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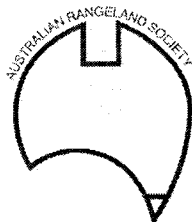
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The Australian Rangeland Society

REGIONAL LANDCARE IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

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The Centralian Land Management Association (CLMA) is a pastoral landcare group formed by pastoralists in 1988. Its area covers 400,000 sq km of pastoral leases between Tennant Creek in the north and Oodnadatta in the south. Our goal is to encourage and foster management practices aimed at economically and ecologically sustainable productivity. We believe that caring for the land is an active process. We have found that the most successful way to stimulate exchange of ideas between land managers and to demonstrate new methods is at field days. These also give researchers the opportunity to find out which matters land managers feel need investigation and priority.

We initially developed a regional landcare strategy which identified the issues and what action we should take. Expertise from local agencies and the experience of land managers was tapped to develop an action plan.

The Cunningham resurvey of rangeland sites in the Alice Springs area during 1993-1995 provided us with a data base for regional planning. Geoff Cunningham, as a member of the NSW Soil Conservation team, carried out a survey in 1963-1965 for the then NT Administration which included 200 photographed and described sites. He then relocated 158 of these sites in 1993-1995, comparing the erosion status and vegetation condition on both occasions.

When the group was first formed, rabbits were immediately identified as a problem and the Needlebush Demonstration site of rabbit control, extending over 300 sq km, was set up to teach us the best techniques for control and the responses we could expect. Baiting with 1080 followed by ripping and the introduction of the Spanish rabbit flea, and recently the establishment of Rabbit Calicivirus monitoring sites, are showing that a fully integrated attack is the best method for rabbit control.

From this a regional rabbit range reduction strategy was developed and work commenced in July 1995. This aims to attack warren-dwelling rabbits at their northern limits of distribution and to eventually control them throughout the central Australian region. The rabbit control project is fully described in a separate paper.

A similar approach is taking place to control weeds. We plan to prevent the introduction of weeds, remove isolated pockets of weeds and progressively control weed problem areas. A weed that is worrying us all is *Acacia farnesiana*, which has spread along water courses and we feel needs to be controlled now before it gets any worse. We also support the DPIF athel pine control project along the Finke and its tributaries.

From the Cunningham report it was identified that 5% of the region was in need of reinvigoration of perennial species. A series of revegetation trials has been set up. Members have purchased a laser truck to assist with setting out ponding banks. Personal communication with Russell Grant of Lands, Planning and Environment indicates 80% of gully erosion in central Australia is caused by badly located roads. Demonstration of road construction techniques is on-going. In all our programs we have experienced problems with acquiring seed of native species, and so have purchased a seed harvester to overcome these shortages. Unemployed programs have been accessed for support for all our projects.

In 1992 a land use planning kit workshop showed us the value of formalised property management planning. Managers have plans, however they are not always written down. Members have indicated the need for formalised planning and the CLMA is attempting to develop the process as a useful, dynamic management tool to suit the needs of individuals within a regional strategy. The recently

proposed strategy for the NT component of the Lake Eyre catchment is an example of all land managers working together on regional issues such as control of ferals, yet each individual manager's inspirations are incorporated through their own Property Management Plan. Agencies will be providing the technical input to support the development of this strategy.

Because the CLMA area is so large and diverse, there are issues that affect the whole area, those that affect regions within the area, and others that affect individual station management. We have addressed this by developing strategies for the whole district and regional strategies to address such problems as rabbits and weeds. At the property level a holistic approach covering all issues from conservation to financial management is required. The principles of sustainable stocking rates, distribution of waters, fencing and road construction, protection of fragile areas or habitats, and feral animal and weed control are all part of the property management planning process.