

Calulu farmer finds a winning formula

Calulu farmer John Maglione has worked in partnership with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to resolve a stock management problem, through the introduction of river frontage fencing and an alternative 'in-paddock' water source.

The ongoing exclusion of cattle from the Mitchell River will help stabilise the bank and improve water quality and also remove the cattle from a popular local swimming and kayaking spot.

Mr Maglione's beef cattle property borders the Mitchell River upstream of the Calulu Bridge and his stock had always been able to graze all the way to the river.

However, a curious few didn't always stop there. Particularly in summer when river levels are traditionally lower, some of John's cattle not only waded into the river, but also made it to the other side. Straight into the temptations of the vegetable farm on the opposite bank.

"There were a couple who reckoned the grass was greener – and found the lettuces to their liking, too," he said.

Mr Maglione didn't want to be a bad neighbour. He was also concerned about the risk of cattle getting out onto the road via the public access gate. CFA trucks sometimes

use the area for filling and turnaround during the fire season. The spot beside the bridge is a popular local swimming hole and a regular kayak and canoe drop-off place. Although most people are conscientious, there would be occasions when the gate was left open.

"It made it difficult to manage my stock, and every night I'd have to round them up from the river paddock and lock them into the other paddock," he said.

Enter Clint Bain from the EGCMA with a proposal that John quickly recognised would resolve several issues. John worked with the EGCMA to provide an area of river frontage that will accommodate both public access and a revegetation program.

A permanent, electric fence of just over one kilometre now excludes stock from the protected river frontage area. This leaves 4.5 hectares of Crown waterway frontage for Mr Maglione to continue to graze. In terms of stock watering, the cattle now have the benefit of three new stock troughs, filled with clean river water via a new pump.

The grant funding for the river frontage fencing and stock watering infrastructure was incorporated into his EGCMA agreement, providing a real financial incentive for

John to proceed with the project.

The fenced river frontage allows for a large turning circle near the bridge and a wide riverbank buffer zone, accommodating both public recreational access and revegetation.

"I agreed to the boundary change for two main reasons. The first was cattle management and the second was the preservation of the river – it's a great river and I wanted to make sure my cattle weren't affecting it," he said.

The main issues that occur when stock access the river include: compaction of the soil structure, grazing and trampling vegetation (particularly emerging seedlings) and increasing the potential for bank erosion; all of which have a significant impact on river health.

The CMA has provided Mr Maglione with a weed control grant to treat weeds such as blackberry.

"We have established numerous agreements with landholders throughout East Gippsland – achieving real 'win win' outcomes," Mr Bain said.

"Most farmers care about creating a safer environment for their stock, but they're also happy to play their role in helping to protect the natural values of our wonderful waterways."



John Maglione (right), of Calulu, discussing his newly fenced paddock with Clint Bain, of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. The paddock allows for a large area beside the Calulu Bridge for public access, and also for revegetation works. (PS)



Before the fencing, Mr Maglione's cattle had access to the river (inset), but now have easily accessible water from new drinking troughs within the newly fenced paddock. (PS)



An aerial view of the farm, which now includes just over one kilometre of fencing along the river that forms part of the agreement. (PS)