

MEDIA RELEASE

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QUEENSLAND
MURRAY-
DARLING
COMMITTEE



Mitchell graziers gather for a district fire plan

A group of Mitchell graziers have agreed to work together to develop a fire plan for their district after a recent field day that explored the 'hot topic' of fire use as a management tool.

The field day was staged by the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) as part of its 'Landscape Fire Planning for Poplar Box Grassy Woodlands Project' which aims to document how graziers use fire and how their practices impact on production, biodiversity and carbon.

The project aims to gather information, apply science to fill knowledge gaps and ultimately empower local graziers to develop fire management plans.

The group of 15 graziers, government advisors, and coal seam gas and industry representatives spent time on the properties 'Currawong' and 'Verniew' examining paddocks that are regularly burned and others that have gone for years without fire.

Merv Phillips of 'Currawong' and his family use fire to manage woody thickening and maintain the regional ecosystem by burning according to seasonal conditions.

"We like to keep the Brigalow in this country to keep putting nitrogen in the soil so we might not burn again for five to six years," Mr Phillips said.

Project consultant EcoRich Grazing Director Col Paton said fire was a natural feature of Eucalypt woodland landscapes and encouraged the group to share how fire improved their production.

"Fire has been used well in this area for production and biodiversity, and the carbon cycle appears to be doing well. What needs to happen now is for that information to go out more broadly so that others can learn that fire is important in these ecosystems and that it can be used wisely to improve production and the environment," Mr Paton said.

Experienced fire manager, Roma's former Rural Fire Service District Inspector Ray Klein said planning was the key to a successful burn, especially in regard to managing the risk of fire escapes.

"Whoever manages fire needs to take steps to ensure their burn doesn't leave someone without feed or in distress. Out here we're inseparably connected and you must have some plan to mitigate your risk," Mr Klein said.

QMDC Regional Climate Change Officer Rhonda Toms-Morgan said the success of the day resulted in the graziers agreeing to regroup in November to discuss a fire plan for their district.

Anyone interested in getting involved in the project should contact Rhonda on ph 4620 4600 or email rhondat@qmdc.org.au. Visit www.qmdc.org.au for more information.

This project is supported by the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee through funding from the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund.

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