



Farming February 2017

From the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

This month's update could have been "Fast" February, "Fervent" February or simply February "Facts", but "Farming" February gives me the opportunity to reinforce the relationship The Mulloon Institute has with Mulloon Creek Natural Farms (MCNF). That relationship is a very important aspect of our work as the MCNF is the working and living laboratory of what we seek to achieve in The Mulloon Institute.

In my last update I mentioned the fire that impacted on the northern part of Duralla where MCNF's hens are located. We were certainly lucky on the day with only a few losses. Those losses did increase to about 30 to 40 but it could have been a lot worse. MCNF manager, Michael Fitzgerald, is working with our staff to address other fire impacts to avoid erosion in gully areas. Cam Wilson is providing Michael with plans for that purpose and to slow water flow as part of work for the Mulloon Community Landscape Rehydration Project (MCLRP). Good examples of the ongoing working relationship between the farm and the Institute.

Similar work has also been carried out on one of the other properties in the MCLRP, namely Palerang. Gully erosion rectification work was designed by Cam Wilson in conjunction with Peter Andrews with work completed using an excavator and assistance from the Green Army. Getting the earthworks aspect of the rectification done now has allowed extensive plantation by the Green Army to help stabilize the area well before we run into autumn and the winter.

This type of work is not only crucial to the MCLRP it is also providing excellent training for the Green Army members. They are also assisting with some of the survey work needed to produce cross-sections of the creek where future interventions are currently being planned and designed. I am aware the Federal Government has announced the Green Army program will be finishing but I'm sure if all Green Army participants were doing the type of work our groups are doing on the MCLRP the government may have reconsidered its decision.

During February we had a visit from Soils For Life including its Chairman, Major General (Rtd) Michael Jeffery, who came to see the MCLRP and MCNF's free range, organic, biodynamic egg operation. Tony Coote and I also spent some time discussing mutual areas of interest with Michael Jeffery. As with The Mulloon Institute, Soils For Life is strongly advocating for a national focus on our strategic natural assets of soil, water (hydration) and vegetation. Soils For Life has previously highlighted these assets through the case studies of nineteen innovative farmers and is now embarking on increasing that to one hundred properties. A goal that fits well with our goal of one hundred catchments.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I can inform you that Michael Jeffery has accepted our offer to become a Patron of The Mulloon Institute. As part of our closer working relationship I will be assisting Soils For Life with its selection of properties to add to its case studies of innovative farming operations. Michael Jeffery and I will collaboratively work in



a number of areas but particularly with respect to advocacy to government on natural resource management policy and regulations. Collectively we intend to raise the profile of the importance of soil, water and vegetation in the national policy debate.

The work we are doing at The Mulloon Institute continues to be admired in the broader community with various organisations visiting us on the ground. One I missed in my last update was two separate groups from the National Youth Science Forum (NYSF) that visited in January. Luke Peel looked after the students and supervisors and took them on tour along the creek and then a presentation in the barn. We are a regular destination for the NYSF that brings top science school students to Canberra each January.

Later in February about 30 students from “Landcare Intrepid ANU” visited and were taken on a walk up the creek by the Institute’s Cam Wilson and Bec Klomp. This group expressed an interest in returning in the not too distant future to undertake some on-ground activities in the catchment.

We have also had regular visits from Canberra Girls Grammar Year 9 Geography students over the past couple of years and their next visit is scheduled for 20 March. We will also be hosting other school groups in coming months.

Our 20 Million Trees project continues at a steady rate with around 5000 of our 12000 trees already planted. Our recent report to the Federal Department of Environment and Energy on our progress to date was well received and approved.

We continue to seek additional support for our MCLRP and related activities and in that vein we recently submitted an application to the Federal Department of Industry, Innovation & Science under its Citizen Science program. Luke Peel and Karen

Galley did a superb job in a short time frame to put a substantial application in on our behalf. Pete Hazell and I provided additional resources to what would be a well aligned program with our current work. We do already have runs on the board when it comes to taking science to the people (e.g. hundreds attending our field days) so we hope our application is given serious consideration.

March will see our second workshop in conjunction with Tarwyn Park Training and lots, lots more including updating you on the Advisory Council meeting held on 3 March and the Science Advisory Council scheduled for 17 March.

But in the meantime many thanks again for your ongoing support.

Cheers,

Gary Nairn AO – Chairman

0419 420 108 | garynairn@themullooninstitute.org

for environment, farming and society