

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review of the Regional Investment Strategy (RIS) for the implementation of the accredited integrated regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) plan *Country to Coast – a healthy sustainable future* is submitted on behalf of the regional community by the designated Burnett Mary Regional Group for Natural Resource Management Inc (BMRG). It contains details of the impacts and outcomes that increased investment in the plans RIS will accrue.

Of significance is the impact the increased investment will have on the implementation of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (RWQPP). **Table A** provides an assessment of the Resource Condition Targets (RCTs) that are directly linked to implementation of the RWQPP. As part of the on-going planning process, the BMRG has undertaken a full audit of *Country to Coast* against the RWQPP which is provided at Attachment 1. All of the targets so linked will receive increased investment under the proposed increased approval guarantee. If approved, this will equate to an overall investment of \$7,239,549 from the Burnett Mary RIS over 3 years in activities towards targets that assist in the implementation of the RWQPP.

To develop the RIS and its priorities for funding, a full social and economic impact assessment was undertaken. The predicted social, economic and environmental impacts of the proposed targets and actions in the NRM Plan were assessed in three steps: 1) an initial screening of the working draft management actions and targets, 2) a detailed assessment of proposed resource condition targets (RCT) and 3) a final screening of proposed management action targets. Criteria included Value, Threats, Feasibility (Social, Economic & Political). This exercise was undertaken by an experienced professional in community development with particular expertise in social and economic impact assessment who is familiar with this region.

A 30+ strong participant (including Technical Advisory Group, State Agency and community) workshop provided additional refinement to priority ratings (Critical, High, Important and Moderate). Shortfalls resulting from this prioritisation are listed in **Table B**. The prioritisation was used to drop 1<sup>st</sup> year funding for some RCTs and reduce others by the 30% and 50% for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years, respectively. This rationalisation ensured our request for funding through the NAP and NHT programs aligned with the 100/70/50% rule for the initial approval guarantee.

If this request is approved, significant gaps in implementing actions towards all targets due to a shortfall in 1st year budget will be addressed. Furthermore, shortfalls in fully implementing many of the actions needed to meet critical targets will also be addressed. A synopsis of the overall increase in budgets and summary of total impacts derived is provided in **Table C**. **Table C** also provides a program summary of the amended **Table 2** (Attachment 2) that details impacts at the target level. The RCTs impacted by the 1st year shortfall are mapped to matters for target in **Table D**. In addition to positive gains through increases in funded RCTS, an increase in the approval guarantee will also allow our region to address matters for target more fully. Finally, an increase in the approval guarantee will address gaps in the first year shortfall as outlined in **Table E**.

BMRG has undertaken this RIS Review by carrying out an evaluation of the effectiveness and ease/feasibility of actually implementing the management actions being implemented. Adjustments in approach of some components to achieve the most efficient and effective NRM outcomes is envisioned, however, with only 4 months of attempting to implement, no major changes in directions or amount/level of expected outputs (except in the positive) are being sought.

**This current request bringing the 2<sup>nd</sup> year funding to the full 100% of the indicative allocation will ensure that all RCTs will have significant efforts and activities against them in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year.**

The Action Programs within the RIS have been designed to promote ecologically sustainable development. BMRG has adopted the principles of ecologically sustainable development as outlined in the Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997, as it relates to the following core objectives:

- To enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations
- To provide for equity within and between generations
- To protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

**Investment in the RIS will deliver a holistic and sustainable improvement in Natural Resource Management in the Burnett Mary Region.**

The total indicative allocation investment for the NRM Plan is \$17,700,000 being \$4,900,000 for the first year, \$6,600,000 the second year and \$6,200,000 the third year. The original approval guarantee was for \$12,620,000.

**This request for an increase in BMRG's approval guarantee of \$3,220,000 will bring the total approval guarantee to \$15,840,000.**

An amended **Table 1** and **Schedule 2** detailing the proposed program budgets and payment schedules respectively are provided as separate Excel spreadsheets to accompany this review.

