



March Metrics

2017

From the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

Firstly apologies for being a little later than I would like with my monthly update but the first week of April was a busy week spent mainly in Sydney attending a conference where I presented two papers plus other Sydney based activities. But more on those in the April update.

March provides the opportunities to use all manner of relevant words, “magic”, “marvelous”, “multiple”, “mystery”, to name just a few. But “metrics” it is, as measurements are key to our work plus we had some interesting demonstrations of measuring equipment during March which I’ll come to shortly. And hey, surveying is my first profession!

In early March one of our good scientific supporters, Dr. John Troughton, brought a group of people to meet with us and demonstrate some of their technology. That included specialized weather stations that would include capturing soil moisture in various locations and could be used to link information on Mulloon Creek Natural Farms egg cartons. They also demonstrated their drone (UAV or RPV depending on what name you want to adopt) technology that can be used for various applications including photography and measurement.

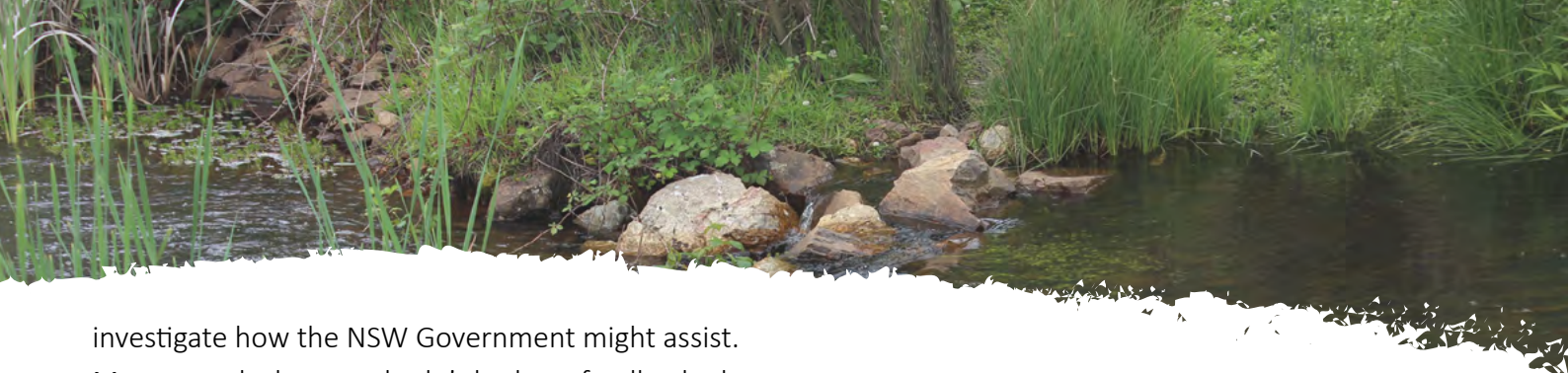
John has also been working with Soren Lunoe of HydroSun that is developing on-dam (i.e. floating) solar technology and is looking at one of its demonstration sites being at The Mulloon Institute. Luke Peel and our Scientific Advisory Council is considering how best to establish an appropriate scientific experiment to test the technology. More

metrics I guess!

The Mulloon Institute Board met in March, as did its Advisory Council and Science Advisory Council. Keeping a steady hand on our progress is very important and these three bodies ensure that occurs. Our personnel needs are constantly reviewed and in March we moved to bring a Communications and Marketing person on board. We had a good response and so should be able to report on that development in my next update.

In last month’s “Farming” February I mentioned visits from the National Youth Science Forum, Intrepid Landcare ANU and Canberra Girls Grammar School Year 9 geography. Visits by school and university students is an important part of our education strategy and outreach goals. Through such activities we seek to influence curriculums at the same time as educating the broader community. In line with that, Luke Peel and Dr. John Troughton were invited to present at the Geography Teachers NSW Conference that was held in Sydney during March. Two informative 45 minute sessions were conducted by Luke and John with excellent feedback and discussion.

Ideally we would like to take some of this education more broadly and more often but it all comes down to time and resources. This is an area that government could assist which is why I recently followed up our local State Member and Deputy Premier, John Barilaro, on some of our activity we discussed with him when he visited last year. He has responsibility for “Skills” and had offered to



investigate how the NSW Government might assist. Many months later we hadn't had any feedback, thus my follow up. We will keep on the case!

We are also keeping the Federal Government informed and I had a regular catch up with the Prime Minister's senior adviser for Environment, Agriculture & Water to ensure the progress of our UN selected project (the MCLRP) is understood at the highest levels.

Following on from my announcement last month that Major General Michael Jeffery is now our Patron, we have been working on a closer relationship with his Soils for Life organization via the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). That is well progressed and I should report on its finalization and other matters next month.

In speaking of Michael Jeffery, late in February Tony Coote and I attended a book launch at UNSW that Michael was scheduled to officiate but couldn't make it due to illness. The book, titled *Water is Life*, was the final book written by Colleen McCullough before she passed away. It was launched at the Michael Crouch Innovation Centre as the book covered not only the challenges Australia has with respect to water, it also covered part of the incredible life of Michael Crouch and his innovative Zip Water system. UNSW Chancellor, David Gonski, stepped in at the last moment to officiate in place of Michael Jeffery.

Michael Crouch also participated and it was good to catch up with him and his son after the book launch and learn about their pastoral activities. We invited them to Mulloon Creek Natural Farms which occurred late in March. They have grazing properties in the Hunter Valley and on King Island in Bass Strait. Michael and his son George and their NSW farm manager spent the best part of a day at Mulloon Creek.

They were very interested in what we have achieved on the pilot project along Mulloon Creek and our extension work to encourage similar repair and rehydration in other catchments. They went away intending to have a closer look at the landscape, particularly at their Hunter Valley property, and see where the principles we promote should be adopted. We will stay in close contact with Michael and George.

Citizen Science was mentioned last month with respect to a grant application we lodged, no advice on that as I write. But I did host an old friend, Libby Hepburn, who is a great advocate for Citizen Science and has done much to develop interest along the far south coast where she lives. She brought Michael Mulvaney from the ACT Government to Mulloon Creek for a visit and was very impressed with what we have achieved. She is very keen to assist us in collecting data within our catchment and helping get broader interest in our work.

The following day Libby and Luke Peel accompanied Rose and I to the Press Club to hear Science Minister, Arthur Sinodinos, present on how he sees science under his stewardship. The address was part of the Science meets Parliament event taking place that week. The Minister was very effusive about the value of science and gave us all a strong impression he will be pushing hard within Cabinet to have the best outcomes for the science community.

A key achievement during March was the successful second four day workshop held in conjunction with Tarwyn Park Training. We had a full complement of sixteen participants with several travelling from quite long distances including Queensland and various parts of rural NSW. The workshop was also attended by Peter Andrews who gave excellent support to

for environment, farming and society



Stuart Andrews and Dwayne Norris. Once again Pete Hazell did a great job organizing the workshop and ensuring it was well attended and doing the follow up survey that helps us with future workshops.

On a final note, during March I enrolled in a UN Sustainable Development Goal Academy run course titled Feeding a Hungry Planet – Agriculture, Nutrition, Sustainability. It is a seven week course and Achim Dobermann, head of Rothamsted Research, is one of the instigators and lecturers for the course. From what I've completed so far it is providing a valuable insight into some of the environmental and agricultural problems facing the world but also some of the ways to deal with those problems. Already I can see that our work at The Mulloon Institute is very much in the "solving the problems" camp.

Until next month and many more "metrics" later, all the very best.

Cheers,

Gary Nairn AO – Chairman

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