



President's Report to the 2010 Annual General Meeting

8 November 2010

The Year Past: July 2009 – June 2010

Several items have once again made the year an outstanding one for MCG:

- The Molonglo Waterwatch program continues to thrive under the enthusiastic guidance of Stephen Skinner. During the year the number of sites sampled regularly has increased from around 28 to 43 and more have been added since. We were able to consolidate a relationship with NCA through a small project to collate all water quality samples above Scrivener Dam, and we now attend the Lake Users meetings.
- Our part in the Molonglo River Rescue Project was successfully completed with the launch of the Molonglo River Rescue Action Plan. This document is already informing other projects in the catchment. The success of the Action Plan, though, is somewhat dampened by the loss of our Project Officer, Vanessa Keyzer, to greener pastures and a more secure job.
- Following in the footsteps of the *Guide to Frogs of the ACT Region* is publication of the *Aquatic Plants of the ACT Region*, developed largely by Stephen Skinner. What was impressive was the funding support made available by a number of organisations to design and print this document and update and print the Weed Information Pack and the Frog Guide. This funding was arranged through the efforts of Vanessa Keyzer. Since the end of the Financial Year, additional funding through the ACT Environment Grants has been confirmed.
- The Sustainability on Small Farms project, the only CFOC grant in the ACT in that round, has brought with it the opportunity to extend our message and build on the MCS roll-out project. It also provided the opportunity to work with Ginninderra Catchment Group in engaging horse owners on small properties in property management – previously a difficult group to engage – and, in hindsight, it was so easy, as that group seems to be crying out for assistance.
- After a slow start the Sustainability in the Majura Valley project is now progressing well, again helping us to extend engagement with rural landholders. The project seems to be on-track to establish a Landcare group in the valley.
- Last year registering on Landcare Online database for corporate field days proved and continues to be effective in accessing a sector not previously engaged. This year, simply registering on the updated Landcare Group database resulted in an untied \$1,000 award. At times it seems simple to do get something done; perhaps it's a case of the harder we work, the luckier we get.
- Successful participation in the Queanbeyan Regatta in March, the Festival of the Forests at the Canberra International Arboretum Open Day in March and the Queanbeyan Enviro Expo in June again all gave opportunity for promotion of the group.
- The *Along the Molonglo* Art Exhibitions continued to be successful and aid in raising the general awareness of issues within the community. Again we have been able to build on last year's displays and presentations at Floriade to enable *Along the Molonglo* to become bigger and better. The catchment model, which was "launched" at Floriade, is piece of art, even if I do say so myself, and we are indebted to Tom Baker and the Queanbeyan Men's Shed for its construction. This year's Floriade also offered a weekend opportunity and hence the potential to engage with more Canberrans. We may need greater concentration on this weekend if the opportunity arises again next year.

- The Mapping Lower Molonglo project continues, still at a much reduced pace due to the departure of the project instigator, Keith Joliffe, and, more lately, the illness of the Stephen Selden who was providing much of the GIS support the previous year. Nonetheless it was successful in developing some information about European cultural heritage in the lower Molonglo and engaging with Belconnen Primary School and Belconnen High School.
- The K2C project is in a serious situation following the reduction of involvement and support by Bush Heritage Australia in the same year that support from the NSW government through the Environmental Trust is winding up. Future funding for facilitation of the project is in perilous straits.

However all is not rosy: the funding arrangements under Caring for our Country remain very tight, and it is clear that the group continues consideration of projects that align with CFOC priorities and reflect integration and partnerships. All project proposals must also include an allowance for project administration and coordination. Our fund raising efforts are very much low key meaning that there are few projects where we are in full control.

Group Objectives

The Group formed formally a little over 7 years ago, with a set of objectives. The Committee is mindful of these objectives and strives to address them. My comments are largely unchanged from last year.

The basic objects of the group are:

1. Provide an umbrella organization for existing Landcare and other natural resource management (NRM) organizations in the Molonglo Catchment.

Although there is already support for Parkcare groups through ACT Parks and Conservation, our support for NSW groups has grown. I believe we have established credentials for support with field days at several locations through the catchment. Our suggestions for additional support to the ACT NRM Council are usually welcomed and viewed very favourably. The website is frequently mentioned for its usefulness, and the subscription list continues to grow. The long-term sustainability of website maintenance is being addressed, regrettably all too slowly, but the light is now visible at the end of the tunnel.

