

# NSW SUSTAINING THE BASIN *Irrigated farm modernisation*

## Update bulletin 17

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](mailto:IFM.info@dpi.nsw.gov.au) or visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/info/sustainingthebasin](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/info/sustainingthebasin)

### What is on offer in Round 3

STBIFM is offering irrigators operating in the NSW Border Rivers and Lower Namoi areas with regulated general security entitlement:

- Up to 80% to a maximum of \$2000 to undertake an IFWUEA. This is now a pre-requisite to applying for infrastructure funding.
- Up to 80% of the total costs of modernising on-farm irrigation infrastructure in return for at least 50% (up to a maximum of 100%) of the projected water savings to be returned to the environment.
- Fully subsidised training and capacity building opportunities.

Submit an [Eligibility Check Request](#) by 30 May 2014 to participate while the funding is available.

### Focus point

#### Submitting an ECR:

- **does *not* mean irrigators need to proceed to returning entitlement**
- **does mean that irrigators can undertake a funded IFWUEA without any obligation to proceed to applying for infrastructure funding**
- **does mean irrigators and their staff can access fully funded training.**

### Could you be missing out?

Many of the successful irrigators from funding rounds 1 and 2 are very happy they jumped in while the STBIFM funding was on offer in their region.

Future funding rounds will depend on the availability of funds. There is no guarantee that funds will remain after Round 3 and this will depend on the number of eligible projects funded in this round of the program. It may also be that the targeted approach of Round 3 continues, and that a catchment by catchment approach is undertaken.

Decisions regarding future location of funding rounds will be undertaken once the uptake in Round 3 is examined.



Dr Tracey MacDonald, Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Manager Water Research and Development, said the successful projects from the first two funding rounds are well underway and those irrigators have reported a large number of positive impacts on their irrigation enterprises.

“These irrigators are glad they made the most of the funding opportunity while it was there.”

“Round 3 focuses on the NSW Border Rivers and Lower Namoi catchments to ensure that these areas, where engagement has been lower, can also tap into some of the benefits of the program that other irrigators have experienced.”

“The current focus on these regions aligns with the water recovery objectives of the Murray Darling Basin Plan,” Dr MacDonald said.

DPI encourages all irrigators to at least consider the opportunities that this program offers and find out more while funding is still available.

Talk to your [local project contact](#).

## So what are the Queenslanders doing?

Irrigators in the Queensland Border Rivers region are also reaping the benefits of participating in infrastructure modernisation programs.

In April 2014, Healthy Headwaters (the sister project to STBIFM), reported that it had invested \$15.8M into the Queensland Border Rivers region. This program has returned 5.4GL to the environment and 5.2 GL has been retained on-farm to boost production.

In comparison, the investment in infrastructure in the NSW Border Rivers region through STBIFM has resulted in two projects with 151ML returned to the environment and 48ML retained on farm for extra production.

Sarah Rossiter, Healthy Headwaters Project Officer based in St George indicated at a recent meeting in Goondiwindi that she felt momentum was building with the Border Rivers irrigating community.

“Some of the fence sitters are now deciding to opt into the program after watching how others, who have been more willing to engage, have fared with the process,” Ms Rossiter said.

[More information](#) on the work done by the Healthy Headwaters team.

## But the banks don't like it – do they?

*“Don't think of participating in the STBIFM as giving up water. It's about increasing the bottom line through efficiencies.”*

**Jim Wall, Wee Waa 2014**

Janelle Montgomery, DPI Irrigation Officer based in Moree believes that there has been some reluctance to irrigators participating in infrastructure programs because of the view of banks and financial institutions.

“Previously, my impression was that banks thought the loss of entitlement on their asset sheet was not good in terms of the irrigator's financial position”.

“However, in recent conversations I have had with bankers and consultants it seems that bankers are now viewing the infrastructure programs in a far more positive way.”

“It appears they now have a better understanding of the projects and can see that the water being given up was water that their clients were paying for but not using because it was actually a water loss and was unavailable for production.”

