

6 October 2009

Standing Committee on Climate Change Visits Southern Rivers Region

A Southern Rivers CMA presentation prompted three members of the NSW Parliament's Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (Climate Change) to visit the region and see how farmers and the CMA are working together help the region adapt to climate change.

Standing Committee Chair, David Harris, MP, Deputy Chair, Karyn Paluzzano, MP and committee member, Ray Williams, MP visited a number of properties in the Bega and Cooma areas to view on-ground natural resource management (NRM) projects that deliver sound environmental and productivity outcomes for the Southern Rivers region.

The tour included visits to properties that are part of the Monaro Grasslands program, which supports landholders managing native grasses for productivity and conservation.

Mr Harris, Mrs Paluzzano and Mr Williams visited the native grassland reserve, Ravensworth, as well as Charles and Fiona Massy's property, 'Severn Park'. The Massys have entered into a voluntary cooperative project with Southern Rivers CMA in recognition of the importance of conserving the native grassland on their property.

"The Monaro is known for its native grasslands and people are now looking to it for examples of how conservation and farming can work together to protect the environment and improve productivity", says General Manager, Southern Rivers CMA, Noel Kesby.

As a result of the Monaro Grasslands Program, 13,300 hectares of Native Temperate Grasslands (one of Australia's most endangered ecological communities) have been protected by partnering with landholders to graze grasslands sustainably. Other partners include: NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, Industry and Investment NSW, Snowy River, Bombala and Cooma-Monaro Shire Councils and the local community.

The field trip included a stop to view a well established system of biodiversity corridors on landholder, Barry Irvin's property near Bemboka as well as a visit to Peter and Sue Johnston's dairy property 'Gourley Farm' at Bega.

The visit to 'Gourley Farm' highlighted the importance of native vegetation conservation work and the role native corridors play in protecting the region's precious biodiversity. Mr and Mrs Johnston have developed an integrated natural resource management plan with Southern Rivers CMA which makes their dairy farm more productive and provides benefits to local biodiversity.

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Over the past seven years, the Johnstons have undertaken NRM projects in collaboration with Southern Rivers CMA, Bega Cheese, Industry and Investment NSW (formerly Department of Primary Industries) and Bega Valley Shire Council. Works have included riparian (river) protection and enhancement, willow control, effluent system upgrades, soil nutrient mapping, water use efficiency, flora and fauna assessments, and shelterbelts and riparian corridors. All of these projects are ensuring that the farm and the surrounding environment are better equipped to deal with the impacts of climate change.

The NRM works on the Johnstons' property fall within a growing cluster of NRM works in the area which constitute landscape scale outcomes in terms of biodiversity corridors and woodland management.

"Property scale development, that is, managing natural resources in collaboration with neighbouring properties, is vital because it extends good quality habitat and biodiversity corridors across an entire area. The corridors provide shelter, food and protection as animals travel from one patch of vegetation to another", says General Manager, Southern Rivers CMA, Noel Kesby.

Southern Rivers CMA is tackling climate change through projects that help our landscapes become more resilient.

"The most effective way for governments to help communities adapt to climate change is to strengthen and support landholders and industry to innovate and adapt. This is best done by taking a bottom up approach and tackling climate change at a regional level. For example, Southern Rivers CMA does this by working with the landholders on the Monaro to improve their environmental performance and address how climate change will impact the way they manage their land", said Southern Rivers CMA Chair, Pam Green.

"The visit by the Standing Committee members was both timely and important. I would like to thank Mr Harris, Mrs Paluzzano and Mr Williams for taking the time to visit our region and experience first-hand both its rich biodiversity and the hands-on work being done by Southern Rivers CMA, our partners and the landholders to conserve and protect it", she added.

The NSW Parliament's Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (Climate Change) is a current standing committee of the Legislative Assembly. The Committee was established in June 2007 to inquire into issues of sustainable natural resource management with particular reference to the impact of climate change.

The Southern Rivers catchment covers a 32,000 square kilometre area of south-east NSW—from Stanwell Park in the north to the Victorian border in the south and west into Snowy Mountains country. It includes the major river systems of the Snowy, Shoalhaven and Genoa. Southern Rivers CMA recently won the Australian Government Landcare NRM Region Award at the 2009 NSW Landcare Awards.

*****Ends*****

Image: Left to Right: Melissa Balas (Bega Cheese), Richard Platts (Bega Cheese), Noel Kesby (Southern Rivers CMA), David Harris, MP, Peter Johnston (landholder), Karyn Paluzzano, MP, Jock Waugh (Bega Valley Shire Council), Sue Johnston (landholder), Justin Gouvernet, Pam Green, Sue-Anne Nicol (Southern Rivers CMA) Dave O'Donnell (Industry & Investment NSW), Ray Williams, MP and Ken Garner (Bega Cheese).

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