



NORTH EAST
CATCHMENT
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MEDIA RELEASE

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North East dairy farmers renovating wetland as part of Drought Employment Scheme

A dairy farming family from Kergunyah will soon begin a significant business and environmental renovation project thanks to financial support available through the Victorian Government's Drought Employment Scheme.

Dairy farmers, Stuart and Sarah Crosthwaite, plan to transform a weed infested, pugged and degraded wetland area that runs through their property into a healthy wetland that will improve the quality of water flowing into the nearby Kiewa River and provide refuge for wildlife, plus provide a productivity spin-off for the farm business.

The long-term aim of the project is to regain some land for pasture while sacrificing some to the environment.

The North East CMA is coordinating the ongoing roll out of the Drought Employment Scheme across the Region and is aiming to employ up to 125 people by the end of February

CMA Manager of Land Stewardship, Mr Chris Reid, said the Scheme is designed to protect and maintain high priority environmental assets in the North East.

"The Crosthwaite's project is a great example of the kind of work being undertaken through this Scheme," said Mr Reid

"People are being employed to do practical things to reduce pressure on the environment. For example, landholders are putting up fencing along sections of waterways to prevent stock from trampling stream banks and causing erosion or water pollution. Some are spraying weeds or watering previous tree planting sites to ensure they survive the drought," explained Mr Reid.

Stuart Crosthwaite said the Drought Employment Scheme had helped him refocus away from current drought on the longer term vision and capital improvements and enhancements for his property.

Although he had previously secured funding from the North East CMA to revegetate a wetland, the unexpected costs associated with the drought had threatened to derail the project.

"You can quickly drop the ball on the bigger picture when you're busy milking 300 (three hundred) cows twice a day and face the financial and emotional pressures of ongoing drought," said Stuart.

"Our longer term goal is to make the farm as productive and efficient as possible, while caring and enhancing the environment our business works within. The funding from the CMA to improve the wetland and the support from the Drought Employment Scheme has enabled us during a tough financial climate to continue rather than waiting till the season and finances improve."

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Through the Drought Employment Scheme, the Crosthwaites will receive \$1150 to cover fencing materials and tree stock and payment for undertaking weed control and tree planting.

They plan to begin work on their wetland renovation project in March with a view to finalising most of the work by the end of April.

The Victorian Government's Drought Employment Scheme is operating across the State.

People interested in finding out more about the Scheme in the North East can contact the North East Catchment Management Authority on (02) 6043 7600.

Interview/photo opportunities:

For additional information or to arrange an interview please contact:

Mary-Anne Scully, CMA Media & Communications Consultant – **Tel: 0408 685 225**