

Managing stock for wetland health and production

David and Wendy Clark at Latoona property are progressing their long-term goal of enhanced stock management and improved waterway management through fencing and revegetating their creek banks to protect downstream wetlands.

The background

David and Wendy Clark purchased the 48ha property Latoona in 2002. The grazing property had been mostly cleared, apart from some remnant forest on the steeper slopes.

An upper tributary of Kilcoy Creek runs through Latoona and this waterway eventually flows into the Mary River. The creek banks were largely devoid of trees and there was uncontrolled stock access with bank erosion. This was leading to landslips, loss of valuable topsoil into the waterway and problems with livestock getting bogged.

Resources and assistance

The Queensland Wetlands Program provided assistance through the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI).

Barung Landcare Association provided technical support, prepared the site, planted the trees and will help maintain the site over the next 3 years.

David and Wendy Clark contributed time and resources to the project by:

- preparing the site
- organising the works
- providing fencing materials.

They will also maintain the fencing and new plants.

On-ground works

In April 2010:

- 200m of electric fence was installed to extend the existing fencing along the creek bank
- 6000m² of creek bank was planted with 700 native trees and shrubs.

About the property

- David and Wendy Clark
- Latoona Bellthorpe, Sunshine Coast hinterland
- 32 ha of pasture, 16 ha of native forest
- Beef cattle enterprise breeding and growing out weaners
- An upper tributary of Kilcoy Creek flows through the property. This creek eventually flows into the Mary River and the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

What are the benefits?

- Stock access to the creek banks is controlled, allowing strategic grazing and reducing erosion.
- There is less sediment and nutrient run-off entering downstream wetlands.
- Strategic grazing creates healthier pastures with fewer weeds and a significant reduction in the invasive and flammable blady grass (*Imperata cylindrica*).
- The ecological values of the riparian community are being restored.
- Mustering has been made easier.
- The long-term aim of preventing and repairing landslips is progressing.



David Clark and Jonathan Waites from Barung Landcare at one of Latoona's wetlands. Photo: DEEDI



Fencing and revegetation

After purchasing the property, the Clarks decided that something had to be done to prevent further loss of some of the most valuable soils on the property. They started to fence off sections of the creek bank. In the absence of grazing pressure the native wattles quickly stabilised the banks. The Clarks then looked to progressively fencing off the entire creek and rehabilitating the riparian area along the creek.



Revegetation of steep banks. Photo: David Clark

Fencing and revegetation can be costly and time consuming and requires in-depth knowledge of suitable plants and revegetation techniques. Revegetation assistance was sought from Barung Landcare Association, and as funding became available, sections of the creek bank were progressively fenced and planted with native trees and shrubs.

In April 2010 the funding provided by the Queensland Wetlands Program allowed David and Wendy Clark to progress their goal of fencing off and rehabilitating the creek with help from Barung Landcare.

‘The funding really helped us to be able to do the fencing and planting which we have wanted to do for a while now.’ (David Clark)

Barung Landcare Association undertook the site preparation and planting and provided the technical knowledge and expertise required for successful revegetation. Barung Landcare Association will help David and Wendy maintain the revegetation area for the next three years to control weeds and make sure the new plants have the best chance of survival.

Healthier wetlands and better pastures

The fencing and revegetation complements the existing fencing on Latoona and now over 3 ½ha of riparian land has been fenced off and revegetated.

The new trees and shrubs along the bank are helping to return the creek to a healthy, functioning ecosystem by providing shade, habitat for a range of animals and fish, leaf litter, stabilisation of the creek banks and weed control. Since the Clarks have been actively restoring their creek, they have noticed many more birds, frogs and other wildlife on their property.

The new electric fence also means that the Clarks can better manage their stock throughout the property. They can regularly move stock between paddocks, rest the pastures and strategically graze the creek bank for weed control and better pasture production. The fencing also makes mustering easier.

The fencing and creek bank rehabilitation has not only led to a healthier creek, but it also saves the Clarks time and money in managing their stock and the property.

‘The fencing allows us to put cattle into the riparian area for short periods of time over winter, as this area has some of the better soils on the property and the grass keeps growing for longer.’ (David Clark)



The new fencing assists stock management. Photo: David Clark



Photograph of riparian land taken in 1959, showing landslips. Photo: David Clark



Photograph of the same area of riparian land in May 2010, following revegetation. Photo: David Clark

Where to from here?

David and Wendy Clark plan to fence the rest of the waterways on their property and create more paddocks for rotational grazing. They are also going to continue the long-term aim of fully restoring the riparian community along the creek, for a healthier creek and better downstream waterways.

‘Since we have been using cell grazing, we have noticed an improvement in our pastures and the blady grass is disappearing. We now carry similar or slightly higher numbers of stock compared to the previous open grazing management, even though some areas are now fenced off. We plan to double the number of cells we have to have even more control over the stock and grazing.’ (David Clark)

Acknowledgements

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The Queensland Wetlands Program supports projects and activities that result in long-term benefits to the sustainable management, wise use and protection of wetlands in Queensland. The tools developed by the Program help wetlands landholders, managers and decision makers in government and industry. The Program is a joint initiative of the Australian and Queensland governments.

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