

Coffs Harbour Steep Lands Management Project.

Presentation Notes.

- Land Management Project.
- Initiated in 2000 with studies. Followed by onground activity.
- Supported By NHT, DIPNR, CHCC, NSW DPI, LANDCARE, NRCMA.
- Project Team coordinates activity.

Setting

- Coffs Harbour City Area.
- Coffs Waterways Catchments.
- Banana growing area - "Banana band".
- Steep slopes and high rainfall.
- Rural living.
- Urbanisation.
- Numerous creeks and estuaries leading to the marine park.
- Vegetation/habitat on ridges, gullies and creeks.

Understand the industry!

SCU industry report and survey 2000.

- 1960 -Coffs 80% of national production.
- 2000 - North QLD 75% of production.
- 60% growers doubted they would be in the industry in 2005.
- Produce 1300 cartons per ha per year on average
- Viability is reached at 1800 cartons per ha per year.
- Outcomes - marketing, organise growers, quality control, target retailers, alternative crops, go organic.

NRM Issues

On farm

- Steep erosive slopes.
- Weed spread - Lantana, Crofton Weed and a range of others.
- Old road networks.

Off Farm

- Downstream water quality.
- Sedimentation.
- Lack of vegetated habitat in the "Banana Band" Landscape.

Understanding the NRM options

CMC report 2000

- Managed slopes essential.
- Some growers would do well. but
- Alternatives were needed for those exiting.

Alternatives

- Other crops.
- Subdivision stumbling block.
- Restoration options - including the "holding pattern".
- Trial restoration site.
- Soil issues.

How you manage steep land - The options

- Support industry to pursue alternatives.
 - Coffee, Blue Berries etc - lower slopes.
 - Limited options for the steeper slopes.
- Holding pattern.
- Grass acceptable and grows well.
 - Clean up the paddock, spray the weeds.
 - Use winter/summer cover crops sown with permanent grass/pasture species.

Holding pattern grasses

- Covers - Jap Millet, Oats, Cow peas.
- Pasture- Clover, Rye, Paspalum, Kikuyu, Rhodes.
- The Broad Leaf Paspalum issue – advise not to use it.
- Molasses Grass great mulch but a fire hazard- place carefully.
- Chemical contamination issues with stock grazing – get checked.

Native vegetation

- Landcare advice.
- Corridor links.
- Plant species list.
- Control weeds.
- Plantings with follow up weed control.

Earth works

- Gully restoration.
 - Road restoration/ rationalisation.
- Clean up of the paddock.
- Remove banana's and banana props.
 - Use excavator to remove debris and large weeds.
 - Dozer trampling.
 - Spray weeds.

Ongoing Projects

- Promoted a grants program.
- 12 grants restoring 46 ha.
- Approx. \$30K in grants with total project worth of \$145K.
- Approx \$650.00 per ha (grant funds)

Project Priorities.

- Steep land - over 18°.
- Priority for NRM.
- A plan of attack, methods, timing etc.
- Assessment criteria.
- Demonstration sites.
- Consider site prep for alternative crops.

Future

- Continue restoration.
- Analyse and document most effective techniques.
- Sub catchment approach.
- Landuse planning re ongoing use.
- Keep in touch with funding partners and land managers.

Final Messages

Strategic

- Restoration costs lowered.
- Large scale restoration possible - 500ha plus.
- Build community capacity/awareness.
- New non farming "Sea changers" need to be aware of weeds and other issues when they take over a property.

Ongoing Tips

- Get a plan together.
- Progressive restoration - bite size.
- Seed banana plantation before destroying the plants.
- Check regulations: soils, rivers, clearing, bananas, development.

Thanks and Recognition

- SCU.
- Bruce Potts.
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- Project Team.
- Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare.
- NRCMA.

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