

2014 water quality IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Gregory River Management Area Progress Report

Summary of progress

The Gregory River flows from Dryander National Park to the Declared Fish Habitat and Dugong Protection Area of Edgecumbe Bay. The catchment supports a diverse suite of land uses with 70% under cane, grazing and horticulture while 30% remains uncleared. Recent peri-urban development has replaced some production land.

In 2007, the water quality and ecological health of the Gregory River catchment area was rated as moderate relative to other catchment areas in the Mackay Whitsunday region. Between 2007 and 2013, there has been considerable investment to improve agricultural and ecosystem management. As a result, the water quality and ecosystem health of the Gregory River catchment area has improved. The progress to date provides an excellent foundation for continued effort focusing on priority actions that ensure the Gregory River provides water quality that meets the needs of the local communities.



“Reef Rescue has been hugely beneficial to growers by speeding up planned management practice adoption.”

Mark Blair, Gregory River cane farmer

Agriculture implementation highlights

- Cane farmers have improved management of soil, nutrients and herbicides on more than 80% of the intensive cropping land in the catchment with Reef Rescue support
- A sediment detention basin has been constructed on a cane property to improve the quality of water leaving the farm

Ecosystem implementation highlights

- Flow management planning has been improved with bathymetric waterhole mapping for a better understanding of requirements to maintain critical fish habitat
- Riparian management has been improved along more than 12 km by graziers who have installed riparian fencing and off-stream watering points with Reef Rescue support
- Three critical barriers to fish migration removed with the construction a rock ramp fishway, culvert and baffles and pool, and weir fishway with cross-vane structures
- Ongoing feral pig control with aerial baiting, shooting and trapping programs

Future priorities

Grazing and cane management practices that reduce particulate phosphorous loads are the highest priority in the Gregory River catchment. Management practices that reduce other nutrients and residual herbicides are a moderate priority.

System repair actions for flow, instream habitat, riparian vegetation and weed control are the highest priority. A significant increase in investment towards active management and restoration of instream habitat and riparian vegetation is required to enable fish communities to gain the maximum benefits from the improved water quality.



Construction of a rock ramp fishway in the upper reaches of the Gregory River removed a critical barrier to fish migration