

On the ground: Fencing wetlands near Taroom

In 2002, with support from Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA), Paul and Marina Wright finished fencing off a natural lake and surrounding wetlands on their 4000ha cattle property, "Nankeen". Four years later they are reaping the rewards, as ground cover in all of their paddocks has improved and natural levees free from disturbance by cattle hold more water in the lake.

Nankeen runs about 500 breeders, mostly Simbrah (Simmental x Brahman). Paul bought the property in May 1981 and named it "Nankeen" after the nankeen kestrel and the nankeen night heron. 'Nankeen is Chinese for a brown, tawny, khaki colour', says Paul.

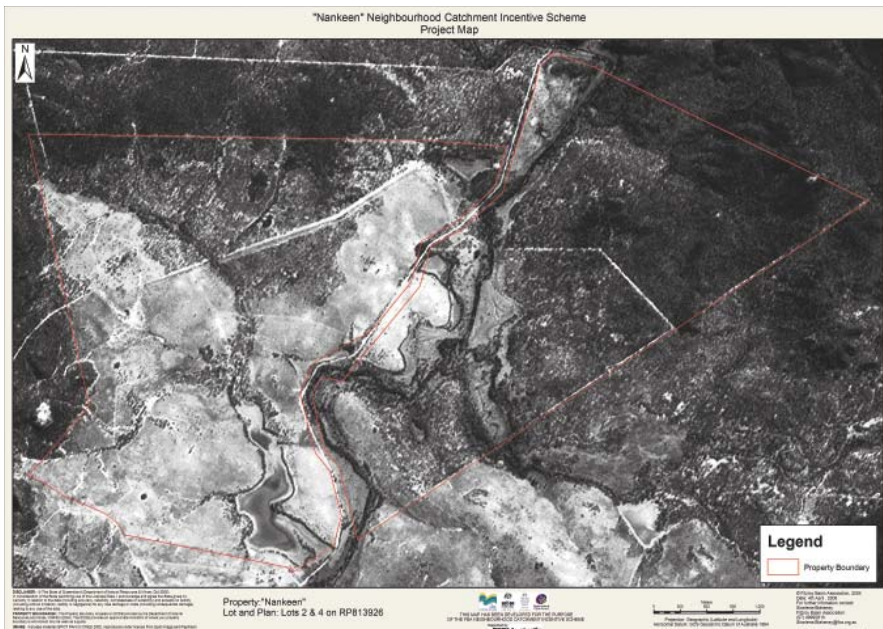
Improving ground cover by spelling paddocks

Ten kilometres of fencing, 4.5km of poly pipe, some troughs, tanks and a pump allow the Wrights to spell the paddock several times a year.

Paul understands the value of the wetland areas on the property, 'It's absolutely critical to keep a good body of grass in the hollows, where the creek backs up, to stabilise the soil and prevent erosion. The stability of the natural levees determines how much water stays in your wetland. When it rains, and the creek floods, we get the cattle out if any are in there at the time. We spell this area for about two months at a time, twice a year.'

By excluding stock and setting up troughs outside the lake area, the Wrights are reducing erosion and improving water quality and bank stability. Increased ground cover means less soil loss during rainfall, and a natural water filter for the lake.

'I couldn't recommend it (fencing) highly enough for people to do. People can rotate and spell sensitive areas. People are afraid they have to "lock up" areas. We have improved ground cover for all of our paddocks.' (Paul Wright)



Paul Wright examines the condition of the currently stock-free lake and wetland on his property 'Nankeen'



Watering with off-stream troughs prevents cattle damage to sensitive wetland areas on Nankeen.

A quick finish to a long project

A member of the Taroom Landcare group from its inception, Paul quickly recognised the need to manage the wetland. He started a fencing project in 1991, but progress was slow. Ten years later, most of the fence was up, but no work had been done on watering points.

An FBA field officer encouraged Paul to complete the project with FBA support, and came out to survey the area for poly line. The Wrights matched FBA funding dollar for dollar.

The FBA-supported work focused on watering points, and took about six months to complete. **'We did in one year what would have taken us ten years otherwise.'**

A past and future with Landcare

Paul is no stranger to sustainable land management. He was on the steering committee that started Taroom Shire Landcare group, the first Landcare committee to be a shire committee, where ratepayers are all automatically members. Says Paul, 'It's been terrifically effective and successful'.

About 25 years ago, Paul helped start a branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society in Taroom, and is still a member. He describes the aim of the group as 'to work out a sensible balance between wildlife preservation and sustainable agriculture'. It is no surprise, then, that he chose to look after a lake on his property that is a refuge for over 70 bird species, numerous marsupials and large stands of remnant timber.

Having been involved from the start, Paul thinks incentive-based approaches are working and have a greater chance of getting producers to the table than legislative approaches. He has some concerns about the future of groups like FBA, and wants consistency in Government approaches to sustainable land management.

Recognising the value in working on sustainability at a larger scale, Paul also encouraged his neighbour to apply for FBA assistance to fence wetlands on his property "Jamberoo", a project that was completed in 2004.

FBA and groups like DCCA are working together for a sustainable Central Queensland

Fitzroy Basin Association provides financial and technical support to sub-regional groups like Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association (DCCA) to initiate, support and fund projects across our region.

If you'd like to know more about this project or others in the Fitzroy Basin region, visit our web site, www.fba.org.au, or contact our office (details below).



Photo by Mittsy Volles, FBA

Paul has been very satisfied with his FBA/DCCA-supported projects, 'I couldn't recommend it highly enough for people to do.'

Further information

Fitzroy Basin Association
Level 4, 34 East Street
PO Box 139
Rockhampton QLD 4700
Phone (07) 4999 2800
Fax (07) 4921 2860

Visit us online at www.fba.org.au

Printed on recycled paper.



Fitzroy Basin Association is funded by Australian and Queensland Government programmes, including the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ) and the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT2)