A detailed analysis of the leveraged co-investment since 1 July 2005, when implementation commenced, against RIS investment that has been allocated to date is provided in **Figures 2.1 to 2.4**. A similar analysis against total dollars allocated to NRM for all BMRG business is provided in **Figures 2.5 and 2.6**. The total co-investment leveraged to date exceeds \$2 million with an additional \$.5 million in volunteer time in-kind.

The BMRG has a series of pro forma for accessing funding through the RIS with supporting guidelines. Each of these includes a prompt for in-kind contributions, both cash and otherwise. This encourages proponents to find value-adding partners and value their time (volunteers) and commitment. A guideline for computing in-kind is also provided.

In the human resource arena, we strive for co-sponsored positions which we support with both funding, tools, access to networks, etc rather than growing BMRG's human resource liability. The end aim is that hosting organizations learn to value the role of NRM capacity in their culture and will continue to support these positions even if BMRG is unable to support them into the future.

An assessment of R&D needs has been undertaken and a contract let to develop a 'professional' prospectus for delivery to universities and other Research and Development organisations statewide, nationally and even internationally where appropriate (scheduled to be released in January 2006). We have undertaken this work in partnership with the Knowledge Brokering unit of Land and Water Australia.

A gap analysis will be run relevant to funding, spatial and asset distribution, output and outcome achievement, when the first year of implementation is complete. Additional prospectus will be developed to target corporate and other partners to fill these gaps.

**This request for an increase in BMRG's approval guarantee provides significant additional opportunities to leverage investment in successful, sustainable NRM in the region.**

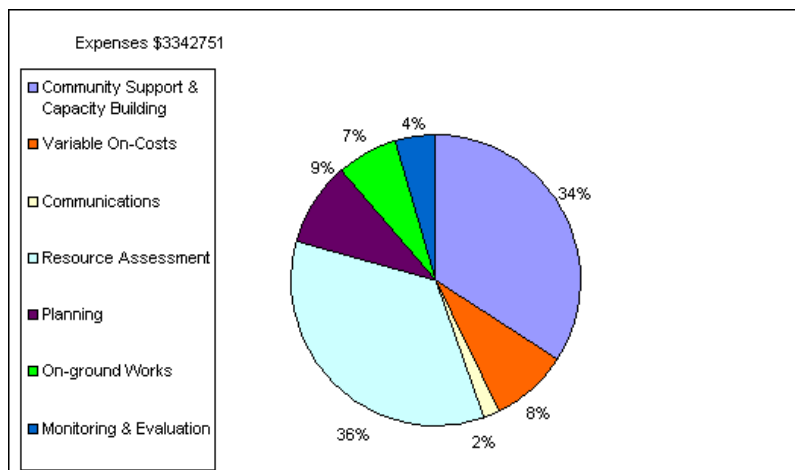
Due to the extensive consultation undertaken in the planning phase, literally dozens of partners willing to assist in plan implementation were identified prior to accreditation of the plan. This has allowed for immediate support for the RIS and its implementation. Some examples of other investors involved in the implementation of the plan include:

1. 24 local shire councils who co-fund 4 facilitator/coordinator positions
2. co-funded position with Aquagen and Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group
3. co-funded position with Barung Landcare, NRMSEQ and SEQWCG
4. co-funded position with Noosa Landcare & Noosa Shire Council
5. co-funded Water Quality monitoring with LGAs and Landcare
6. funding support from Burnett Program of Actions of the Coordinator General
7. research by CSIRO funded by the Sugar Research Development Corporation
8. research by Alan Fletcher Research Station and Brian Pastures Research Station
9. partnership with Conservation Volunteers of Australia
10. leveraged funding or support from Statewide Level Activities (CB07, CB03, SE03, SE05, AG05, AG16)
11. leveraged funding from Department of Environment and Heritage Coast to Catchment Initiative
12. in-kind from 14 Landcare groups
13. in-kind from QPWS (outside of negotiated in-kind)
14. in-kind from Private Forestry Southern Queensland
15. in-kind from Growcom and Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers
16. in-kind in every activity thus far funded in RIS implementation
17. multi-regional projects supported by Fitzroy Basin Association, SEQWCG, NRMSEQ and the World Wildlife Fund
18. BMRG's recent inclusion in the Natural Resources sub-committee of the Regional Managers Coordination Network
19. recommendation to Ministers for BMRG's inclusion in the Executive of the Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC)
20. datashare with Department of Natural Resources & Mines
21. datashare with Sunwater.

