



Natural Resource Management

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## Country to Coast News

Facilitating the improvement of  
land and water management practices

21 February 2011

### What's Inside:

1. Welcome by the CEO
2. Volunteering Events Calendar
3. University food gardens
4. Doing business while culturally aware
5. Agricultural production continues to improve
6. Boosting support for community groups
7. Fighting erosion
8. Sustainable House Day
9. Becoming a volunteer via social media
10. Drive safely on beaches
11. Endangered plants and lizards found
12. Greening Sheepstation Creek
13. Traditional owners cash in on carbon credits
14. Wet weather hinders the path of fish
15. Website facelift

### What's On

For more details go to :  
[www.nqdrytropics.com.au/](http://www.nqdrytropics.com.au/)

### Welcome by the CEO

Hello and welcome to our first newsletter of 2011 and a new year of caring for our wondrous dry tropics.

As last year drew to a close, the Board and staff worked to finalise a new 3-year strategic plan for the company. Although coincidental, the timing of the strategic plan is now allowing us to make some New Year resolutions!

If there's one constant in natural resource management, it's that it's always changing. Remaining on top of new and emerging challenges and opportunities means adapting and refining the business and, hopefully, having a hand in shaping the future. So, with this in mind, we've made the following New Year's resolution:

We're going to ensure that we are a healthy and well governed organisation that is supported by efficient and effective systems. We are going to demonstrate strong leadership in the management of land and water resources in the dry tropics, and we are going to ensure that what we do reflects the aspirations and concerns of our community. And finally, we're going to grow the business of NRM in the dry tropics, building strong partnerships and an even stronger investment base.



We've been asked for more regular communication around things that are happening within NQ Dry Tropics and within the region. We hope this newsletter and the upcoming revamped website will give you a better idea of who we are and what we're doing.

The next few pages are an enjoyable read and a mere slice of what we're doing. I look forward to your feedback.

May I encourage you to make volunteering one your 2011 resolutions. See our calendar for some fantastic opportunities.

Scott Crawford  
Chief Executive Officer

[Back to top](#)

## Volunteering Events Calendar

### February

Saturday 19 Bush garden  
Planting, raising seeds.  
Coastal Dry Tropics Landcare Inc  
4721 4322

Sunday 20 Lou Lister Park  
Planting, weeding  
Coastal Dry Tropics Landcare Inc  
4721 4322

Monday 21 Creek watch  
Fish, fauna, macroinvertebrate and water quality surveys.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Tuesday 22 Town Common  
Fish population surveys and water quality monitoring.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Tuesday 22 Louisa Creek  
Macro invertebrate, fish population surveys and water quality monitoring.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Tuesday 22 Bohle River  
Fish population surveys and water quality monitoring.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Wednesday 23 Bohle River restoration  
Tree planting, weeding, mulching and water activities.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Thursday 24 Town Common restoration  
Tree planting, weeding, mulching and water activities.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Friday 25 Conservation Volunteers Australia garden nursery  
Planting and raising seedlings.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Saturday 26 Palliative Care gardens



Planting and weeding  
Coastal Dry Tropics Landcare Inc  
4721 4322

Sunday 27 Bohle Wetlands  
Planting and weeding  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Sunday 27 Middle Ross Weed Control Project  
Coastal Dry Tropics Landcare Inc  
4721 4322

Monday 28 Creek Watch  
Fish, fauna, macroinvertebrate and water quality surveys.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

## March

Wednesday 2 Bohle Wetlands restoration  
Tree planting, weeding, mulching and water activities.  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Thursday 3 Town Common restoration  
Tree planting, weeding, mulching and watering  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

Friday 4 Conservation Volunteers Australia garden nursery  
Raising seedlings  
<http://conservationvolunteers.com.au> or 4721 4077

## Upcoming

8 April 2011 Swamp Secrets Bus Tour - free  
Celebrating World Wetlands Day from 8am  
½ day tour of Townsville's top nature spots!  
Loads of kid's activities and bunyip hunting...  
Experts who love our environment. Lunch provided.  
Book by calling NQ Dry Tropics 4724 3544.

Want to know more about volunteer opportunities in your area?  
Contact Laura Dunstan at NQ Dry Tropics 4724 3544.

[Back to top](#)

## University food gardens



A JCU student Kristen Weiss requested the school coordinate vegetable garden plots at each student accommodation site within the grounds.

Laura Dunstan of NQ Dry Tropics enlists volunteers and brings community groups together. She met with James Cook University staff to help manage the project. She suggested groups Permaculture Townsville and Food for Thought have the expertise to help.

The proposal will save students money, supply bumper good eating and green spaces to care for.

