

Building Bush on Cloverbrook

CASE STUDY

BUILDING BUSH ON CLOVERBROOK



PROJECT TITLE

Building Bush on Cloverbrook

PROJECT AREA

The project area is within the locality of Dwarda which is approximately 15km south of Wandering

PROJECT LEADER

Geoff Hillman, Farm Manager for Cranston Pty Ltd at Cloverbrook

PARTNERSHIPS

Geoff Hillman, the farm Manager for Cranston Pty Ltd at the company's Cloverbrook property

PROJECT MANAGER

Terry Brooks, Sustainable Landscapes Project Manager

BENEFICIARIES

Landholder, remnant bushland, water quality, reptiles, birds, mammals, the gradual improvement in water quality will have positive downstream effects in Fourteen Mile Brook, a tributary of the Hotham River

PROJECT DURATION

May 2012 to April 2013

ABOVE: Geoff Hillman with successful revegetation at Site 1 in May 2013. (photo: Terry Brooks)

INSERT: Riparian flood fringe with severe erosion as result of large magnitude flood event in December 20 (photo: Terry Brooks taken February 2013)



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“The property will look better, it will be better for the environment and his downstream neighbours, and it will help me better manage the sheep”, said Geoff Illman, Farm manager. He also believes that “revegetation needs to be blocked up enough so that the benefits come sooner and you don’t have to keep going back to fill plants in gaps. As they grow the weaker ones (plants) die off and the strong survive which is what happens in nature.”

When Geoff heard about SWCC funding for on-farm biodiversity conservation, he saw this as a golden opportunity to rehabilitate the fringe of two creeklines on the property. He was excited about the potential benefits and this led to the rehabilitation project at Cloverbrook. The aim was to rehabilitate the riparian zones of two tributaries of fourteen Mile Brook through exclusion of stock and revegetation with native species that will ultimately enhance natural regeneration, increase native fauna habitat and reduce erosion and sediment and nutrient input to the river.

These activities would contribute to the ongoing conservation and protection of biodiversity on 22.6ha of land with project works including construction of 3.0km of fencing and the revegetation of 5.5ha with over 8,000 local native seedlings.

Preparation for the revegetation included ripping to increase root penetration and spraying with herbicides, followed up by an ongoing program to monitor and manage weeds and pest animals. Geoff completed the fencing and revegetation aspects of the project and has ordered a similar number of seedlings again for the 2013 planting season.

The project did suffer a setback when a fierce localised storm hit the property in 2012. Geoff said that he had “never seen anything like it. Water was everywhere and there was damage to fences (none

of which were part of this project), trees and earthworks.” One of the two project sites was more adversely affected than the other, but “in general, the plants benefited from having a fair bit of water lying around”. And surprisingly few seedlings close to the waterways were lost!

However, a fallen tree across the waterway was an issue, as the floodwaters flowed through and damaged a section mounded in preparation for the 2013 planting season. The floodwaters gouged out waist-deep gullies, making it difficult for machinery to access the area. Geoff plans to continue with his planting program in 2013 although some flood-affected sections may be difficult to establish.

The project only started in late winter and this also caused some issues, as machinery had difficulty accessing parts of the project sites, in spite of the fact that 2012 was a dry year. As Geoff commented, “if he had to do it all again, he would have the site preparation for planting completed before it got wet.”

The project results highlight the fact that the first year of establishment is when revegetation is most vulnerable to what nature throws at it. In this instance it was flood. Mounding on a level contour or herringbone design (rather than parallel to the waterway) could possibly have reduced the impact of floodwater erosion, and the timing for doing site preparation for



planting should have been better planned better.

In spite of all this, Geoff has ordered seedlings to build the existing revegetation up to a density of 3,000 stem/ha in 2013 and is eager to continue the waterway protection work at Cloverbrook – in fact he “wants to fence off all of the creeks”.



ABOVE: Cranston project map. Project area highlighted in pink

TOP INSERT: Degraded riparian zone at Site 1 in July 2012 (photo: Terry Brooks)

BOTTOM INSERT: Site 1 fenced, ripped and revegetated in February 2013. Note barley grass area in middle of photo not revegetated due to high level of waterlogging/salinity (photo: Terry Brooks)



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