

MEDIA RELEASE

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How many dragons are in your river?

River health surveyors have been scouring the rivers and streams right across the Maranoa-Balonne and Border Rivers catchments to find the answer to this question.

The intensive 'river health survey' was part of a Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) project to assess rivers and streams in the Border Rivers and Maranoa-Balonne catchments.

QMDC's Water Projects Officer, Paul Webb said, "Even given the dry conditions, studies of permanent waterholes will provide valuable information about ecosystem health and the impact of pollutants on in-stream organisms."

"This sort of information helps us to understand and plan the best ways to maintain or improve the health of our rivers," he said.

"We assessed riparian vegetation, and took water quality and macro-invertebrate samples, including mosquito, midge and dragon fly larvae, as well as mites, water beetles, and insects."

"Macro-invertebrates, or waterbugs, like dragon flies, can be quite sensitive to changes in the river and some can only survive in healthy rivers. By studying which bugs are where, we can get an idea of how healthy the rivers are," said Paul.

About 35 QMDC staff and community volunteers studied 100 sites across the two catchments over the course of three weeks. A report on the survey will be available in early 2007.

"The results from all these studies will be combined with other monitoring activities to show variations in river condition and will help to measure trends in river health in our area," said Paul.

Paul said that this information will be vital to help communities to understand river and water management, and encourage communities to participate in on-ground activities.

"There are already several community water monitoring groups operating across the region and several new groups starting up," Paul said.

"We hope that the results from this survey, and the monitoring methods used, will not only be adopted by communities, but will also enhance QMDC's ability to support community participation in these activities."

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060918_Rapid Assmt_Team 5_BR_Site 1_Waterbugs_LOtto.jpg Caption: Project Coordinator, Paul Webb, collects a water sample for testing.

RapidAssmt_KateReilly_Ph_LWeedon.jpg Caption: QMDC Water Quality Officer, Kate Reilly, tests Ph levels.

060915_RapidAssmt_NatalieFries_Waterbugs_LWeedon.jpg Caption: Volunteer, Natalie Fries, hunts for waterbugs.

For electronic copies of any of these photos, please contact Amelia Radford on 07 4637 6234, or ameliar@qmdc.org.au