So many options for a native bush garden like this caper tree

The first Permaculture garden will launch at JCU on January 29. There will be cooking demonstrations and expert speakers.

[Back to top](#)

### Doing business while culturally aware

It's not often that NQ Dry Tropics staff wriggles into stinger suits and jump off boats to catch turtles. Turtle tagging in Bowen was part of cultural awareness training designed to gain an understanding of the cultural factors that affect Aboriginal people; their history and beliefs.

Our business works closely with 16 Aboriginal groups of the dry tropics region. During the training staff imagined Australia's settlement history through the eyes of a young Aboriginal boy and felt challenged to identify with his changing circumstance.

Cliff Cobbo, WWF-Australia Policy Manager, spoke about the businesses' power to alter policy.



Leah Saltner spoke about her dual role as NQ Dry Tropics employee and Traditional Owner.

On the second day of training, staff experienced a day in the life of Indigenous rangers in Bowen.

Geared up in stinger suits, NQ Dry Tropics staff and rangers travelled along the coast in tinnies searching the waters for turtles. The aim was to tag and release to monitor turtle numbers.

Cultural awareness training is important to gain an understanding of Aboriginal issues and appropriate engagement.

[Back to top](#)

### Agricultural production continues to improve



Applications for Reef Rescue came flooding in from sugar and horticulture farmers and graziers recently.

Thanks to Reef Rescue funding around 150 farmers and graziers will implement changes on their properties to reduce their impact on the environment. Primary producers are also required to contribute money towards projects.

Reef Rescue is part of the Australian Government \$2.2 billion Caring for our Country initiative which helps landholders improve the way they manage land. NQ Dry Tropics distributes Reef Rescue funding in this area.

In many instances Reef Rescue helps farmers and graziers afford positive changes much sooner than they would otherwise have done.

[Back to top](#)

### Boosting support for community groups

Landcare and community environment groups can struggle to find enough people and funds to do the work

they need to.

NQ Dry Tropics now has two specialists to work with Landcare and community environment groups in our region.

Peter Arthofer and Riaan Breedt are helping groups to apply for funding, linking them with like-minded groups, helping out with training, and keep them up to date with the latest scientific information.



The positions are part of the National Landcare Facilitator Initiative which is investing \$33.6 million over four years to support Landcare work.

The initiative is about helping groups from Townsville to Alpha to be resilient and continue to contribute to healthy environments.

Peter has a background in environmental science and worked with CSIRO and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries before joining NQ Dry Tropics four years ago. He has been working on grazing, water quality, coastal, and pest and weed initiatives.

Riaan has experience in agricultural development and sustainable agriculture. He was a farmer in South Africa and more recently managed a revegetation company based in north Queensland.

There are at least a dozen Landcare groups in north and central Queensland that will be supported by this initiative and 20 other groups in urban and regional areas that will benefit from Peter and Riaan's help.

[Back to top](#)

## Fighting erosion



Grazing properties regularly use a grader to make tracks, roads and fence lines but they can do so at the expense of the soil. Erosion can be caused by inappropriate use of graders or similar machines.

In October NQ Dry Tropics and AgForce held workshops about using graders to reduce the effects of soil erosion.

The workshops were presented by Darryl Hill in Collinsville, Ravenswood, Charters Towers and Mt Fox. He is highly recognised throughout Australia for his practical knowledge and experience using graders and other machinery. He's based in Katherine and is passionate about the soil.

Darryl said, "Most new erosion is not due to uncontrolled stocking, but pastoral property access tracks and fence lines. What may seem time-consuming in the short term will alleviate many costly repairs in the future."

The 60 people who attended the workshops learnt more about good grader practice to prepare fire breaks. Many were keen to make effective fire breaks given the amount of vegetation that's grown after this big wet. Knowing how to build breaks without causing erosion is important.

Darryl has been running workshops for years in the rangelands. He also showed graziers how to reduce and improve road erosion.

For more than 40 years he has studied soil erosion from a variety of viewpoints; as a ringer, head stockman, property manager and Landcare officer.

[Back to top](#)

## Sustainable House Day

When Chris moved into his small miners' cottage it was dark and hot. Now it's a home that excels in tropical design and energy efficiency.

For surprisingly very little cost Chris renovated the low set 1908 Queenslander to encourage breezes through each room. He also eliminated some of the small rooms houses of this era typically have.

Chris also installed solar panels and built a low water use yard featuring vegetables and native plants. The plants are great for wildlife and the kitchen. They're also used for screening and shading and help to create a cool microclimate around the home.



Chris and other home owners opened their houses to hundreds of people for Townsville's Sustainable House Day in September.

