Capricorn Conservation Council

President's Report for the 2006 Annual General Meeting
The Hut, Haigh Park, Livermore Street, Rockhampton
28 June 2006

The Capricorn Conservation Council has continued the never-ending struggle for environmental responsibility in the Central Queensland region. One of the main issues that still dominates the scene is water and I suspect it will continue to be a prime cause of environmental concern into the future. We try to draw attention to the big issues of global warming and climate change, but we are not really in a position to effectively tackle these issues locally. The irony of being a small conservation group at the centre of a region with a burgeoning economy based on exporting phenomenal quantities of coal is not lost on any of us. We can however direct some attention to the continued loss of biodiversity in the region due to the expansion of these mines, and our guest speaker has some important words to say on this issue later this evening.

As with all community groups there is the problem of attracting sufficient members and supporters during times when there are no major local environmental issue in the headlines.

Coordinators

Jason Countryman was employed (3 days per week) as coordinator from July to Dec 2005 when he resigned to take a full time job as a Ranger with QPWS.

Crystal Jasperson, a recent graduate of Environmental Science from CQU, has been our coordinator (4 days per week) from Feb 2006 to the present.

It was unfortunate that uncertainty over funding in the previous year led to the absence of a coordinator for over six months. It has taken time to recover from the consequent loss of continuity.

Campaigns and Projects

CCC is pursuing a large number of issues and these are listed in detail in the coordinator's report. I will just mention a few of the key ones here-

Waterpark and Sandy Creeks, Byfield

Livingstone Shire Council (LSC) had originally proposed to build a weir on Sandy Creek to supplement the water supply from Waterpark Creek. This was objected to by CCC and local residents. Our opposition has now resulted in the weir not being part of the scheme. The current plan is for a pipeline to supply water from the Fitzroy River at Rockhampton to the Capricorn Coast. However while the LSC is still waiting for federal funding for the pipeline, there is a proposal to extract water from Sandy Creek, without the weir, during times of drought. This is a difficult balancing issue because some moderate extraction of water from Sandy Creek. will help prevent salt intrusion in the lower reaches of Waterpark Creek. I represent CCC on the Community Environmental Reference Group (ERG) set up by the LSC to help ensure the best environmental outcomes for Waterpark and Sandy Creeks. Along with our coordinator I have attended a number of ERG meeting during the year and a meeting with DNRM&W on this issue.

Greenlakes

Several committee members and coordinator Jason Countryman were heavily involved in expressing community concerns over the proposals for plantation forestry at Greenlakes and Paddy's Swamp. These schemes, by Qld Dept of Primary Industries and Integrated Tree Crop Limited involved draining some previously ponded areas. By working closely with the proponents from the early stages, Jason was able to assist in achieving better environmental outcomes which include increased buffer areas of remnant vegetation.

Eco-Living Expo

A CCC stall was set up at the 2005 Eco-Lining Expo at Yeppoon by Jason, who also gave an oral presentation as part of the information sessions.

Bush Friendly Beef and Envirofund

Both of these projects had some positive and significant outcomes in their earlier phases, which have been reported on previously. In the last year a number of BFB meetings were held and a property visit was conducted. However with the lack of a coordinator for six months in 2005 and the loss of key committee personnel, these projects did not come to a satisfactory completion and some of the funding was returned.

Submissions

We made a submission to the Central Qld Regional Water Supply Strategy (CQRWSS) and wrote to ministers and a number government department expressing our concern over key environmental problems.

Representatives on other groups

Cathy Herbert has been nominated by CCC to the board of Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) and has represented CCC on the Stakeholder Council of FBA. This latter role is now taken by Crystal Jasperson. Cathy Herbert is also the CCC rep on the Bridled Nailtail Wallaby Recovery Team.

I represent CCC on the CQ a New Millennium, a state government sponsored planning group for coordinating regional development. While it has noble aims I am yet to be convinced of any substantial outcomes.

Christine Fraser and Liese Childs represent the environment movement on the Fitzroy River Coastal Catchments (FRCC) committee.

Meetings at The Hut

The following presentations were given at The Hut during the last year-

- Stanwell Coke Plant EIS release by Bob Saunders of Qld Coke and Energy
- Central Qld Regional Water Supply Strategy by Ed Donohue of DNRM
- Environmental aspects of CQRWSS by John Platten of EPA

Funding

I wish to thank the State Government for their funding support through EPA, and FBA for their capacity-building funding after the appointment of our new coordinator.

Conclusion

My previous time as president of CCC was over 20 years ago. The two major differences that I see today compared with the way that CCC operated in the 1970's and 80's are-

- The advent of email and the web have led to an explosion in information. We are now far more deeply involved in a far greater number of issues than we were before and the time constraints seem sharper.
- Unlike the Joh era, governments have now learnt to embrace us rather than fight us. This means inviting us to onto committees and asking for submissions. Rather than being silenced through exclusion, we now risk being silenced through overload.

I wish to thank all of those who have supported us during the year including our committed volunteers.

Transfers and work commitments have led to a number of departures from the committee recently. With new committee members coming on board and our new coordinator up and running, the next year should be a very exciting one for CCC.

Ian Herbert
President