“I believe that some bankers can now see that, in effect, infrastructure programs that address on-farm irrigation water losses are [creating 'new' water](#) for the irrigator to use to increase productivity and their bottom line,” Ms Montgomery said.



*Janelle Montgomery, DPI Project Officer Irrigation Benchmarking in Moree says banks are changing their opinion on infrastructure projects. Image: DPI*

## What is this idea of 'new' water?

STBIFM helps maintain the irrigation productivity of the region by enabling up to half the identified irrigation water savings resulting from the infrastructure modernisation to be invested back on-farm.

The benefit of this is that the individual can use these savings to improve their enterprise which also aids in supporting the local economy of regional communities.

On average in the STBIFM program so far, 33 percent of total projected savings have been kept by irrigators to provide water for future crop production.

So far, nearly 4.7 GL of water savings are earmarked in program contracts to be put back into production in regional communities.

Without the infrastructure upgrades this water would have been attributed to system losses.

[Want to know more about creating 'new' water?](#)

## See for yourself . . .

Tony Quigley and his family have been developing their family farms 'The Wilgas' and 'Caringa' near Nevertire in NSW since 1970 to improve irrigation water use efficiency by focussing on reducing irrigation losses and increasing yields.

Tony Quigley said it is easy to understand where their emphasis is and why.

"This project allows us to focus on getting an improved return on investment from our irrigated cropping enterprises rather than spending more time to get less increase in return on our dryland grazing or dryland cropping enterprises.

*"Yield, yield and more yield from better irrigation is what will generate a profit," Mr Quigley said.*

[Read](#) more about the Quigleys project and why they chose to participate in STBIFM.



*Tony and Tom Quigley with didn't hesitate in taking up the opportunity offered by STBIFM to build on what they had already achieved and access the funding while it was available to progress their business plan. Image: S. Quigley*

## And another in the Namoi Valley . . .

Jim Wall's family came to 'Athelstone' near Wee Waa in 1878.

Mr Wall is the fifth generation and says that his family are here for the long term.

The Walls are 'generational' farmers that are focussed on increasing their business returns rather than just the land value.

Jim Wall said that the STBIFM funding provided a valuable opportunity for their irrigation enterprise.

"We have identified significant savings with the change but the real value for us is the improvement in our water security.

"This is a way of achieving long term goals in a shorter time frame," Mr Wall said.

[Read](#) and [watch](#) more on Jim Walls project and his experience with STBIFM.



*Jim Wall is a 'generational' farmer focussed on increasing his business returns rather than just the land value. Image: S. Bray*

## How can I participate in STBIFM?

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

For more information all aspects 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](mailto:IFM.Info@dpi.nsw.gov.au) or visit the website at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/info/sustainingthebasin](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/info/sustainingthebasin)

## Key dates for Round 3

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

## What if I'm already participating?

Irrigators who already have a valid project number should have received notification of their eligibility for Round 3.

If you haven't, please notify [DPI](#) so it can be checked and confirmed.

Existing participants do **not** need to submit a new ECR but they may be required to provide extra information reflecting the changes made to the ECR process. DPI will notify participants of this shortly.

Irrigated Farm Water Use Efficiency Assessments (IFWUEA) are now a **pre-requisite** prior to applying for infrastructure funding.

All current participants who are eligible for Round 3 will be required to submit an IFWUEA for assessment **prior** to submitting an application for infrastructure funding.

The final date for IFWUEAs to be submitted to DPI is **29 August 2014**.

This can be a complete IFWUEA, or component of an IFWUEA previously funded through STBIFM.

If an irrigator has **not** previously completed an IFWUEA, they **must** engage a suitably industry certified or accredited irrigation consultant to complete or, at least, certify the statement of losses that must be included in an IFWUEA for Round 3.

Current eligible participating irrigators will be sent a package of information regarding IFWUEAs shortly.

All eligible irrigators are encouraged to discuss the process of developing and submitting an IFWUEA with their [local project contact](#).

## Your local project contacts

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