

Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator (RALF) Update

Community Engagement Steering Committee meeting Thursday 23rd April 2020

1 Introduction to community engagement by the RALF

Our second year has seen a significant increase in the amount of community engagement undertaken by the PHCC RALF, as part of RALF Core Services and the delivery of RLP Projects, such as Greening Farms.

There are two broad 5-year NLP outcomes of the RALF role, and therefore RALF community engagement:

- **Outcome 5:** By 2023, there is an increase in the awareness and adoption of land management practices that improve and protect the condition of soil, biodiversity and vegetation
- **Outcome 6:** By 2023, there is an increase in the capacity of agriculture systems to adapt to significant changes in climate and market demands for information on provenance and sustainable production.

These two outcomes guide the RALF's community engagement priorities.

A large part of the RALF's role is delivery of the PHCC project Greening Farms, which has been designed to meet NLP Outcome 5, and provides operating budget for community engagement activities.

2 Community Engagement in Greening Farms

This project **works with farmers** to protect, enhance & plant native vegetation on farms across the Peel-Harvey Region in two farming landscapes and three bioregions. Farmers will be supported through **technical advice, field days, on-farm surveys & on-ground support** to improve protection of existing vegetation & utilize innovative management techniques to increase farm biodiversity, productivity & improve soil condition. The project includes at least **1300 ha of on-ground works or protection agreements** & will directly involve over **250 farmers over the 5 years**. Attention to native vegetation that is degraded or in urgent need of protection will be one of the project's priorities.

Community engagement project services under Greening Farms 2019-20 to date

Project Service	Numbers Required	Numbers delivered	Operations Budget	Spent	Allocated
Community Environment Grants: Establishing agreements	10	19	\$65,000	\$56,984.09	\$8,015.91
Community Environment Grants: On ground works	10	4	65,000	\$12,690	\$52,310
Field Days/other events	3	3	\$6,000	\$3,409.77	\$2,545.00
Communication Materials	12	19	\$2,400	0	\$2,400
One on One technical advice	10	10	\$3,000	\$455.00	\$2,545.00
Farm Management surveys, inc Land for Wildlife	4	2	0	0	0
Negotiating with community groups	3	1	\$1,000	0	\$1,000
Total			\$142,400	\$73,538.86	\$68,861.11

3 Community engagement highlights (November 2019 – April 2020)

3.1 Community Environmental Grants (CEG): a community engagement program

The PHCC CEG program is a major opportunity to support farmers with financial and technical support to carry out on-ground works, and provides a significant opportunity for PHCC to engage with our farmers and influence land management practices. The CEG process involves the RALF and other PHCC staff working with farmers and landholders through a staged process taking anywhere from 6 months to over 12 months. This builds trust with farmers and can lead to other on-ground and community engagement opportunities.

The main milestones for RALF CEG work are reaching agreements with landholders and the completion of on-ground works by the farmer

Agreements with Farmers

In the 2019-20 CEG program, Greening Farms and the RALF established 19 agreements with farmers (3 on Swan Coastal Plain, 16 in Hotham Williams (HW) catchment)

Aim: increase in awareness and adoption of land management practices that improve and protect the condition of soil, biodiversity and vegetation

- One-on-one site visits to each property during the Greening Farms Community Environment Grant project development phase, and where required, assisting landholders with their applications.
- Four (4) Landholders within the HW area had more than one application per farm. For example they had up to 3 projects they wanted funding to support. This is a credit to Mel and team for putting them together.
- The hard thing is asking the right questions to the landholders. They all want to take action, however we want the projects to be completed, be sustainable- long term, and meet NLP Outcomes 5 and 6, and PHCC NRM strategy.

On-farm on-ground works

Aim: Support farmers to improve and protect existing vegetation, and implement innovative sustainable agricultural practices.

In 2019-20, four on-farm works have already been completed. The aim is for 10 to be completed by June 2020.

Key on-ground achievements so far:

- Over 10,000 salt bush shrubs planted
- Weed control in Williams River, Quindanning
- Capacity building with landholders, and local governments
- Private/ Public benefits



Figure 1: CEG grant acquittal sign

3.2 Field Days/ other events

a) Pigs, Pests and Biosecurity Workshop Thursday 5th March 2020, Cuballing Recreation Centre

Intro line

Throughout the greening farms CEG visits and one on one technical advice, it became apparent that pigs and biosecurity is a major issue both on public and private land. Landholders wanted more information, but they did not have time to attend a full day event.

The 6 groups engaged were:

- WA Pork producers association
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Private landholders
- Local government
- Community Groups x 2

Aim: Increase awareness in biosecurity threats including African Swine Fever, feral animal management, weed and pests of significance including roadside weed management. Encourage farmer to farmer collaboration from commercial business to hobby farmer.

Field Day	Total number of participants	Number of groups engaged	Expenses
Pigs, Pests, and Biosecurity	24	6	\$577.50



Figure 2: Biosecurity signs, handed out at Biosecurity event

You might also want to explain how you facilitated and engaged the group to provide feedback etc.

b) Talkin Soil Health Conference Wednesday 12th March 202, York Town Hall

Aim: Educate, inform, and engage attendees to build natural capital, through soil health, using regenerative farming practices and principles.

