



Drawing a line in the sand

Gascoyne pastoralists have developed a project which is working towards securing the triple bottom line for a sustainable industry.

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Forty-nine stations, encompassing three Land Conservation District Committees (LCDC) and more than 73,000 square kilometres of rangeland are currently involved in a property and catchment planning project to improve rangeland condition and productive potential in the Gascoyne region of WA.

The Gascoyne Catchments Project was developed by the Lyndon, Upper Gascoyne and Gascoyne-Wooramel LCDCs in 2006 and received funding in late 2007 through the Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group (Rangelands WA). The vision of the Gascoyne Catchments Project is "to develop an ecologically sustainable, profitable and respected pastoral industry that supports an adaptive and vibrant community". In May, the steering committee sought the help of a facilitator to develop short and long-term objectives for the project, allowing the project to monitor its own success and failures.

Support and resources for the project are being delivered by the Ecologically Sustainable Rangelands Management (ESRM) program, a Department of Agriculture and Food project. ESRM works with pastoralists to develop property

action plans, which identify the factors that drive landscape function, biodiversity and livestock productivity.

ESRM program manager Luke Bayley said that to date the project has seen 11 properties visited to develop property action plans. "These plans are an important place to start identifying new approaches to landscape rehabilitation and pastoral production systems. They are based on the knowledge and experience of the land manager and as such each one is different. The plans always remain the private property of the Station," Mr Bayley said.

The project also incorporates a vital model required for the pastoral industry in the form of a self-assessment and monitoring tool. A full-time consultant has been employed by the project to develop this tool and to collect, reassess and install monitoring sites on properties in the LCDCs.

As a follow up from the project, logic testimonials, stories and observations were collected from pastoral families that demonstrated the changes in condition of the pastoral lands. The testimonials helped to provide further evidence of changes in the rangeland and the condition of pastures from the perspective of the land managers themselves.

Following on from the planning and monitoring activities, a range of targeted and innovative financial incentives will be delivered throughout 2009 to assist in the adoption of sustainable pastoral practices in the Gascoyne region.

John Percy, Chair of the Lyndon LCDC, believes the Gascoyne Catchments Project has the potential to boost the profile and productivity of the pastoral industry in the Gascoyne region. "This project, along with the ESRM program aims to not only work towards improved rangeland conditions and increases in production levels but importantly to support the development of industry and regional leadership." ■

Top: Lyndon's Land Conservation District Committee holds a field day to discuss the region's future.