Negotiations are currently underway with a variety of corporate sponsors and BMRG are continuing identification of other corporate investment opportunities. Several of these efforts are near closure (eg co-investment from Wide Bay Water, co-investment from LGAs for weed control). It is becoming increasingly obvious that the potential for leveraged opportunities is enormous.

Support from the Landcare sector has increased appreciably with the formation of an additional seven groups and in-kind support from the groups currently estimated at a ratio of \$3:\$1. All local shire councils fully support the NRM Plan and have worked together to create the first Local Government Authority NRM Clusters in Australia. Each cluster employs an NRM Coordinator to facilitate the implementation of numerous co-funded activities cluster-wide and cross-regionally.

The following chart shows the breakdown of actual expenditure for the financial year ending 30 June 2005. **Variable on-costs are 8% and at this stage we do not expect that there would be any significant variation under current implementation budgets.**



In order to manage the RIS processes BMRG are well advanced in developing their own in-house Information Management System which maps all targets against outputs and matters for target, including national indicators. This process is also followed in the financial accounting MYOB system with all expenditure other than administration costs being mapped to RCTs, outputs and matters for target.

All coordinators are assigned to oversight all or part of an action program. Their workplans are developed in line with targets specified in the NRM plan. Monthly assessment of their workplans provides close monitoring of activities to ensure implementation investments are aligned to targets within the Plan.

Evaluation of proposed activities is carried out by some or all (depending on the nature of the proposal) of:

- BMRG Technical Staff and/or outsourced 'expert' contractors
- The relevant LGA Cluster NRM Panel (4 subregional clusters)
- Technical Advisory Working Group (each Action Program TAWG comprises a minimum of 1 Federal, 1 State and 1 Research and Development technical expert, and a maximum of 7 members)
- BMRG Board of Management.

BMRG is well advanced in the development of an integrated data capture, information management, GIS and resource condition system to underpin our monitoring and evaluation framework. Specific on-ground monitoring in place includes a team of botanists, including senior staff from the Qld Herbarium, to undertake biodiversity condition assessment over the life of the RIS. The baseline data will be complete by the end of 2005. We have also engaged LGA's, agencies, community groups and water industry corporations to form Water Quality (surface and groundwater) monitoring alliances. Data and information derived from these sources will be evaluated on a bi-annual basis to underpin a State of the Region report in 2007.

**Increase in our approval guarantee will allow BMRG to continue to support and ensure that Action Programs are continually assessed and approved by community, industry, local, state and federal government stakeholders.**

The investment in the revised RIS, if approved, is apportioned across the six Action Programs (Biodiversity Conservation, Coastal & Marine Management, Community Capacity & Partnerships, Sustainable Use, Weeds & Pest Management and Water Quality & Equitable Use). The impact of the revised RIS is detailed in **Table 2** ([Attachment 2](#)). The following impacts are expected to be delivered under the new approval guarantee.

