



Northern United Forestry Group

Monthly Meeting. Raywood Hotel, 8pm Wednesday 26 July 2006

1 Welcome and Apologies

President Ian Rankin declared the meeting open at 8:07pm.

Present: Ian Rankin, Prue Borschmann, Phil Dyson, Rob Comer, Darren Bain, Mal Brown, Darren Kerr, Tim Johns, Ken Wellard, Louise Wellard, Don Brown, Lindsay Cail, Shaun Quayle, Trevor Barker, Mal Johnson, Nick Farmer, John Toll, Stuart Ayson, Andrew Wall, Andy Hay.

Apologies: James Williams, Linda Cartwright, Paul Turnbull.

Motion: "That the apologies be accepted." Moved John Toll. Seconded Lindsay Cail. Carried.

2 Minutes of previous meeting held 28 June 2006

Motion: "That the minutes of the meeting held at the Raywood Golf Club 28 June 2006, be accepted as a true and accurate record of what took place at the meeting." Moved Ken Wellard. Seconded Shaun Quayle. Carried.

3 Business arising

- ♦ Chainsaw operators course discussion. Ian presented the 2 options, Karl Lissman via Inglewood Community Resource Centre and Vincent Lakey via Bendigo TAFE. There was no real difference in cost. The main difference between the 2 courses was the Lissman course took a maximum of 8 people, the Lakey course a maximum of 20 with 4 saws operating at any 1 time. It was decided to go with the Lakey course. There were 10 takers. Safety gear required includes chaps, files, helmets, ear protection and steel cap boots.
- ♦ Trevor Barker to enquire as to whether the cost of attending the International Landcare Conference could be further reduced for Landcare Groups.

4 Correspondence In

- ♦ Bendigo Bank – Inspiring local communities
- ♦ Darren Perry (Indigenous Facilitator NCCMA) – Will be present at the next NUFG meeting. Has asked to look at Kamarooka indigenous history.
- ♦ Ian Linley – Natural resources Innovation Grants.

Motion: "That the correspondence be accepted." Moved Mal Johnson. Seconded Andrew Wall. Carried.

5 Correspondence Out

6 Reports

- ♦ President's report – Ian Rankin reported on vegetation monitoring with Mal Brown at the Kamarooka site. Ian has taken photos at various marked locations to be part of visual vegetation monitoring over time at Kamarooka. He also spoke about Ruby saltbush being transported/spreading on revegetation site 12.

- ♦ Treasurer's report – Rob Comer reported on NUGF's income and expenditure as at 26 July 2006.

Motion: "That the Treasurer's report at 26 July 2006 and that accounts received be approved for payment." Moved Rob Comer. Seconded Darren Kerr. Carried.

- ♦ Social Secretary report – On holidays.

- ♦ Kamarooka report – Mal Brown gave an in-depth report on the status of sheep grazing monitoring being undertaken at the Kamarooka site. Andy Hay has been doing quite a lot of work on a 100 sheep size sample in terms of weight and comparison with other sheep on his property. Overall Andy has found that the sheep on saltbush have stayed steady with regards weight. This has been extremely useful as he has had to feedlot his other sheep. Effectively the salt effected land has been returned to a useful piece of land, which can hold the condition of sheep and help avoid the cost of buying in feed.

Mal also reported that he is progressing individual monitoring of 200 sheep on the basis of blood and fecal analysis and weight. These are separated into samples of 25 head at a time. This work is being conducted in conjunction with a biometrician to develop the experiment. Each animal has been electronically ear-tagged to assist with identification. Mal reported that the sheep have given the saltbush a "caning" down to skeletal sticks, which is in keeping with good management of saltbush. Also some trees have been "hammered" by sheep moving from the saltbush to the dam. Fencing is required to prevent access and further damage to the trees to properly manage this area. Prue asked whether the sampling of the sheep was statistically valid (ie how many treatments, etc.) Shaun was asked to get involved in the measurement of trees/ productivity cost analysis.

- ♦ Salinity, Groundwater and NUGF report – Phil Dyson gave an extensive written and graphical report on the status of the aforementioned portfolio areas. Of significance with respect to groundwater was the rainfall which fell mid July causing watertable under the saline land to rise between 0.5 and 1m. This response in the upper catchment was not noted. More good work has been done developing the website. The full July report will be available on the NUGF website along with the minutes.

7 **General Business**

- ♦ Tim Johns requested approval for expenditure of approx \$300 for a sign and the accompanying planning permit through the Loddon shire. The purpose of the sign is to point people to the NUFG website to get an explanation of the development of Mal Brown's highly visible plantation on the Calder highway at Leichardt.