The day is a once a year opportunity for the public to walk through private homes which have excelled in tropical design, energy efficiency and sustainable lifestyle practices.

Visitors saw and experienced the features of the homes and spoke to homeowners about how they became more sustainable. Industry experts in energy efficiency, tropical design, renewable energy, and sustainable garden practices were also on hand.

NQ Dry Tropics' Judy Warner said, "We like to show people what can be done on a limited budget. Owners with more modern homes also demonstrated what they've done to improve energy efficiencies.

"There are so many small things we can do to make our houses and yards better for people and animals."

[Back to top](#)

## Becoming a volunteer via social media



Studies show that people who volunteer are not only happier, but live longer.

NQ Dry Tropics is getting behind volunteers with its Strengthening Communities program.

Laura Dunstan from NQ Dry Tropics said, "There are fantastic projects happening right now in our local environment that need more volunteers. These projects are taking real action towards creating a more sustainable future for us and our environment!"

For the business wishing to increase their community contribution, backpacker wanting a truly local

experience, or resident not already a member of an environment group, it was virtually impossible to know how to get involved.

The program will boost volunteer numbers for all dry tropics environment groups and create networking and training opportunities for groups and volunteers.

For NQ Dry Tropics to help promote the events of environment groups, social media seemed a great solution.

Anyone can Google 'volunteering dry tropics' to connect via social media Facebook or Twitter.

Every week in north Queensland volunteers transform eroded, nutrient poor land from its dusty brink to lushly shaded, wildlife friendly bliss. They monitor the health of wetlands and keep count of rare and endangered species.

Volunteers make friends, gain employment and training, while leaving a lasting, positive legacy on the environment.

Give our office a call and talk to Laura if you'd like to be involved.

[Back to top](#)

## Drive safely on beaches

Driving on beaches is a popular activity in north Queensland for boaties, swimmers, and explorers.

Beaches in the Burdekin and Townsville regions are under increasing pressure from vehicle use.

Public safety concerns are also rising.

A group established by NQ Dry Tropics is helping to reduce the risks 4WDs, quad bikes and motorbikes pose to beach users, cultural sites and plants and animals.

The Coastal Vehicle Management Steering Committee has released a guide to driving on beaches in the Burdekin and Townsville regions.



The Vehicles on our Beaches guide explains how to drive appropriately on the coast, the laws that apply to driving on beaches and what to do if you witness unlawful driving.

Mark Murray from NQ Dry Tropics says drivers need to be aware of the problems that have occurred in north Queensland when vehicles are driven on beaches.

"Inappropriate driving can damage plants, erode sand dunes and disturb shorebirds, sea turtle hatchlings and their habitats." Mr Murray said.

Driving a vehicle above high tide is subject to various legislative regulations which often prohibit the use of vehicles.

In Queensland beaches can be considered a state road for management purposes and therefore road rules apply.

"Drivers are encouraged to stay below high tide at all times and use allocated access areas only to get onto a beach." He said.

The Steering Committee involves coastal management organisations that are interested in establishing a plan to manage vehicles on our beaches.

It includes organisations like the Townsville City Council, the Burdekin Shire Council, the Queensland Police Service, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Department of Environment and Resource Management.

The Vehicle on our Beaches guide aims to raise the profile of what is and isn't appropriate behaviour for drivers using our beaches. A copy is available on our website [www.nqdrytropics.com.au](http://www.nqdrytropics.com.au)

The Committee is continuing to look at ways to manage the issue. If you live in the Burdekin area you will notice new signs on safe beach driving being installed in the coming months.

[Back to top](#)

## Endangered plants and lizard found



Amanda Laurie of Healthy Habitat is showing Chris Chandler a Dietrich's Morning Glory specimen

NQ Dry Tropics discovered three species of rare and threatened native vines and a lizard outside of Townsville.

The saxicoline sun skink was recently found on a mountain in Nome, near Alligator Creek.

Two of the three native vines; Mt Stuart Dutchman's pipe, William's tylophora and Dietrich's morning glory are not known to any other areas of Australia.

They were discovered by NQ Dry Tropics during assessments on private properties.

The property owners are participants of our Healthy Habitat project.

Landholder Craig Scholz said, "I'm thrilled about the 10 feet high Dietrich's morning glory and little skinks. I had no idea what was on my property but now I know what native trees are thriving here."

Landholders have since installed identifying flags alongside the plants and lizard habitat and removed competing weeds.

The discovery of the vines was unexpected but the saxicoline sun skink had been recorded just once before on Mt Muntalunga in Nome.

Alligator Creek property owner Chris Chandler said, "I practice the habit of not knocking over anything unless I know it is a weed."

