

NSW SUSTAINING THE BASIN *Irrigated farm modernisation*

Update bulletin 19

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

Last Chance

Last opportunity to submit an Eligibility Check Request for Round 3 is 30 May 2014

Real old-fashion service

This is what we try to offer with STBIFM.

Yes, it is the information age with the 'interweb' and tweets but nothing beats the one-on-one service of the old days where there was always time to chat.

STBIFM Leader, Michael Grabham recently spent time in the Goondiwindi district with Janelle Montgomery doing the rounds making sure everyone is aware of the deadline to register an interest in participating in STBIFM.

It wasn't all just sunshine and cups of tea though. The team spent time with over 20

irrigators and consultants in the two days they were in the Goondiwindi district.

Dr Grabham says Border Rivers irrigators are seeing the opportunities, not only to increase the water available on-farm, but also to improve on-farm irrigation infrastructure and business outcomes.

"It's not for everyone but we are encouraging all irrigators to at least consider the opportunities that this project provides while the funding is available."



Michael Grabham, STBIFM Leader and Janelle Montgomery, DPI Project Officer Moree in Goondiwindi recently.

Janelle Montgomery, DPI Project Officer in Moree is a familiar figure in the Border Rivers district and says it's been a difficult season for Border Rivers irrigators because of the impact on crop quality from the end of season rain.

"It's not an easy time for irrigators to look at large infrastructure projects."

"However, when you see the returns other irrigators have had from returning some water, in terms of their productivity and water security, this opportunity may be too good to miss!" Ms Montgomery said.

Why would I swap an appreciating asset for a depreciating one?

This has been a question put to DPI a number of times over the past few years. And it's a good one!

We can tell you the theoretical reasons behind why it is a good thing for irrigators but don't take it from us.

Sam Coulton of Goondiwindi was a successful tenderer in the NSW Sustaining the Basin: Border Rivers - Gwydir pilot project which finished in 2011.

Mr Coulton has always been a keen supporter of government initiatives to recover water through infrastructure modernisation.

When asked why he was prepared to give up an appreciating asset for a depreciating asset Mr Coulton says he can answer this easily.

"For one, I believe I am achieving water savings of around 25 to 30 percent with the new lateral move system over the previous furrow irrigation system."

"The other big advantage is the reduction of maintenance on channels, head ditches and fields, and the labour needed to do that."

"I also believe the depreciation on the lateral move system is easily accounted for in the ongoing cost of putting in head ditches and rotabucks to run your furrows."

"Adding to this, the labour costs of a syphon system and the cost of installing and maintaining tail drains and return drains is significant to an irrigation enterprise," Mr Coulton said.

Some food for thought!

[Read what else Mr Coulton has to say.](#)



Sam Coulton of Goondiwindi believes the numbers add up to give up water. Image: S. Bray

Not only about changing irrigation systems

For a number of participants in STBIFM the focus was not on changing or improving irrigation systems alone.

For some, the funding has supported them to also change enterprises.

Ed Hickson, pictured below, has established 80 hectares of irrigated pecan nuts near Bonshaw in northern NSW.

Mr Hickson says the water use of cotton and pecans is similar but the dollar returns for pecans is almost double that of cotton.

"This type of development is so long term and it's difficult for private business to take on all those risks."

"This type of financial assistance helps make you dip your toe in the water and that has got to be great for the whole water industry and irrigators," Mr Hickson said.

[Watch more on Mr Hickson's drip irrigated project funded in Round 2](#)



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The public benefits of this approach to water recovery

There are always flow-on effects from projects like STBIFM to regional communities that rely on agriculture to drive their economy.

Sometimes though, in the cut and thrust of life, it is difficult to see them all around us.

In 2008, a study* undertaken for the Cotton Industry indicated that every additional million dollars generated by the cotton industry had a multiplier effect of 5.3 jobs into the broader community.

So it's reasonable to assume that the improved production from creating 'new' water from the recovered on-farm losses must deliver significant benefits to our local irrigating communities in terms of jobs and economic growth.

Mark Schmitt, director and sales manager with Pivot Irrigation and Pumps in Gunnedah, has been in the irrigation business for 17 years.

For Mr Schmitt, government programs like STBIFM provide a solid base for his business during the lifetime of the program.

[Watch](#) more about what Mr Schmitt thinks about the STBIFM program.

*1 Powell, R. & Chalmers, L. (2008) [The Socio-economic Impact of the Australian Cotton Industry on Regional Communities in NSW and Queensland](#) Project No 3.01.02 Cotton Catchment Communities CRC Narrabri

Investing in your better land has better outcomes



Ivan Truscott, Business Manager at Darling Irrigation thinks STBIFM can only be positive for all sectors of the irrigation industry. Image: S. Bray

Ivan Truscott, Business Manager at Darling Irrigation based in Narromine said direct buy back of water can impact on people in every industry but the STBIFM infrastructure project provides positive benefits.

"This project has allowed irrigators to invest in improving their irrigation systems on their better ground instead of only investing in the areas that are un-irrigable."

"The pay offs on this approach are far greater."

"This project can only be positive for all sectors of the irrigation industry." Mr Truscott said.

[Watch](#) or [read](#) more about what Mr Truscott thinks of the STBIFM project.

Your local contacts

For information on any aspect of participating in STBIFM, 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

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