Motion: "That expenditure of \$300 towards manufacturing and permitting for a sign to be erected at Mal Brown's plantation be approved." Moved Tim Johns. Seconded Shaun Quayle. Carried.

- ♦ Phil Dyson stated that the NLP innovation fund being open was a good opportunity for NUFG. The North central area presented 3 good proposals last time, there is \$3M in the fund, and there is no bias for groups with projects already up. The proposals close in the 2nd week of September. At this stage the meeting proposed various ideas for development. These included; plantations for biomass (Shaun Quayle), recharge at Kamarooka (Phil Dyson), a seed orchard (Ken Wellard) and a biodiversity planting (Darren Bain). The meeting decided that the members noted beside the items would develop their options by the next meeting.

- ♦ Trevor Barker stated that Commonwealth water grants up to \$50K were open.

- ♦ Darren Bain tabled an idea for a combined member plantation along the lines of purchasing land, and establishing a plantation which could be the focus of member activity. This would be a commercial arrangement whereby land and plantation values would be set at certain rates allowing people to trade out, with various rules on how this would work. Darren was encouraged by the meeting to investigate this idea.

- ♦ It was noted that there is a group working to improve the usability of the NUFG website. Further developments will be reported to the meeting.

- ♦ Lindsay Cail stated that Andrew Wall's plantation requires thinning, following up on the pruning previously undertaken by the group. It was suggested that the chainsaw course could be conducted at Andrew's property. Ian Rankin to organise.

- ♦ Rob Comer reported that Agroforestry News delivery would be delayed by 1 month. He also reported that a meeting regarding the use of biodiesel would be held on Thursday 27 July at the Elmore bowls and country Club for interested parties.

- ♦ Ken Wellard reported that he had received correspondence regarding his investigation on the genetic improvement of *Acacia Stenophylla* from Des Stackpole. Des had some serious concerns regarding the suitability of the species, and suggested looking at oil mallees and biomass.

8 **Meeting closed at 9:47 pm**

9 **Next Meeting**

Raywood Golf Club, 8pm Wednesday 23 August 2006.

Salinity, Groundwater and NUFG Website Portfolio July Report - Phil Dyson

This has been both an interesting and busy month from the perspective of both the salinity and groundwater issues and the further development of the website. The arrival (finally) of some rain meant that the new rainfall logger and the bore loggers had some work to do and we were able to have a look at the changes they have been recording. The various tasks completed for the month are briefly summarised below:

Groundwater and salinity monitoring:

- (1) The operation of the electronic rain gauge was checked on 16 July and found to be working particularly well.
- (2) All of the NUFG monitoring bores plus a few DPI bores were measured were measured on 22 July (graph attached)
- (3) All 12 NUFG bore loggers together with the electronic rainfall logger were downloaded on 22 July.
- (4) All data from the loggers has been processed including barometric pressure correction, transformation of pressure head data to watertable depth, hydrograph plotting, filing, and appropriate file back-ups. The data has not yet been up-loaded to the NUFG website, but this will occur some time over the next week.

Results: Some 42 mm of rain fell over the period 14,15, and 16 July, with most falling on 16 July (37,4 mm). This event caused the watertable under the most saline land to rise between 0.5 and a little over 1 metre. No such groundwater response to rainfall occurred in the upper catchment. The responses were recorded by the bore loggers and are presented in the attached graphs.

All of the electronic loggers are now fully operational and have performed particularly well over the past three months. This is the first time we have completed a full download of all instruments.

Website development

- (1) A new page has been added to the Kamarooka site for reporting daily rainfall for each month. The data comes directly from the electronic logger.
- (2) New pages have been added to the NUFG site to accommodate (a) a link to DPI species profiles, (b) the beginnings of a register of collaborative research, (c) Otway farm forestry tour, and (d) a 'useful links' register.
- (3) A new page has been added to the Kamarooka site to better present the vegetation surveys. Ultimately there will be 12 pages, one for each vegetation site. Images for each site will be presented sequentially on each page.
- (4) There are plans to develop a 'biodiversity' page, probably on the Kamarooka page, largely to log the wide range of species observed in both the remnant vegetation and the NUFG plantations.
- (5) The website is being further developed and tweaked with the assistance of the Master of the Communications portfolio and the NUFG Chair.

General gossip – Rumour has it that previous 'defensive' driving episodes were very nearly eclipsed on the saline land last Sunday.....

Phil Dyson