

Water quality projects reduce fertilisers and pesticides from polluting the reef

MACKAY // MONDAY 21st September 2020

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation has announced nine projects that will stop at least 26 tonnes of fertiliser and 215 kilograms of pesticides at its source every year in the Mackay Whitsunday area.

Reef Catchments is overseeing the delivering of the \$22.7 million Mackay Whitsunday regional water quality improvement program over the next four years.

The program will greatly reduce the volume of pollutants from the Plane Creek and Pioneer catchment entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon by providing extension advice to cane farmers which leads them to adopt improved land management practices. The projects provide varied approaches to reduce pesticide and fertiliser loads. They combine known methods, such as precision agriculture, with trialling novel techniques which could facilitate further pollutant load reductions in the future.

Reef Catchments CEO Katrina Dent said: “Cane growers are always interested in reducing losses of both fertiliser and pesticides from their farm and into the environment through practice change, however there are often many hurdles to overcome before making a change. The program facilitates the practice change through extension support which also ensures that the change, and subsequent improvements in water quality, are long term”

Great Barrier Reef Foundation Managing Director Anna Marsden said poorer water quality caused by land-based runoff is a significant threat to the health of Australia’s irreplaceable ecosystem, the Great Barrier Reef.

“By working with farmers and scientists we’re not only improving conditions for the Reef’s precious corals, we’re also saving endangered turtles and dugongs that feed on the region’s seagrass beds that need clean water to thrive,” Ms Marsden said.

“We need less fertiliser and pesticides running into the Reef’s waters as they cause algal blooms which prevent coral and seagrass from receiving the natural light they need to survive, are toxic to marine life and contribute to the increase of crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks.

“These projects are an important part of our ambitious plan to prevent 500 tonnes of dissolved inorganic nitrogen from polluting the Great Barrier Reef each year by 2030.”

The Mackay Whitsunday regional water quality improvement program is funded by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation’s partnership with the Australian Government’s Reef Trust.

ENDS

MEDIA RELEASE

REEF
CATCHMENTS



Media contacts:

Reef Catchments: Jonathan Reichard, 0438 726 226 | jonathan.reichard@reefcatchments.com

GBRF: Sarah Henderson, 0429 890 087 | shenderson@barrierreef.org