

HNRRP e-news

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Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of HNRRP e-news, the newsletter for the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Recovery Program.

In May 2009 the Australian Government's Water for the Future initiative - Water Smart Australia Program announced up to \$77.4 million of funding for the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Recovery Program.

The program is being managed by the NSW Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean in partnership with NSW agencies. Additional funding and in-kind contributions are also provided by the NSW Government, local landholders and the Hawkesbury City Council.

The seven projects have come a long way since commencing last year. You can read about their progress in the first issue of HNRRP e-news.

Bruce Boyes
Program Manager

Comprising seven projects, the program aims to improve river health by making more water available for environmental flows and reducing nutrient inputs to the river system.

About

HNRRP e-news is the newsletter for the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Recovery Program.

The program is managed by the Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean (OHN) in partnership with New South Wales Government agencies.

HNRRP e-news is produced by the OHN and distributed through program partners.

Photos courtesy OHN and Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority.

To subscribe email riverrecovery-subscribe@yahoo.com.au. If you no longer wish to receive e-news call (02) 4729 8123.

For more information visit www.ohn.nsw.gov.au or call (02) 4729 8138.



Meters rolled out

New water metering systems are being rolled out across the Hawkesbury Nepean (HN) catchment as part of the Improving Hawkesbury-Nepean Water Balance Accounting (Metering) project.

Managed by the NSW Office of Water, the project is installing or upgrading water meters and monitoring systems for surface water users in the HN catchment.

Project Manager Ian Charlton said, "Significant progress has been made with over 520 meters installed to date, which equates to metering of approximately 75% of water extraction across the catchment."

Ian Gregory of Tennyson Irrigation Co-Operative Society in North Richmond

was one of the first water licence holders to have a meter installed under the project.

"The new electronic metering system will help to monitor and maintain water supply for farmers, the environment, local town water and lifestyle users," he said.

"The installation process was co-operative and the new systems will hopefully lead to better utilisation of the water available to all users throughout the HN system."

For further information call 1800 220 952 or visit www.water.nsw.gov.au and click on "water balance accounting" under quick links.



Nutrient Smart Farms bring birds back

A Douglas Park farmer is helping to protect the Nepean River by preventing nutrient run off escaping from his property into the waterway.

Keith Dowel (inset) is fencing off key areas of his 40-hectare grazing property so that native vegetation will flourish, providing a buffer zone that will prevent nitrogen and phosphorus from being washed into the Nepean River, 300 metres away.

'I was born and raised on the Nepean and I've seen a lot of changes,' says Keith.

'Birds have been decimated and I haven't seen possums for years. We used to be deafened by frogs but you don't hear them much now.'

Keith is fencing out eight hectares and supplementing the existing trees by planting another 3000 native seedlings.

He is also closing off the property's dams and providing an alternative watering system for livestock. He has decreased his stock numbers to reduce grazing pressure on the land.

The works are funded through the NutrientSmart Farms project, which is delivered by Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority (HNCMA) and Industry and Investment NSW.

The project assists landholders to reduce pollution, by preventing nitrogen and phosphorus run off into waterways.

'Excess nitrogen and phosphorus from animal waste collect around the property's dams and in heavy rainfall, the waste runs off into the dams and then into the Nepean River,' says HNCMA catchment officer Koshy Varghese.

'We estimate that the project will prevent around 82 kilograms per year of nitrogen and 18 kilograms per year of phosphorus from reaching the Nepean River.'

Local landholders are now invited to apply for funding to help manage their nutrients. For more information call the Smart Farms Information Line on 4588 2118.

Photo courtesy Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority

Spotlight on nutrients

While fertilisers are a vital part of agriculture, inappropriate management practices can have a detrimental impact on our environment.

Fertilisers contain nutrients which can enter downstream waterways through farm run off, leading to outbreaks of aquatic weeds and algae in our rivers.

The NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water (DECCW) is measuring nutrients in farm run off through the Nutrient Export Monitoring Project.

The project is looking at a range of agricultural activities in the lower Hawkesbury-Nepean region.

With the help of the Smart Farms projects it is assessing the effectiveness of different management practices in reducing nutrients in run off.

Water samples are taken before and after nutrient management improvement works are undertaken and analysed for their nitrogen and phosphorus content to determine any reductions in nutrients leaving farms.

Preliminary results indicate that the nutrient management works being implemented by Smart Farms are proving to be effective in reducing nutrients in agricultural runoff.

Photo: DECCW's Brendan Haine demonstrates on site nutrient monitoring



Licence purchase kicks off

The Expression of Interest (EOI) process for water licence purchase in the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment has closed.

The NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water (DECCW) is assessing the EOI submissions from willing sellers as part of the licence purchase process.

River water licence holders who submitted an EOI form will be contacted regarding their offer over the coming weeks.

For more information please contact Rachel Gilmore on (02) 6229 7144 or go to www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/waterpurchase.htm

Councils begin restorations

In an effort to improve the quality of their public open spaces and playing fields, North Sydney, Willoughby, Sutherland, Strathfield and Marrickville councils have signed up for Stage 2 restoration works with Sydney Water's Irrigation and Landscape Efficiency Project (ILEP).

All three councils have already completed Stage 1 works, which involved a free irrigation and landscape assessment of nominated open spaces and playing fields.

The assessment report recommends practical solutions to improve conditions and reduce water use.

In Stage 2, ILEP will match the participating councils dollar-for-dollar for agreed restoration works.

Mayor of Marrickville Councillor Fiona Byrne said the Stage 2 works on Arlington Reserve commenced in October. This will involve regrading the field, installing subsurface drainage, and implementing a new irrigation control system.