Field Day	Total number of participants	Number of groups engaged	Expenses
Talkin Soil Health Conference	140 6(Peel Region)	7	\$2,000



Figure 3: Sponsorship of the Peel-Harvey Soil Health Champion: Shaun Wittwer, Cuballing – third generation farmer.

Greening Farms was able to sponsor our Soil Health Champion to attend the Talkin' Soil Health conference, including accommodation, travel and attendance at the Cocktail Function where he was awarded with a trophy.

As a Soil Health Champion, PHCC took a short video of Shaun explaining why soil health is so important. The video was broadcast at the conference.

3.3 Communication materials

Communication material	Total	Purpose
Wattle and Quoll RALF updates	3	Advertising future events, engage with new information/ insights e.g. new apps or websites
HW Landcare matters	2	Share new information, share past event statistics and insights, gain interest in future events
Facebook	9	Share our success, create interest in agriculture, advertise events, share information from other sources relevant to our catchment
Twitter	5	Share and engage in real time



Figure 4: FB photo, part of UWA ARC linkage seedling trial

3.4 One on One technical

(11 delivered in the July 2019 – April 2020 period)

Working one on one with landholders to listen, understand and share information allows them to choose more sustainable land management practices and work towards both NLP Outcome 5 and 6.

In addition to the many one-on-one interactions that the RALF has as part of the CEG program and organised events above, there have been at least eleven other 1:1 interactions with farmers since July 2019 on a range of issues. Examples include

Feral cat enquiry: Landholder called, seeking support for potential feral cats on private land on the Swan Coastal Plain.

After discussing the issue we connected him with a monitoring camera and information on the best monitoring cameras to potentially purchase.

Peel Harvey Biosecurity group provided information on effective cameras based on their previous research.

After 6 weeks I contacted the landholder, and there has been no evidence of feral cat activity.

Native Bee depletion

A Mandurah resident called PHCC concerned for the low native bee numbers, and suggested that the City of Mandurah Mosquito spray program is killing bees.

I informed the concerned resident of further information based on information from the City of Mandurah website and suggested they speak to a bee specialist at UWA. The information for the UWA specialist was sent through from Steve Fisher.

3.5 Farm management surveys: 4 delivered 2

(Two surveys delivered in the July 2019 – April 2020 period)

Aim: There is an increase in the capacity of agriculture systems to adapt to significant changes in climate and market demands for information on provenance and sustainable production.

The two farm management surveys were for Ross Rose and Liz Butler (Land for Wildlife), of whom are current CEG recipients.

3.6 Negotiating with community groups:

(Negotiated with one group in the July 2019 – April period, with the support of the H-W team)

- Negotiated with Shire of Boddington: weed removal (cottonbush) in the Williams River corridor, unallocated Crown land
- Engaged 4 stakeholders, provided PPE and chemical
- Significant Public and private benefit.

3.7 Community engagement projects in progress:

SJFFA Covid-19 response: A survey, to assist landholders who may need assistance in sourcing seeds, resources and staff. SJFFA will then apply for Lotterywest funding with support from PHCC, PDC, and SJ Landcare.

Peel Hub Southern Dirt- MOU: sign an MOU with the Peel Hub of Southern Dirt to ensure strategic business relationship into the future that utilises existing resources and encourages sustainable agriculture.

Wandering productivity group: Wandering Productivity group have been inactive for the past 10 years. Through talking one on one with some members of the original group, it was decided to hold a town meeting. The outcome of the meeting included ways that the RALF officer and PHCC could support the group going forward. Suggestions included: finding keynote speakers, writing minutes, facilitating events, and sharing event information.

4 RALF Covid-19 impacts to date:

- Cancellation of SJFFA Food and Farm Fest
 - Sponsorship funding, assisting SJFFA through support with Lotterywest funding and questionnaire
- Property planning workshop postponed
 - Working one on one with the 7 people that registered interest in the event, doing more background research on each landholders needs.
 - This is a workshop that we feel cannot be done online, however we could do an initial basic one online. E.g. SMART goals, vision, vegetation protection, landscape, future needs. They can then bring the work to date to the event.
 - Plan to hold event in August/September
- UWA ARC linkage project on hold
 - Project start date moved to 2021
 - Letter sent to farmers (3) confirming their commitment to the trial in 2021.
 - Work with UWA to keep farmers engaged by sending them new research information and fact sheets on the benefits for farming.
- Changes to CEG acquittal, and expression of interest process
 - Working with Mel Durack and each individual farmer to ensure CEG grants are acquitted on time, in a safe manner.
 - Ensuring we are engaging with potential CEG recipients for 20/21 grant round
- Cancellation of RALF conference- Canberra
 - The RALF team in Canberra will not be holding a conference in 2020, they will be working closely with each state group of RALF's to ensure we have the support we need.

Thank you.