

NSW SUSTAINING THE BASIN *Irrigated farm modernisation*

Update bulletin 18

May 2014

This bulletin provides updates on the NSW Sustaining the Basin: Irrigated Farm Modernisation (STBIFM) project. This project is funded by the Australian Government's 'Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure' Program.

The bulletin will keep interested stakeholders informed of key dates and activities for the duration of the project. It will also alert you to opportunities for training and learning more about emerging issues and technologies.

DPI encourages you to be involved and stay informed using this service. You can, of course, unsubscribe at any time.

For more detailed information on any aspects of the project please send an email to IFM.info@dpi.nsw.gov.au or visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/info/sustainingthebasin

Key dates in a nutshell

30 May 2014	Close of ECRs
29 August 2014	Close of IFWUEAs
17 October 2014	Close of Round 3

Please note: Existing eligible participants with a valid project number are required to submit an IFWUEA prior to applying for infrastructure funding in Round 3.

"There is no obligation for irrigators to hand back water by submitting an ECR, but it opens up a whole range of opportunities for them including farm water loss assessment funding and excellent training opportunities."

Michael Grabham, STBIFM Leader

Cotton Australia says 'water is the most valuable resource a cotton farmer has.'



Michael Murray, Policy Manager for Water & Queensland for Cotton Australia urges growers to look at the business opportunity STBIFM provides. Image: Cotton Australia

Michael Murray – the Cotton Australia's Policy Manager for Water and Queensland – says the cotton industry is proud of its achievements in water use efficiency.

"Cotton growers know the importance of continually improving their water management, to both their bottom line and the community," Mr Murray says.

“The vast majority of our growers have already invested heavily in new, innovative irrigation infrastructure to improve their efficiency and output.”

“Infrastructure programs like the NSW Sustaining the Basin: Irrigated Farm Modernisation program offer an opportunity for growers to fast-track development.”

“Funding opportunities like this are a worthwhile addition to the huge investment industry has made into breeding, innovative technologies and cutting edge on-farm practices.”

“While it is clear that growers have valid concerns around the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and this program is part of the plan, I urge growers with genuine irrigation efficiency works in mind to look at this program in a strictly business sense.”

“While it will not suit everyone, there is no doubt that it can provide excellent value-for-money in many circumstances.”

Industry expectations

Although Australia’s cotton industry has achieved a 40% increase in water productivity over the past decade, there are still key areas growers can focus on to improve efficiency:

- Maximising storage and distribution efficiency (on-farm storages and channels)
- Maximising application efficiency (putting water on the crop)
- Achieving uniform application (putting water on the crop)
- Monitoring water use and calculating efficiencies (while the crop is growing)
- Improved irrigation systems (where applicable) such as overhead sprinklers, relaseder surface systems and drip irrigation.

Check out the information on irrigation efficiency on the Cotton Australia website:

www.cottonaustralia.com.au

All of these focus areas are suitable for funding through the STBIFM program and have been funded in both Rounds 1 and 2 and the pilot project.

Why not check it out and call your [local project contact](#) or irrigation consultant for a chat?

Community meetings – the outcomes

A series of community briefing meetings have been well attended with 67 interested people from across the project region attending.

There has been strong interest from eligible irrigators in the eligible areas, particularly in the lower Namoi, demonstrating that irrigators are seeing the benefits of this program.

Michael Grabham, STBIFM Leader said irrigation consultants have also indicated they have clients in the NSW Border Rivers who are ready to capitalise on the funding opportunity while it is there.

“Successful irrigators funded through the pilot program to STBIFM in the NSW Border Rivers remain, based on their experience, very supportive of this infrastructure initiative.”

“The Queensland Healthy Headwaters program is also going well in the Border Rivers which is a fantastic indicator of the interest in that region,” Dr Grabham said.

“Submitting an [Eligibility Check Request](#) is obligation free. Irrigators are not locked into giving back water by submitting this request.”