This year we have seen some ACT Friends groups join us, through what some may see as bribery, but I consider it being able to extend our support to them

2. Facilitate the preparation of a community catchment strategy for the Molonglo Catchment, as an agreed framework between key stakeholders for regional delivery of NRM, consistent with the Murrumbidgee Catchment Blueprint, ACT NRM Plan and total catchment principles.

The Molonglo Catchment Strategy was released in June 2005 and that year was awarded the Australian Government Landcare Regional Award for the ACT. We will need to maintain its relevance by reviewing the short-term targets and actions as the timeframes expressed in the Strategy are now close and in some instances embarrassingly past.

3. Promote a strengthened partnership between stakeholders in the Molonglo Catchment, to enhance capacity to address NRM issues in the Molonglo Catchment in a collaborative, coordinated and cost-effective manner.

The group continues to be represented at a regional level through the Catchment and Landcare Association, the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee and the Kosciuszko to Coast Partnership. The Group is seen as a credible vehicle for NRM delivery as we continue to effectively deliver projects. However this reputation is at risk if we fail to deliver on time.

4. Provide support to member groups with sub-catchment planning, strategic project development, funding bids, managing projects and to develop cross-sectoral partnerships and corporate support for projects.

We provided support to groups for small projects with Friends of Aranda Bushland, Friends of Mount Majura, Captains Flat Landcare, and sponsored the "Seeing Grasslands" ACT Environment Grant project. Offers for First Aid, Chemcert and GPS training have been steadily taken up. The small project with NCA has been a fillip to further working with that organisation. The establishment of the Bush on the Boundary Reference Group for the Molonglo Valley development promises greater things to come, by introducing yet further stakeholders. Continuing engagement with Queanbeyan City Council and Murrumbidgee CMA has brought benefits to each of those organisation. Again, this reflects the enthusiasm and professionalism of our staff.

5. Provide a structural link between ACT and NSW groups

Our representation on the CLA and UMCCC helps this process on a regional scale, but at our catchment scale we need to encourage greater participation in catchment activities.

6. Provide a central point of contact for the broad community, including information dissemination.

This function continues to operate satisfactorily within the ACT and the duplication of effort across the border is decreasing. The challenge is to raise the profile of the group and hence the issues of natural resource management. Having a shopfront in Queanbeyan certainly helps.

7. Employ and manage a Molonglo Catchment Coordinator to facilitate meeting the above objectives.

The role of Coordinator for a community-based catchment group is a difficult one, with often conflicting demands on time and resources. Andy Westcott has demonstrated that he is well-equipped to continue the very professional approach to catchment coordination as well as managing the office, while often at the same time having to balance it against his commitments to home and fatherhood.

The Year Ahead

Once again, the year ahead promises to be an interesting one. The economic situation and the structure of Caring for our Country has meant that we continue to run on a very tight budget for the next year. In March, the NSW election may bring changes in that part of our world.

At the same time, urban growth within our catchment will become a major issue for the next few years with Molonglo Valley development and East Lake Urban Renewal in the ACT and Googong and Tralee in NSW. These developments and the M2G pipeline are likely to seriously challenge our resources if we do not plan adequately. At the same time they can present an enormous opportunity that could enable us to expand our horizons.

The Group continues to suffer because of inadequate community participation in the committee to share the load; I believe that we could be a little more evangelical in attracting increased membership, with an eye on the future.

Thanks

In closing, I would once again like to record my gratitude for the assistance of the committee throughout the year, in preparing, commenting on and refining our submissions, communications, and processes. I again acknowledge the frank and fearless advice that our Coordinators, Andy Westcott and Stephen Skinner have provided. The experience and enthusiasm of our Project Officer, Vanessa Keyzer, was welcome but all too brief. The tireless support from our Vice President, Tom Baker, whose work with *Along the Molonglo* in particular continues to bear fruit cannot be matched; and the work of our Treasurer, and current ACT Individual Landcarer, Maryke Booth, whose business has provided accounting support

Lynton Bond
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