



President's Report to the 2011 Annual General Meeting

12 December 2011

The Year Past: July 2010 – June 2011

The past year has largely been a “steady-as-she-goes”.

- The **Molonglo Waterwatch** program continues to thrive under the enthusiastic guidance of Stephen Skinner. During the year the number of sites sampled has increased from around 43 to around 60 (66 sites were sampled in April 2011), including 11 sites in the Upper Yass River and Lake George sub-catchment where we are assisting Palerang Council with their Sustainability Snapshot. Although more sites have been added since, the number of sites being monitored regularly has decreased following the completion on Cassie Hancock's project. We continue to attend the Lake Users meetings and now also attend the Murrumbidgee to Googong Environmental Reference Group meeting and offer advice to the Actions for Clean Water advisory group. The profile of Waterwatch was encouraged by the community's response to the floods in December 2010.
- We saw the completion of the **Sustainability on Small Farms** project; although we didn't quite meet all of our targets, many were overachieved. Through its successful **Horse Management on Small Properties** seminars, we were able to successfully apply for NSW Environmental Trust funding to conduct further field days around the ACT Region. Overall, though we see this sort of project as being part of our core business and we are considering applying for another project of more of the same.
- The **Sustainability in the Majura Valley** project culminated in the much publicised launch of the report and the establishment of a Landcare group in the valley. The report appears to have had an impact on the Eastern Broadacre proposal due to a greater understanding of the issues being faced by rural landholders.
- Successful participation in the **Queanbeyan Regatta** in March and the **Queanbeyan Enviro Expo** in June again gave opportunity for promotion of the group. Due to other commitments, we had only a small presence in the CLA display at the **Festival of the Forests** at the Canberra International Arboretum Open Day in March.
- The *Along the Molonglo* Art Exhibitions continued to be successful and aid in raising the general awareness of issues within the community. With ASOC, we have withdrawn the *Along the Molonglo Exhibition* from their Spring Exhibition to become a stand-alone exhibition in April instead. It will be a challenge to see that it can establish its own profile.
- Now separated from the ASOC *Along the Molonglo* exhibition, our presence at **Floriade** grew, this year bringing with it some of the *Seeing Grasslands* exhibition. We need to be a bit more focussed and to make an impact on the Floriade crowds. This year's Floriade gave us the opportunity to engage with even more Canberrans by having a presence in the ActewAGL Look'n'Learn marquee over the Canberra Family Day holiday weekend.
- The Mapping Lower Molonglo project appears to have run its natural course, in part because of the establishment of the **Molonglo Bush on the Boundary Group**. Despite this forum suffering through a “little brother” relationship to the higher profile Forde / Mulligans Flat BoB group as well as the large drain on the resources of forum members..

- The **K2C project** was in a serious situation this time last year following the reduction of involvement and support by Bush Heritage Australia and the finalisation of NSW Government funding through the Environmental Trust. The Project was fortunate to find funding for a project to cover the period to the end of 2011. Future funding of the project is more certain with a significant joint project with MCMA and MLI which means a continued profile for the project on the ground. Meanwhile, the executive committee is very optimistic that the NSW Government will provide some funding for facilitation but the expectation is that it will only be partial.
- The development of a riparian restoration project on the Molonglo and Queanbeyan Rivers at **Oaks Estate**, thanks largely to the lobbying by Karen Williams has ignited community interest and serves as an example for the way the Group's support albeit small and behind the scenes, can help things to get done.
- The Group is justifiably proud of the work of its member groups, and accordingly made several nominations for the **ACT Regional Landcare Awards**. Our nominations for the Urban Landcare Award (Friends of Mount Majura, Mt Ainslie Weeders and Watson Woodlands Working Group) and the Quiet Achiever Award (Leanne Barrett) were, not surprisingly, successful, purely because of the diligence and commitment of the nominees.
- Our nomination to the **Regional Achievement and Community Awards** made the semi-finals, but failed to make the cut for the short-list. Nonetheless, the introspection required for the nomination was well worth it and we have an up-to-date document that has already been used to advantage in other applications.

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.

We need to be aware that we may be called upon to assist the community as several developments progress in the catchment – the Lower Molonglo Valley, East Lake, Eastern Broadacre and Googong.

Group Objectives

The Group formed formally a little over 8 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.

We have seen the formation of Friends of Glenburn, and the Majura Valley Landcare Group, and are currently working to facilitate the formation / reestablishment of a Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands

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. This was to have been addressed in the last twelve months, but has unfortunately slipped off the radar. The priority of a review will be raised in the current period.

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 Molonglo BoB Group has served to further enhance capacity and establish collaborative partnerships. We have increased our presence by contributing to the Conservation Council's Biodiversity Working Group, the M2G ERG and ACWA Advisory Group. 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, Burra Landcare, 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. Continuing engagement with Queanbeyan City Council and Murrumbidgee CMA continues to bring benefits to each 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, and at our catchment scale we have been able 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. However we are becoming stretched for space. Our participation in the Community Hub / City Farm

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 Group should be proud of Andy's achievement in graduating as a Fellow of the Peter Cullen Trust and we hope this will lead to even bigger and better things for Andy and for the Group.

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. However, new streams are becoming available through the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future initiative and the NSW Government's Bush Regeneration Large Projects Stream.

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 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. Karen Williams has been a welcome addition to the committee. Sandy Lloyd's diligence on the committee since the Group's formation will be missed; I hope she will make a speedy recovery and find the time to meet with us from time to time.

I again acknowledge the frank and fearless advice that our Coordinators, Andy Westcott and Stephen Skinner have provided. 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, Maryke Booth, whose business has provided accounting support. John Bruggeman has experienced a difficult year and I am grateful that he has been able to continue with us.

Lynton Bond
12 December 2011