“This has been a common question put to us at community meetings.”

“There is no obligation for irrigators to hand back water by submitting this check, but it opens up a whole range of opportunities for them including [farm water loss assessment funding](#) and excellent [training opportunities](#),” Dr Grabham said.

Irrigators who may be interested in the program are encouraged to at least consider the opportunities on offer and contact their [local project contact](#) to talk it through.

For those who couldn’t make the meetings, have a look at the [presentation](#) and the questions others have asked.

DPI maintains a full set of [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

For further information on any aspect of STBIFM, contact your [local project contact](#) or email IFM.info@dpi.nsw.gov.au

[Community meeting presentation](#) (pdf)

Recap on the pilot project of 2010

An [irrigation infrastructure modernisation pilot project](#) was carried out in 2010 in the Gwydir and NSW Border Rivers catchments to assess the potential of irrigation infrastructure modernisation to capture water for the environment. Two funding rounds were conducted in the pilot achieving the following results:

- 38 applications received
- 15 applications were approved for funding and 12 of these went on to complete works

- \$5.8 M contributed to the local economy including irrigator contributions of approximately \$1.2 million
- 990 ML of 'new' water for on-farm production with 1274 ML transferred to the environment
- 13 training workshops were delivered to 176 participants

Have a look at what some of the successful Border Rivers participants thought.

[Angelo Saccon, Bonshaw](#)

[Anthony Barlow, Mungindi](#)

[Sam Coulton, Boggabilla](#)

[Pieter Maine, Bonshaw](#)



Anthony Barlow of Mungindi was a successful NSW Border Rivers participant in the pilot program of 2010.

"The only thing we regret is not including another lateral move within our proposal to take advantage of the government funding to do both."



What did Gwydir irrigators also say about the pilot?

See for yourself. . .

Estens family, Moree, [case study](#), [video](#), [testimonial](#)

Bartel & Williams families, Moree, [case study](#), [video](#)

[Peter and Mark Winter](#), Moree

[Peter Birch](#), Moree

[Australian Food & Fibre](#), Moree

"The best thing about this initiative is we will achieve water savings from an idea that we have had for a while and the on-farm water assessments proved we were on the right track."



Peter Winter, 2010

Irrigators say - It's all too hard and I can't be bothered!

We hear this catch cry a lot but STBIFM participants have certainly not found that to be the case.

Take Scott Waters from Somerton for example.

Mr Waters was successful in Round 1 and then backed up in Round 2 and was successful again.

Mr Waters said personally he thought the process of applying was very easy to work through.

"It was only a matter of a few simple forms to fill out and the way the forms were set out made the mathematical side of it easy, Mr Waters said.

[Watch](#) more on Scott Waters experience in receiving funding in two rounds and with the DPI team.

[Read on . . .](#)

Key facts from irrigators

"I found DPI very good to deal with. Once our application was lodged it was virtually plain sailing and it all happened quickly and efficiently."

Successful irrigator, May 2014

Evaluation of irrigator experience for those who have already completed their projects and received the final payment indicates:

- 9 out of 10 - Their experience with DPI where 10 is excellent
- 7 out of 10 - The reporting required by DPI where 10 was very easy
- 7.4 out of 10 - Having one main DPI contact during the implementation phase where 10 is excellent.

. . . and almost 50% of them gave their local project contact 10/10.

Meet our staff

There are STBIFM staff in each region to help irrigators and consultants make the most of the STBIFM opportunity while it is available.

DPI listened, and has provided the support that irrigators and consultants said they needed to make it easier to participate in STBIFM.

For information on any aspect of participating in STBIFM, including submitting a re-bid application, please contact your DPI regional project staff member, send an email to IFM.Info@dpi.nsw.gov.au or visit the website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/info/sustainingthebasin

Interested irrigators **must** submit an [Eligibility Check Request](#) by **30 May 2014** to register their interest in participating in Round 3.

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