Amanda Laurie from NQ Dry Tropics said, "If you notice a plant that you've never seen before on your property you can call us and we can help you identify it."

Botanist Dr Calvert said the recent discovery of the Dietrich's morning glory is one of the largest populations of the threatened native species he's ever seen.

On this site, some of the white trumpet shaped flowering vine was entwined with lantana, a weed known to out-compete native species.

The very rare Mt Stuart Dutchman's pipe, endemic only within Townsville and Magnetic Island had narrowly missed being wiped out as it was found in an area recently cleared of weeds.

There is legislation to protect rare native plants in the richly bio-diverse Townsville region.

Meanwhile Healthy Habitat continues to be one of our most popular projects. 88 landholders are now ridding weeds and planting natives in Alligator Creek and Black River.

[Back to top](#)

## Greening Sheepstation Creek

School students in Ayr are looking after the future of an internationally acclaimed wetland in their backyard.

Year five to seven students from the Burdekin Christian College have extended a nature refuge along Sheepstation Creek which feeds into Bowling Green Bay.

They planted 50 indigenous paperbark and Leichhardt tree varieties along 100 metres of the Creek on private



property.

Scott Fry from NQ Dry Tropics said, "It was great to see the kids so enthusiastic about planting trees."

The site we revegetated is a key site used by the kids to monitor water quality. They got a really good understanding about what trees have to do with water quality."

The planting is part of a NQ Dry Tropics' project to improve the health of the Ramsar listed Bowling Green Bay wetland.

Queensland has just five Ramsar wetlands, which are wetlands considered to be of international importance.

Sheepstation Creek is a work horse in the Burdekin farming area. It's used as a distribution network for water from the Burdekin River.

It also recharges groundwater and surface water for sugar cane irrigation.

The trees were planted on a site that's barely five kilometres from Bowling Green Bay so they will have a direct positive impact on its health.

This is one of the many school planting activities NQ Dry Tropics is planning over the next 12 months.

[Back to top](#)

### Traditional Owners cash in on carbon credits

Aboriginal communities are looking to capitalise on electricity generation.

The Urannah Property Association is considering building wind turbines on its 65,000 hectare property.

The property north west of Mackay has testing beacons onsite to measure the available wind.

The energy company the Association is working with owns the wind turbines. If the project goes ahead it will pay a rental fee and a portion of sales from electricity generation to the landholder, which could be as much as \$20,000 a year for each turbine.

The Urannah Property Association's Norman Johnson said, "On the hills of Urannah there's plenty of opportunity to produce electricity because it's close to the grid and it's up high for solar and wind. We don't have the money to do it but we don't mind leasing the place in return for a little bit of income".

He thinks other Traditional Owners should also look at ways of benefiting from renewable energy.

"I think all Aboriginal people across Australia should be looking at things like this. Half a dozen turbines might be able to sustain a community in electricity and a little bit of income." Mr Johnson said.

One hundred Traditional Owners recently attended workshops coordinated by natural resource management group NQ Dry Tropics and Carbon House, carbon strategists for business and landowners.

Participants learnt about how climate change will affect their land, how a carbon credits system works and how to minimise climate change on their property.

NQ Dry Tropics was interested in coordinating these workshops for Traditional Owners due to a gap in knowledge around climate change as well as some of the positive opportunities around carbon economies which not only support climate change mitigation options but also Indigenous development options.

NQ Dry Tropics Land and Sea Coordinator Jean Fenton said, "Aboriginal landowners are in an excellent position to invest in renewable energies such as solar and wind. If the land was cleared prior to 1990 there are opportunities in carbon sequestration projects through forestry initiatives."

Ms Fenton said there are also plenty of opportunities for joint venture partners to get on board with some of these initiatives to make them a reality.

[Back to top](#)

### Wet weather hinders the path of fish

A number of fish passageways planned for the dry tropics have been delayed due to this season's wet weather.



To date NQ Dry Tropics has cleared 5,000 kilometres of waterways so that fish can move freely throughout the region to feed and breed. The decline of native fish in our region has declined partly due to roads, dams and weirs.

We are working with James Cook University to upgrade a fishway off Solander Road. Other fish passageway projects in the pipeline this year are at Ross River dam, Sheepstation Creek, Jerona Road crossing, Town Common wetlands and Five Ways Road Crossing.

[Back to top](#)

### Website facelift

We're revamping our website to make it look fresh and make it easier for you to find your way around. We're looking forward to launching it in the not too distant future.

[Back to top](#)

This edition, can be found on our website:  
<http://www.nqdrytropics.com.au/resources/>

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