

Save the Mary River Coordinating Group PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Dec 2011

A big thank-you to all those who continue to be involved with protecting the Mary River and educating on our special creatures and their needs to survive and thrive! The mighty Mary River has received good rain this year and is carrying lots of fresh water to the sea. It has also been a good year for Mary River turtle nesting with 7 nests protected in the Traveston Crossing reach of the Mary River and lots more protected around Tiaro by Tiaro Landcare.

Two years on from Minister Peter Garrett's final NO DAM decision for Traveston Crossing, we are seeing slow progress on the State Government's plans on land use and land sales in the Mary Valley with a couple of properties coming on the open market. There is now a Stakeholder Reference Group formed in an advisory role to assist and I am one of the community representatives on that Group.

There is still a threat of options to make use of strategic reserve in the Mary Basin being investigated, including an upgrade of Borumba Dam and water harvesting or more inter-basin transfer out of the Mary catchment (the Northern Pipeline Interconnector (NPI) stage 1 from Lake Baroon and NPI stage 2 from Lake McDonald and the Mary River at Coles Crossing.

The Mary Basin Resource Operations Plan (ROP) has been released, still based on the flawed Water Resource Plan and still showing us that there is no consideration by the state government of the need for fresh water flows to the sea, or to reduce over allocation during the dry months of the year. Water trading has commenced which potentially can take water extraction higher than we have ever experienced before.

We have seen the judges decision on the Paradise Dam court case go against the Wide Bay Burnett Conservation Council showing how difficult it is to protect our endangered species through the legal system. Also the dark cloud continues on the horizon as a threat to the Mary River and it's Estuary, is the coal and coal seam gas exploration downstream of Gympie.

The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group continues to be active in putting in submissions to issues that potentially threatened the Mary River. Issues this year have included our response opposing the amendments to the State Water Act to reduce community consultation, the proposal of a free range piggery on Kandanga Ck and a motor sport proposal at Little Bella Ck

Representatives from the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group participated in the Mary Valley Renewal Team and through community meetings, this team has twice reviewed actions in the Mary Valley Community and Economic Action Plan through holding public forums and helped develop a Kandanga Community Action Plan. Through this process, there continues to be progress and

economic recovery in the communities of the Mary Valley. The RV park at Kandanga is a wonderful example often full of travelling tourists now stopping over to enjoy the Mary Valley

The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group has been active on a number of environmental projects that are part of the Mary Valley Community and Economic plan, which can be downloaded from the www.maryvalleyrenewal.org website and includes an update from the forum held in Oct 2010 and June 2011. A huge effort continues to be put in from our volunteers at the Save the Mary Museum and River Education Centre near the Kandanga Railway for locals, visitors and school excursions. Special thanks to all our volunteers who continue to greet our visitors especially on steam train days.

The Save the Mary Museum and River Education Centre continues to be a wonderful tribute to all those who fought so hard to overturn the decision to dam the Mary River at Traveston Crossing and a help to attract visitors to our Mary Valley.

We also have some wonderful news that Jenny Mengel has been awarded a Wide Bay Volunteer's Award under the Environmental Category. 2011 is the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers. The theme for worldwide celebrations is "*Inspire the Volunteer in You*" which is designed to promote and encourage volunteering. Jenny is one of ten award winners in Wide Bay selected to receive a custom-designed award pack, which will include a certificate of appreciation for their volunteering efforts and an *International Year of the Volunteer* commemorative stamp and coin set. Jenny has been a dedicated leader in her vision of setting up the Save the Mary Museum and River Education Center to help educate people and particularly youth in what is special to protect about the Mary River and to ensure the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal is stopped forever. Congratulations and well done Jenny.

Successful activities the group have been involved with during the year are the continuing tourist and local interest in the Museum and River Education centre, the tree planting days at Traveston Crossing and Kandanga, the Mary River Fun Day at Les and Heather Hall's property at Kybong and the Mary River Festival. Partnering with the Cooloola Arts Council continues to make the Mary River Festival a wonderful opportunity to meet up with people from throughout the Mary River catchment and celebrate our victory for the river. Check out festival website at

<http://www.maryriverfestival.org.au/>

Unfortunately we had to cancel the Kandanga 1000 ride due to wet weather but the keen response is to have it again next year.

We are seeing a number of other great environmental initiatives progressing in the Mary Valley. On a federal level, the regional species recovery plan for threatened aquatic species has been drafted through the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee. Awaiting the final report being worked through the Federal government and hopefully some support for funding on ground works.

Great Sandy Biosphere – A proposal to expand the Great Sandy Biosphere boundary to include the Mary Valley is being discussed and generally agreed that the logical boundary to protect the

Great Sandy should be the Mary Catchment.

Kandanga Community Garden proposal – There is an opportunity to lease 5 acre block with orchard opposite the centre at \$10/week (no bond) initially for 6 months to progress a Community Garden. Discussions are continuing regarding the proposal to be auspiced with Cooloola Human Services Network from Gympie (CHSN).

On an national level, Steve Burgess and myself presented a case study about community consultation with the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal at the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand annual conference held at Twin Waters.

On an international level, an outcome from the Rivers for Life conference in Mexico is the video “A River Runs Through Us” which features learnings from our Save the Mary Campaign.

<http://australianriverrestorationcentre.com.au/a-river-runs-through-us-compelling-documentary/>

Our websites are still being maintained and provide a detailed archive of information that other campaigns are accessing for ideas and inspiration.

I encourage everyone to renew membership and invite new members in the new year as there is much work still to do to make sure that the state government looks after the the interests of the Mary River. This approach to continue to have a presence is far better than to fight to ensure the Mary River runs healthy, runs free and is protected for future generations to enjoy.

Glenda Pickersgill,

President

Save the Mary River Coordinating Group

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