"By taking part in this project, Council will be able to improve the playing surfaces of their sporting fields and save on water use over time," said Councillor Byrne.

Once complete, the project team will work with Council to determine the success of the restoration activities and water savings achieved.

18 councils are involved in the project, with 12 currently participating in Stage 1 assessments.

For more information on the Irrigation Landscape and Efficiency Project, visit www.sydneywater.com.au.



Smart savings

A mixed use rural property in the Hawkesbury region has completed stage one of a WaterSmart Farms grant funded project and has achieved significant labour and water savings.

The project converted the old travelling irrigators to a solid set irrigation system with a new PVC delivery line and sprinklers spaced at 20m.

The new system allows 17mm to be applied to each paddock in under four hours - a process that previously took all night and used twice as much water!

Property manager Garry Jones is extremely pleased with the new system. "Irrigating is as easy as turning on a tap now, and we have more time to do other farm operations, instead of spending all day moving travellers," he said.

Mr Jones is also interested in automating the irrigation system in the future, which will allow further labour and water savings.

HNRRP on display

Projects from the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Recovery Program were on display at the annual Farming Small Areas Expo from 12-13 November at the Hawkesbury Showground, Clarendon.

Celebrating its eighth year, the 2010 Expo is Sydney's largest small acreage showcase with over 200 exhibitors.

The Nutrient and Water Smart Farms, Nutrient Export Monitoring and the Metering projects were all on display.

Despite the heat and rain, the crowds still came and the HNRRP project stalls were well attended.

For more information visit www.farmonline.com.au/theland/fsa_expo2010/index.html.



OHN mobile

The newly created Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean (OHN) is getting out and about in river communities providing better access to information about the river and its management.

With some 220 kms of catchment length, a visit to the Office's Penrith headquarters is too far for many residents so the only answer was to take the Office on the road.

The mobile office will host information from all state government agencies with a management role on the local stretch of river. And if staff don't know the answer they'll find it.

The mobile office has set up in Hornsby, Goulburn Mulwaree and Camden councils with more council areas to follow in 2011.

For more information visit www.ohn.nsw.gov.au.

Water for the Future

Water for the Future is the Australian Government's long-term initiative to better balance the water needs of communities, farmers and the environment.

The strategy has four key priorities: taking action on climate change, using water wisely, securing water supplies and supporting healthy rivers.

More information at www.environment.gov.au/water/australia/index.html.



Effluent reuse scheme underway

Murphy McCarthy & Associates recently signed the contract for Hawkesbury City Council's South Windsor Water Recycling Scheme, marking a major project milestone.

The project includes the design and construction of a recycled effluent treatment plant at the existing South Windsor Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) and a distribution system to supply recycled water to Council reserves (14 hectares) and schools (6 hectares) in South Windsor and Bligh Park for irrigation.

Murphy McCarthy & Associates will undertake surveying, geo-technical investigation, design, construction, testing, commissioning and process proving of the South Windsor STP Recycled Water Plant, rising main, on-site storage tanks, recycled water toilet flushing systems, sprinkler irrigation systems and distribution network.

The contract was signed on 11 November 2010 with the project due to be completed by 15 September next year.

Construction will commence in the next few months once the design process has been finalised.

Sharing the past for a healthier future

A storage clear-out by local state government agencies has turned into a bonanza for Penrith City Council Library.

Lorraine Stacker, keeper of the library's technical library collection for the last 17 years, was delighted to receive a donation of books and materials on soils and land use in the Penrith area from the NSW Office of Water and the Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean.

"These works on soils and land use really complement the materials we already have in the Hawkesbury collection," she said.

For Maree Abood, Director of the Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean, it's a very good example of how information from the past can be shared by government agencies to inform future management decisions.

"It's important we don't allow the hard work of the past, especially in river management, to be lost," Ms Abood said.

Public donations to the collection, including photos, are most welcome. Visit www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au/index.asp?id=41 for more information.

What are we doing?

Reducing nutrient run off

The Nutrient Smart Farms Project is reducing nutrient runoff from agricultural activity through education and on ground works, including compost treatment. Managed by Industry and Investment NSW and the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority.

Improving agricultural water efficiency

The Water Smart Farms Project is making more efficient use of river and town water for irrigated agriculture by upgrading irrigation systems, improving water harvesting and reuse, and through education and training. Managed by Industry and Investment NSW.

Ensuring equitable water use

The Improving Hawkesbury-Nepean Water Balance Accounting Project is ensuring equitable and efficient water use through the installation and upgrade of water metering systems for up to 2,000 licensed water users. Managed by the NSW Office of Water.

Improving irrigation practices

The Irrigation and Landscape Efficiency Project is helping to improve irrigation efficiency in non-agricultural activities by offering subsidies to councils, schools and golf courses to assess their open space irrigation, leading to on-ground works to improve practices. Managed by Sydney Water Corporation.

Returning water to the river

The Licence Purchase Project is buying back water access licences from willing sellers across the catchment to increase the amount of water that stays in the river system. Managed by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

Recycling and reusing water

The South Windsor Effluent Reuse Scheme is constructing a recycled water plant at Hawkesbury City Council's South Windsor sewage treatment plant, along with a distribution system to supply the recycled water to council reserves, schools and other customers. Managed by Hawkesbury City Council.

Measuring success

The Nutrient Export Monitoring Project is measuring nutrient exports from primary industries before and after actions are implemented through the Nutrient and Water Smart Farms projects. Managed by the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

More information

For more information on each project visit www.ohn.nsw.gov.au/River-recovery/default.aspx and click on the project links.

