr Mangano will also share his observations on the role of remnant vegetation and landscape effects on invertebrate populations and the role climate change is playing in relation to these animals.

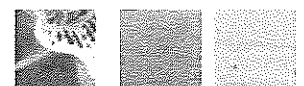
To register your interest in the workshop, please RSVP your attendance by 26 July, 2011 to either Fiona Falconer: 0427 203 273 davidfiona1@bigpond.com or Stanley Yokwe: 9938 0105 Stanley.yokwe@nacc.com.au

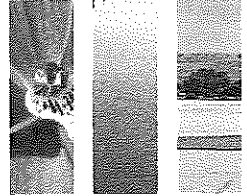
This event is supported by the NACC through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Initiative.

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For further information please contact Janell Kopplhuber on 9938 0103 or email Janell.kopplhuber@nacc.com.au

Photo Caption:





Vegetation corridors essential to agricultural production

The creation of vegetation corridors to sustain animal species populations was recently explained at the *Boreholes, Bugs and Birds* workshop at Waddy Forest District.

According to Professor Jonathan Majer of Curtin University, the habitats of many of these species have deteriorated markedly because most of the land has been cleared for agricultural production.

“With around 93% of the agricultural zone cleared, many species have retreated in their distribution or become extinct. Nevertheless, a number of species still persists in agricultural areas in the paddocks, remnant vegetation, reserves and road reserves but, the majority of these could soon be impacted by climate change.”

Prof Majer said that it’s often the smallest creatures who play a critical role in maintaining healthy landscapes.

“What people often overlook is the role invertebrates such as worms, snails spiders, mites and centipedes play in a healthy, functioning ecosystem which is necessary to production.

“The insects that populate the planet not only recycle nutrients, maintain soil structure, pollinate our plants, disperse seeds and minimise pest problems they are also an essential food resource for many amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammal species.”

Vertebrates such as birds and reptiles who feed on many of these pest animals have only survived because they found new places to live on farms or, according to Professor Davies of Curtin University, have been encouraged to return through the establishment of vegetation corridors.

“Many of these creatures only survive because they can find living spaces, particularly around the homestead areas of the farm as these are usually not ploughed or burned”, said Prof Davies.

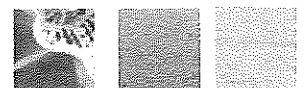
“However, if you want to maintain biodiversity or encourage animals to return such as birds and reptiles, all you need to do is create corridors that will provide nest sites and a dense understory in remnant vegetation.”

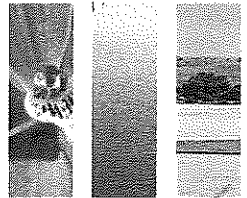
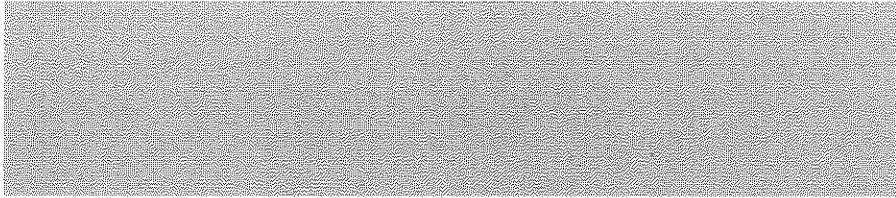
Wayne Parker of the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA), told attendees bird surveys conducted in the Biodiversity in Grain and Graze Project measured the extent at which mixed farming, cropping and grazing have contributed to a healthy landscape.

“Since clearing the land native birds and animals have become confined to small areas of uncleared remnant patches, however, these patches still play an important part in the ecology of the region as they help to prevent erosion, slow water table rise and provide shelter to birds and animals.

“The health of these patches can be measured by the type, number and diversity of bird species that inhabit these areas and although a large patch will always support more species than a small patch, it is important to remember the fauna living in these patches will have an impact on their surrounding paddocks.

Peter Mangano, also of DAFWA said landholders should consider an integrated pest management (IPM) plan which employs natural methods to control pest insects and only uses chemicals as a last resort as many birds feed on these bugs.





“Over and above their aesthetic value, birds have practical implications for the farm in which they live as many birds feed on the insects from the paddocks surrounding their habitat. Therefore, any IPM should involve a range of control options including the preservation of beneficial invertebrates such as predatory mites, carabid beetles, ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies and the use of chemicals should be a last resort rather than the primary means of control.”

Further investigation to determine the level of impact birds have on neighbouring paddocks is still being conducted and according to Wayne Parker, this work should lead to a better understanding of the links between paddock production and remnant vegetation inhabitants.

He also stressed the importance of providing habitat through revegetation for birds and reptiles should farmers want to benefit from a more natural method of pest control.

“Generally the number of species in a patch of remnant vegetation is dictated by the habitat, therefore, the high number of species found in perennial pasture paddocks is often the result of sown tree lines as larger open spaces of cropping simply doesn’t provide the shelter required by birds or reptiles to survive.”

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Photo Caption:

