

CAPRICORN CONSERVATION COUNCIL INC.



Topic of Capricorn

Our official newsletter

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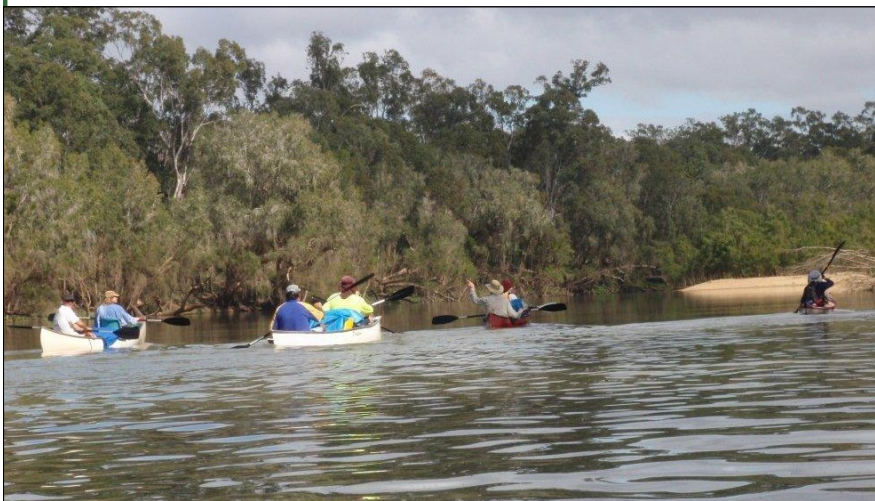
Don't 'Murray' the Fitzroy by Coordinator Michael McCabe

The Fitzroy River flows for 310 km from the conjunction of the Dawson and Mackenzie Rivers into Keppel Bay. With the construction of the Fitzroy Barrage (1971) the natural length (~120km) of tidal estuarine influence was halved. Despite the installation of a fishway, the migration of fish (e.g. Barramundi) between spawning (salt water) and maturation (freshwater, billabongs) the ecological trade-off for achieving a reliable urban water supply was significant.

The construction of Eden Bann weir to supply Stanwell Power flooded almost 70km of riverine habitat, leaving only ~30km of 'natural' river (pools, riffle zones, gravel beds) west of Yaamba. Eden Bann created another major barrier for aquatic life and a significant hazard for freshwater turtles. A loch system is in place to provide fish passage but little is known about its effectiveness (refer to the Paradise Dam debacle: <http://www.envlaw.com.au/paradise.html>).

Several years ago there was a proposal to increase water storage along the Fitzroy, mainly for increasing water security for industrial growth in Gladstone and possibly for several industrial scale cattle feedlots (15,000 head each) on the floodplain. The plan was to raise Eden Bann weir and construct a very large weir at Rookwood by 2011. Eden Bann storage was to be increased using an inflatable bag similar to the one which tragically collapsed at the Bedford Weir (Blackwater).

The surge of industrial growth in Gladstone has put these proposals by Gladstone Area Water Board and Sunwater back on the table. If approved under State and Federal planning and environmental laws, The Fitzroy will be 'mighty' no more. The Eden Bann pondage will consume another 70km of natural river system. Rookwood (Stage 2) would rise to 49 metres—drowning 150km of riverine ecosystems, backing up water into the Dawson and Mackenzie. Refer to the maps on page 4.



Fitzroy Canoe Club tour the Fitzroy River

The 'mighty' Fitzroy for much of the time starts as just a trickle through gravel beds below the conjunction of the Dawson and Mackenzie. While heavily impacted by earlier land use practices, there has been a quiet revolution in sustainable grazing practices in recent decades. Better management of ground cover, installation of off-stream watering for cattle, protection of riparian vegetation and biodiversity are now 'stock in trade' for the region's land managers. Will these efforts be lost if the Fitzroy becomes the next Murray, with seemingly endless disputes over water allocation and quality? Will the current industrial boom cause the loss of a healthy river system that's essential for our landscape, reef and food security? Will our vulnerable, unique Fitzroy Turtle *Rheodytes leucops* be sacrificed for short-term economic gain? <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/1761-conservation-advice.pdf>

Will the reduced flows, especially if the Nathan and Connors River dams go ahead, further reduce natural flushing, resulting in even higher salinity following big wets like 1991 and 2011 and also reduce the ability of the Fitzroy river system to dilute the inevitably increased mine water discharges with the current mining boom?

CCC is Supported by



Caring for Country &
Queensland Government
Conservation Grant (DERM)
Federal Government GVEHO Grant
& Member Donations

Donations and other community grants support on-ground projects with partners and volunteers. Please contact CCC if you wish to support these activities through **regular tax deductible donations**.

SOKIT Update

Save our Keppel Island Taskforce (SOKIT) is a community campaign to save Great Keppel Island from inappropriate development. SOKIT promotes the natural beauty and significant environmental



values of the island's forests, coasts, corals and wildlife. They've produced a beautiful book entitled 'Precious Great Keppel Island' illustrating these values and recommending the best way to manage human use and conservation.

Tower Holding's proposed development within the old resort footprint at Fisherman's Beach is endorsed by SOKIT but not the marina at Putney or real estate development on Lot 21 (a public lease). We've heard that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the re-development project on Great Keppel Island will be released for public comment soon.

See the website for more details:- www.careforkeppel.org.au

Using Mapping Tools

There are some useful government mapping tools available on the web which you might find helpful if you want to make comment on a development proposal or just want to find out more about a block of land. You can enter a lot and plan number (ie. The real property description) and your email address, and a map will be emailed to you showing the lot in question with the relevant mapping. Generally the email arrives within 5 minutes but you might have to wait as long as a day. You'll also find on most of these sites there is an email address to contact the data custodian with any questions you have, and there is also usually a link, either to the method used to derive the data, or to the background data itself.

These webmap sites are:

Vegetation mapping

http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/biodiversity/regional_ecosystems/introduction_and_status/regional_ecosystem_maps/index.php

Ecological significance mapping (both High and General significance)

http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/environmental_management/land/natural_resource_management/ecological-significance-mapping.php

Referable wetlands

<http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/ecosystems/referable-wetlands-form.php>

Coastal management district maps

http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/environmental_management/coast_and_oceans/coastal_management/district-maps.php

If you go to the vegetation mapping site you'll see there are two maps you can order, one for remnant mapping and one for regrowth mapping. Each of these is delivered with 2 maps, making a total of 4 vegetation maps available. The regional ecosystem/remnant mapping also includes an Essential Habitat map and the regrowth map includes a second map showing any PMAV registered on the title (if applicable).

Getting Your 'Letter to The Editor' of the Paper Printed by Susan Cunningham

The Letters to the Editor (LTE) column is the most widely read part of any newspaper and, for many people in the community, it is the most scholarly writing they have access to. An untruth or myth, if printed in LTE and left unchallenged, assumes the status of "fact" among a proportion of the population. Those who dismiss the LTE column make the mistake of ignoring a voting block of significance. Hence I believe challenging such untruths when they appear in the LTE is an important part of the democratic process.

Over the years most of the letters I've submitted to the editor of the Morning Bulletin have been published (about 95%) and most of the feedback I've had from people has been positive. I also wrote a weekly column (a freebie) for the paper for a while in the late 1990's. However, I get the impression that many people think getting a letter or opinion printed is difficult or requires an "out there" personality. In fact I had my first letter printed when I was 16 years old and I don't think it's particularly difficult, although it does get easier with practice. That's why I volunteered to write this guide. The following is my personal list of "rules" which I have found helpful to get a letter printed:-

- 1. Use email.** This makes it easy for the editor to pass your letter along for publication. Save the letter as .rtf and copy it into the main body of the email, and make sure you include your home address and a daytime phone number. For the Morning Bulletin the email address to use is tmbully@capnews.com.au and you will get a call to verify your identity.
- 2. Stick to the word limit.** This is another ploy to make it easy for the editor to "pick me!" Yes, I know they will print over-length letters sometimes, but I've had letters and columns cut back and this can change the content. You are probably more of an expert on the topic than the editor (or the junior sub-editor) so it's better if you choose what to cut to get it back to 250 words.
- 3. Don't use big words.** Stick to Grade 10 writing level and convert all jargon into plain English. Don't use all long sentences or all short sentences - mix them up.
- 4. Stick to facts and don't get emotive.** This is another one that seems to be outdated in 2011 but I personally think those terms such as "mental", "snot-filled" and other insults do nothing to advance the exchange of ideas while respecting the person. Insults are a form of bullying and undermine your credibility.
- 5. Pick your topic.** Don't try to be all things to all people, but stick with what you know and are passionate about.
- 6. Challenge assumptions.** People know what they are thinking but don't always know what they are assuming.
- 7. Edit before you submit, then edit again.** For most people this means writing a first draft, putting it aside for 24 hours before editing it, then another 24 hours and another edit. With a day's grace you will notice where you could turn a phrase better, which sentence is redundant or could be reduced to a part of another sentence, or where you can turn a passive verb into an active one, or a noun into an adjective.

Finally, practice makes perfect. When you first start writing you will probably waffle and use long-winded phrases and sentences to make a point. Your point might not be clear, even to you. You'll sound pompous or silly or wonder what you were thinking when you started. This is why you need to practice writing, and why you need to edit your own writing. Reducing a wordy draft into a succinct final makes my writing that much more readable to a general audience. As you edit your own letters before submitting them, you'll learn to write in a tighter, sharper, punchier style.

Writing LTE letters or opinion pieces is not something that should be left to the same few all of the time. It's a form of "town commons" where everyone can and should have a say.

PLASTICS AND THEIR DARKER SIDE by Selena Standfast

What happens to plastics when we finish with them and how do we dispose of them properly? If plastics aren't disposed of properly they could end up on our beaches, in our waterways and oceans where they are causing dire consequences for bird and marine life.

There is plenty of research being carried out around the world about the impacts of plastics on fauna. Despite the implementation of strict international legislation aimed at reducing the amount of marine debris originating from ocean and land-based sources (e.g. MARPOL Annex V), debris, particularly plastic, continues to accumulate worldwide with an estimated 20-30 million items entering the ocean each day (Lavers 2011).

In our own backyard, seabirds which forage in the Tasman Sea are mistaking plastic for food, eating it and perishing on Lord Howe Island (Darby 2011a). 700 kilometres north-east of Sydney, Lord Howe Island was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Area in 1982. It is widely regarded as a pristine environment, with over 70% of the island protected from development and visitor numbers strictly limited to 400 at any one time (Lavers 2011). A Lord Howe Shearwater's skeleton (right) reveals its stomach was loaded with shards of blue and white plastic (Darby 2011b). Middle Beach (below) on Lord Howe Island may be one of Australia's "cleanest" beaches but particles of plastic debris wash up on every high tide (Lavers 2011).



More than 200 seabird species have been reported to ingest plastic debris, presumably mistaking it for food. Adult birds then return to the breeding colony and 'off-load' the ingested plastic to their chicks during feeding. Plastic debris is known to accumulate hydrophobic organic toxins such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at up to 106x ambient seawater concentrations. Once ingested, debris can block or rupture the digestive tract and leak contaminants into the bird's blood stream resulting in stomach ulcerations, liver damage, infertility, and in many cases, death. The sharp-edged fragments tear internal organs and toxic substances bind to the plastic. Mercury, which is toxic to birds at four parts per million (ppm), was found in these Shearwaters at up to 30,000 ppm (Lavers 2011).



According to Scott (2004) it is not just plastics that we should be concerned with. Other items found in fauna's stomachs included ropes, polystyrene cups, mattressfoam, plastic bottles, toys, tools and cigarette lighters.

This then has become a global problem that isn't sustainable. According to Lavers (2011), in 2009 the Australian government identified the ingestion of plastic debris by marine vertebrates as one of only a handful of 'Key Threatening Processes'. The UN Environment Program has called for intensified research on its impacts, and Birds Australia warns it must be treated as a serious threat. In its 2011 yearbook, the UN program has flagged marine plastics as a toxic time bomb (Darby 2011b).

It is then up to the individual to carefully consider what action they can take each and every time they dispose of their wastes. According to Hutton (2011), the choices we make as individuals do a lot to help – refuse the use of plastic bags, support proactive companies, sell products in compostable containers, remove rubbish when visiting the beach, lobby your member of parliament, sort and recycle plastic items and encourage others to do the same.

Full-length article and references available on request.

KAFDA Update

Keppel and Fitzroy Delta Alliance (KAFDA) has been formed to oppose several proposed coal export port developments in the Fitzroy Delta and Keppel Bay. The proposals include coal ports on Balaclava Island and North Curtis Island, coal barges in Raglan Creek and dredging in Keppel Bay.

These local marine areas are very important breeding grounds and homes for a wide variety of fish, crustaceans, marine animals and birds. Some animals, like the Near Threatened Snubfin Dolphin and the Endangered Yellow Chat, rely on these ecosystems for the very survival of their species.



The male Yellow Chat



Snubfin Dolphin - Photo by Guido Parra
www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlife-ecosystems/wildlife/az_of_animals/australian_snubfin_dolphin.html

Two public meetings of KAFDA have been held to date. The first, in Yeppoon, attracted nearly 300 concerned locals and the Rockhampton meeting involved over 160 people. KAFDA now has over 100 members and is currently planning future action.

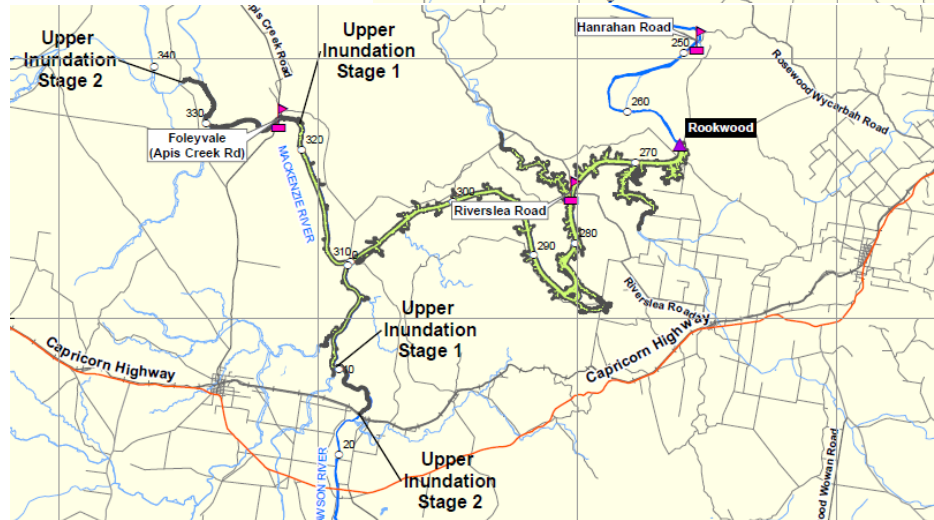
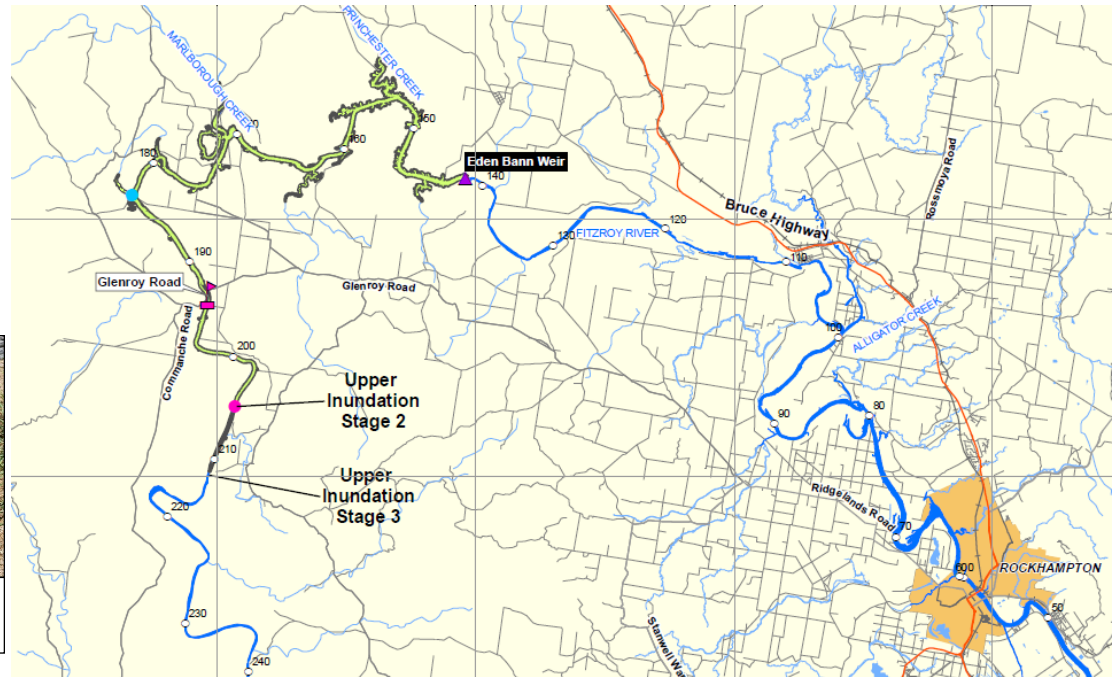
See the KAFDA website www.savekeppelfromcoal.wordpress.com

Don't 'Murray' the Fitzroy (cont.)

These maps show the proposed raising of Eden Bann Weir and establishment of Rookwood Weir, along with the anticipated inundation.



Rheodytes leucops



Clearing on Curtis Island for LNG plant

Some of CCC's other campaigns and activities

Gladstone - researching and lobbying to get to the bottom of the water quality issues in Gladstone Harbour relating to dredging in the Harbour and clearing on Curtis Island.
 - helping to establish a Gladstone Conservation Council.

Galilee Basin - Discussions with Hancock Coal regarding Alpha Coal Project and proposals for creek diversions.

Water Management Workshop for local water management professionals and stakeholders - in collaboration with Qld Conservation Council - a draft proceedings report is available now.

Submissions/Comments relating to various Terms of Reference, EIS & Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) referrals, including Curragh West, Alpha Coal and Rolleston Coal Mine.

Media coverage relating to a wide variety of topical environmental issues.