

## Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association

### NRM CEO MONTHLY REPORT – APRIL 2007

#### Natural Resource Management Unit

Key issues for the TFGA NRM Unit for April included:

#### **Water**

**Water Management Act Amendments** – A Dam Works Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill has passed the State Parliament. The Bill primarily relates to streamlining the assessment committee for dam construction process. The TFGA supported the intention of the Bill, however very actively engaged with both major parties and the Legislative Council members to seek clarification and where required, amendments to measures in the Bill.

**TFGA Water Standing Committee** – A meeting of the committee was held on 27 April. Key discussion points included:

- DPIW Guest Speakers - Dr Alan Harradine, General Manager Water Division, David Nicholls, Water Policy Manager, and Ray Hart, Project Manager Water Development,
  - Status of the independent review of the adequacy of the water licensing system.
  - Status of the Catchment Modeling Project for the Ringarooma Catchment, looking at the issue of plantation water interception.
  - Status of SMART Farming Water Initiative Programs – On-farm Water Development Plans, Irrigation Partnership Program;
  - Status of investigations into major water projects under the State Water Development Plan (Phase 2) -
- Dam Works Amendments Legislation
- National Water Security Plan
- Priorities for Water Infrastructure - the Committee reaffirmed the potential suite of projects that the TFGA should advocate funding for during the Federal election campaign. Peter France and staff will now work with the TFGA Board on the water infrastructure issues to be included in the TFGA's Political Strategy for 2007.
- The Committee noted recent TFGA submissions in response to Draft State Climate Change Strategy, first biennial assessment of the National Water Initiative, and to the Tasmanian Sewerage and Water Reform Ministerial Taskforce. The key recommendation arising from the TFGA's submissions noted by the committee was the need for a new far-sighted Water Resource Management Strategy for Tasmania that integrates across rural and urban water issues.

#### **Native Vegetation**

**Threatened Native Vegetation Legislation:** On 30 April 2007 the Tasmanian Government proclaimed new regulations relating to the use of native vegetation areas. This brings to an end nearly four years of uncertainty for landowners. From the outset the TFGA has sought to engage closely with Government throughout this time to ensure that these new regulations were as fair, practical and sensible as possible for our members. The TFGA has now written to all members providing further information on the legislation. Further information, for example on the vegetation communities involved, is available from the TFGA's native vegetation field officers. The TFGA will continue to liaise with Government as the new legislation is implemented to identify and address any concerns arising.

**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 - 5. 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 – progress being made with both the potential landholders and DPIW.
- Taking PAPL inquiries in absence of PAPL Program Officers and also taking Forest Conservation Fund inquiries (referring to FCF contacts).
- Provided technical input into Threatened Native Vegetation Communities Information Sheets for use by landholders (forming part of tools to support new legislation)
- 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***

**Fox Eradication Program:** Alan Johnstone the Fox Eradication Program Project Manager state that the 1080 baiting has finished in the Richmond area and will be starting around Rushy Lagoon area in May 2007.

**1080 Code of Practice:** TFGA Game Committee has been actively pursuing the State Government regarding adding additional wording under the current 1080 Code of Practice for Exceptional Circumstances for the repeat use of 1080 poison within a three year period. The TFGA are waiting for official confirmation from the government on this matter.

**King Island 1080 Alternatives Project Proposal:** A meeting between TFGA, DPIW, NRM King Island and Tony Gyass (Wallaby Processor) was held on 29 March 2007, in Launceston, relating to investigation of commercial wallaby harvesting on King Island as a means to addressing the game problem there. The purpose of the meeting was to consider a program concept to investigate the feasibility of managing the King Island browsing damage problem through commercial wallaby harvesting.

**Training of Junior Shooters:** An inquiry into the training requirements of junior shooters has been requested by TFGA has been issued by the Minister for Police and Emergency Management to the Tasmanian Parliamentary Committee on Community Development. The purpose of the inquiry is to report upon the adequacy of the current provisions of the Firearms Act to allow junior shooters to be given appropriate training in the field.

### ***Weeds***

**Weeds CRC:** TFGA has received a reply from Hon Eric Abetz regarding the 'Retention of an Australian Centre for Weed Research'. The Minister is pursuing options for weeds researching the area of invasive weeds while advocating Government's continued funding for relevant research and development into the management of weeds more generally.

**Weeds Standing Committee:** The committee has developed a brochure on "Highlighting the issue of weeds in Tasmania", which will be available at Agfest. This is the start to drawing the public's awareness to the serious problem of weeds in Tasmania and the affects to the environment and agriculture lands.

**National Gorse Taskforce** – the Policy Manager attended a meeting of the Taskforce. The key outcome is that the Taskforce will focus on eradicating outlying populations of gorse from national eradication zones.

### ***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:

- Continued roll-out of the tool to producers;
- Liaison with DAFF and Hassal's to finalise details of 3 month extension to the project.
- Prepared first draft of final project report that is due before 30 June.

- Arrangements for Project Steering Committee meeting on 7 May.

**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:

- A planning meeting was held in Campbell town recently between major project stakeholders to determine the future of the PMS Framework. Stakeholders agreed to support the next stage of implementation of the PMS Framework and to pursue further funding.
- The initial FarmRIGHT planning project is due to end in mid May 2007. A 2-3 month funding gap can be expected between the end of FarmRIGHT and the commencement of the next implementation stage project, when new staff will be appointed.
- The third and final PMS Framework Think Tank meeting was held in Campbell Town.
- An interim set of standards and Guidebook to support the PMS Framework have been developed and circulated for comment. A final draft copy will be completed by mid May.
- An implementation plan has been developed for the next stage of the PMS Framework development. This plan will be reviewed and further developed as part of the next stage of PMS Framework implementation.
- A draft final report is due for completion in mid May. This will signify the completion of the FarmRIGHT project.
- Ian Dickenson and Ashley Bastock attended a meeting of the Cradle Coast NRM Group to discuss the further development and implementation of the Statewide PMS Framework

**FarmSAT Funding** – the TFGA has applied for a new project to the Pathways to Industry EMS Program to fund the continued and expanded roll-out of FarmSAT for a further 12-months. If successful the new project would aim to increase the involvement of NRM Regions and industry organisations/companies in the EMS approach.

### **Other Issues**

**Drought** – TFGA's priority is currently to work towards a formal drought declaration for key areas of the State, leading to an application for Exceptional Circumstances. Following ongoing discussions with the Government we anticipate an announcement in May.

**Meeting Hon Sussan Ley** – the President and Policy Manager met with the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture to discuss a range of issues including environmental management systems funding, rural counselling and federal election issues for TFGA.

**Communication Strategy for Tasmanian Farmers on Environmental Legislation:** 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'. The TFGA will use the survey answers to build a Guide that assists members with their environmental law issues.

**Forest Policy** – Forestry is emerging as an issue for the upcoming Federal Election. In recent weeks the TFGA has responded in the media regarding the platforms of Labor and Liberal Parties, focusing on the impacts of "forestry" policies on land clearing and viability of private wood production. This will remain a key issue that the TFGA watches as part of its overall Political Strategy for 2007

**Amendments to the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act:** The TFGA has recently reviewed a number of proposed reviews of EMPCA, including contaminated sites, controlled waste and now a package of mostly administrative amendments.

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**8 May 2007**