**Biodiversity Conservation**

- improved status and condition of priority endangered, vulnerable, rare and iconic species
- improved status and condition of high and moderate value terrestrial biodiversity sites
- improved condition and extent of high value freshwater biodiversity areas
- stream reach condition identified, protected and improved
- freshwater wetlands identified, mapped, classified and planned for improved management
- restored and protected ecological function of priority wetlands and riparian zones
- maintained and improved biodiversity status of regional ecosystems
- maintained and improved status of known sites of endangered, vulnerable and rare species on the freehold land estate
- enhanced aquatic habitat and improved connectivity
- maintained and improved remnant vegetation condition and function
- protected high value native species and ecological communities
- improved partnerships with community groups whose core business is biodiversity conservation.

**Coastal & Marine Management**

- restored degraded coastal, estuarine and marine ecosystems
- protected pristine coastal, estuarine and marine species and ecosystems
- maintained coastal, estuarine and marine habitats
- reduced discharge loads from point sources and urban stormwater
- protected coastal, estuarine and marine habitats of biodiversity significance
- maintained and improved coastal ecosystems and processes
- maintained and protected non-Fraser Island coastal foreshores and sand mass areas
- maintained and protected Fraser Island
- reduced impacts on coastal and marine resources and ecosystems by maritime and marine industries, vessel and service industry operators.

**Community Capacity & Partnership Action Program**

- maintained and improved community trust and engagement in NRM planning processes
- improved communication and increased participation in NRM activities by industry, community, local government and other stakeholders
- LGA recognised as leaders in sustainable NRM decision making
- increased participation of landholders and natural resource managers in practices that achieve sustainability
- improved structures and processes for efficient and effective delivery of NRM business
- improved alignment of government policy and investment priorities to support achievement of targets
- increased facilitation of partnerships that increase regional capacity
- improved landholders access to training in NRM related courses
- increased partnerships with the R&D sector to fill knowledge gaps

- improved support to NRM stakeholders to participate in knowledge sharing and extension activities
- greater support to the Indigenous sector to fully engage in NRM activities
- increased support to the Indigenous sector to develop engagement protocols
- improved awareness and promotion of Indigenous cultural values.

#### Sustainable Use Action Program

- improved biodiversity condition and sustainability of grazing lands
- increased property management planning across the region to increase sustainability of land resources
- improved sustainability of cultivated land resources
- improved condition of lands affected by extractive industries
- improved condition of remnant vegetation on private forestry lands
- increased sustainable development of plantations and farm forestry
- improvement of land resources affected by salinisation
- minimised or eliminated impacts from soil salinisation
- established sustainable native species harvesting industry.
- increased participation of landholders and natural resource managers in the uptake of practices that achieve sustainability
- more opportunity to support community groups who focus on farm forestry as an area of interest.

#### Weeds & Pest Management Action Program

- improved condition of cultivated land through management of weed and pest infestation
- reduced economic impacts on uncleared estate by controlling weeds and pest infestations
- reduced impact on ecologically significant areas from invasive species
- reduced impact on areas of high conservation value from invasive species
- maintained and improved freshwater biodiversity resources through management of ecologically significant invasive weed species
- maintained and improved freshwater biodiversity resource through management of aquatic pest flora and fauna
- protected biodiversity significant habitats in coastal, estuarine and marine areas
- monitor, map and assess environmental values at risk from tourism and recreation on Fraser Island
- introduction and impact of marine pests controlled and prevented.

#### Water Quality & Equitable Use Action Program

- establishment of end of catchment water quality targets
- equitable and sustainable access to water resources through achievement of optimal environmental flows
- reduced impact from point and concentrated sources of pollutants and sediments
- improved water use efficiency for all uses
- increased monitoring and remediation works for groundwater provinces
- maintained and improved riparian zone vegetation health and stability
- maintained and improved sites impacted on by acid sulphate soils
- increased support to LGA and industry to lead in progress towards sustainability.

These impacts will be achieved through the accomplishment of the outputs detailed in [Attachment 3](#) (SCHEDULE 3). **Figure 8.1** outlines the trends in the proportion of investment allocated to output categories over 3 years. **Figure 8.2** provides the total percentage of investment against each output category.