

**Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association**  
**CEO'S MONTHLY REPORT – FOR MARCH 2007**

**Natural Resource Management Unit**

Key issues for the TFGA NRM Unit for March included:

***Water***

**Water Management Act Amendments** – A Dam Works Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill has passed the lower house of the State Parliament. The Bill primarily relates to streamlining the assessment committee for dam construction process. The TFGA supports the intention of the Bill. However we have concerns regarding new measures being introduced to place conditions on water allocations relating to land management plus how new emergency water supply powers provisions will apply. Accordingly the TFGA is very actively engaged with both major parties and the Legislative Council members to seek clarification and where required, amendments to measures in the Bill.

**National Farmers Federation – Water Industry Group** - The NFF in response to the new \$10B National Water Security Plan has established a Water Industry Group. The Group includes members and non-NFF members to be able to provide a co-ordinated view from industry on the NWSP and is in addition to the NFF's member-based Water Taskforce. Peter France, Chair of the TFGA's water standing committee is our representative on both NFF groups.

***Native Vegetation***

**TFGA Native Vegetation Negotiating Group** – the negotiating group remains in ongoing discussions with the Forest Practices Authority. This is to progress the package negotiated by TFGA prior to Christmas regarding the threatened native vegetation communities legislation, proposed forest practices regulations amendments and related implementation issues.

**TFGA Non Forest Project:** Activities of Leigh Walters and Mary Whitaker, the TFGA's two native vegetation field officers, during February have focused on:

- Follow-up visits - 4. In total, TFGA Officers are currently in ongoing discussion with 10 landholders regarding possible vegetation management agreements of various types. With the overall DPIW Non-forest Project to end in 2007 (as funding ceases) Leigh and Mary's focus continues to be on bringing current negotiations to a logical conclusion.
- Progressing development of Stewardship Grazing Agreement approaches and proformas for trial.
- Attended Bothwell Spin-in
- Taking PAPL inquiries in absence of PAPL Program Officers.
- Numerous inquiries regarding native vegetation issues in general and support to members with existing covenants or agreements.
- Ongoing liaison with landholders, key stakeholders and groups.

***Game Management***

**Native Hens:** Minister Llewellyn has replied to the TFGA Game Management Standing Committee letter regarding our concerns with the proposal to regulate the native hen as protected wildlife. The Minister considers that there is now a strong case to list this species as protected wildlife. The TFGA Game Management Committee will discuss the issue further at their upcoming meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007.

## **Weeds**

**Weeds CRC:** the Weeds CRC re-bid for funding to continue for a further three years was unsuccessful. The TFGA has written to Peter McGauran, Minister for Agriculture and Eric Abetz, Minister for Fisheries, Forestry & Conservation regarding the retention of an Australian Centre for Weed Research, especially when farmers rate weeds as their most important natural resource management issue.

**TFGA Priority Weed List by NRM Regions:** The TFGA Weeds Standing Committee has collated a priority weed list to correspond with the Tasmanian NRM Regions. The list can be viewed at the TFGA web site – [www.tfga.com.au](http://www.tfga.com.au).

## **Property Management Systems**

**FarmSAT - Environmental Practices Self Assessment for Tasmanian Agriculture:** The TFGA is the proponent for this 2-year project funded through the Australian Government Pathways to Industry Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Program. Activities for March noted by Jane Lovell (Tas Quality Assured) the Project Manager include:

### **Facilitators**

Celia Leverton has joined the FarmSAT team. Celia is based in Franklin and will cover the south of the state. Initial training of Celia has been undertaken. Sharni Radford has resigned as a FarmSAT facilitator to work full time for TAFE.

### **Extension of current FarmSAT project**

TFGA is in the process of seeking a 3-month extension to the current FarmSAT project, to allow for effective use of unspent funds arising from an initial delay in the project's commencement.

### **FarmSAT roll out**

11 producers met with this month, making total to date 187.

### **Networking / Linkages**

Liaison with;

- RDS regarding PMP in the NRM South Region. It appears there may be a relaxing of the eligible areas and this could bring in the East Coast Producer Group
- Mark Smith regarding DairySAT. FarmSAT facilitators are following up with 5 new dairy farmers.
- ARM regarding PMP in the Cradle Coast NRM Region. Visits to Pyengana have commenced.
- Calls to viticulturalists have been finalised

**FarmRIGHT:** The TFGA's FarmRIGHT project is examining policy, structural and resourcing issues to develop a State-wide framework for Property Management Systems (PMS). Activities noted by Christine Kershaw, NRM Policy Officer (Property Planning) include:

- With project funding ending by early May the focus is on finalizing the project outputs of:
  - A PMS Framework for Tasmania
  - A Draft Implementation Plan
  - Draft Standards and Guide for PMS
  - Final Draft Memorandum of Understanding between the State Government, TFGA and 3 NRM Regions

- A joint funding proposal to enable further development and implementation of the PMS Framework

### **Other NRM Issues**

**TFGA Environment Policy Council** – key outcomes arising from the Council's March meeting were: recommending to the TFGA Board a package of policy positions on Plantations on Farmland and also Environmental Stewardship Programs; a position on the Fox Free Taskforce; accepting recommendations from the TFGA Climate Change Taskforce; support to help young members develop skills and knowledge of NRM issues; presentations from Drew Wagner (NFF liaison officer for Dept Environment & Water) and Ted Lefroy (UTas Landscape Logic research Program)

**Communication Strategy for Tasmanian Farmers on Environmental Legislation:** The TFGA has received funding from the Natural Heritage Trust for a 12-month project focusing on improved communication strategies to Tasmanian farmers on environmental legislation. Recent activities of note included:

- An environment survey has been posted out to all TFGA members to gather important information that will assist with the development of the 'Environmental Law Guide for Tasmanian farmers'.
- Commitment from State Government Departments to participate in a reference group for to assist development of the Guide.

**Proposed State Rail Legislation:** The TFGA are continuing to liaise with the State Government regarding the state rail legislation. Key issues include: boundary fences, vegetation and weed control, private rail crossings, drainage, rail corridor protection, and private bridges. A draft bill will go before parliament during the June sitting.

**DPIW Private Land Conservation Program** – The Policy Manager attended a meeting of the PLCP steering committee involving DPIW, Federal Dept Environment and Water, Tasmanian Land Conservancy, 3 Tasmanian NRM Regions and TFGA. The overall Program co-ordinates the various incentives-programs aimed at conserving natural values on private land such as the Non-Forest Vegetation and Protected Areas on Private Land Programs. A key focus is on developing new environmental stewardship approaches.

**Ashley Bastock**  
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**15 April 2007**