

6TH CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

Newsletter

Summer 2003

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We hope you all had a relaxing break over Christmas and New Year and are starting 2003 fresh and invigorated!

The 6th Creek Catchment Project is part of a network of land rehabilitation projects steadily covering much of the Mount Lofty Ranges. To be effective all of these projects need long term effort and funding from both government and landholders.

Our project is completing its third year of funding and is looking for the support needed to continue. In future, all funding will be via Regional "Integrated Natural Resource Management Groups", in our case for the Mount Lofty Ranges & Greater Adelaide Region. Funding could be either from the new Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) program or from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) program.

Our project was not assessed as being a funding priority under the NAP program for 2003 (although Upper & Mid Torrens projects were). In March, we should hear if NHT will support our project for the next funding year. Indications are already, however, that the Region's planned projects for 2003 will exceed Regional NHT funding and we could be in for a lean year. If so, this could present difficulties for partially completed project sites. NHT requires the return of any unspent/uncommitted money from previous project years. All our precious NHT funds are either spent or committed and we are hoping for a generous interpretation of deadlines for actual outlays. Annual funding and accounting routines are not necessarily helpful if juggling actual on-ground problems.

The group also has a small NAP grant for 2002/03 and we hope to keep our program ongoing.

COMING EVENTS

February 3rd – FREE Chemical Users Workshop run by SCCG & EPA Norton Summit 6.30-9.30pm (light meal provided)
Register your interest with the Project Officer

6th – 6th Creek Catchment Group AGM – Guest speaker

15th – Uraidla Show

Dealing with those Unwanted Fruit Trees

Trevor Ranford – Apple & Pear Growers Association SA

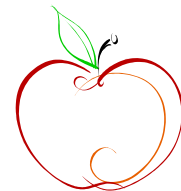
The Adelaide Hills Region produces some 82% of South Australian apples and pears, and 90% of cherries in orchards varying in size from 2 hectares to over 400 hectares. The fruit produced not only supplies the local domestic market but also interstate and international markets. These crops, along with grapes, represent a significant component of the \$96 million horticultural industry of the Region.

Over the years commercial orchardists have worked extremely hard to control a range of pests and diseases, including black spot and codling moth. The wide adoption and implementation of Integrated Pest Management has resulted in a major reduction in the use of chemicals, particularly the 'hard' chemicals, and an improved environment for all who live within the region. The orchardist relies heavily on 'scouting' the orchard and using agreed 'active thresholds'. Below the 'threshold' the orchardist maintains the 'soft' option(s) and above the 'threshold' the orchardist may be forced to return to the 'hard' option(s).

Despite these attempts to control pests, codling moth still exists as a significant problem to commercial orchardists. The problem is largely attributed to the existence of poorly maintained, neglected or abandoned orchards and 'feral' trees either in home gardens or along roadsides, which harbour remnant populations of codling moths.

These orchards/trees represent major 'sinks' of pests and diseases. If poorly maintained, pests and diseases can survive:

- In the structure of the tree *eg. leaves, branches*
- Under the bark
- In the leaves and prunings left on the ground
- In discarded fruit, and/or
- Within the soil



If the pests or diseases are left to live and reproduce uncontrolled, within orchards/trees, then they increase in number and so increase the level of pest or disease pressure to a point where they can have a major influence on surrounding commercial orchards. While Integrated Pest Management often never eliminates the pest or disease, it works very much on the principle of maintaining the lowest possible pressure level. If that level is continually increased from outside areas, commercial orchardists are forced to revert back to the use of 'hard' chemicals.

Landowners that purchase land for rural living and/or lifestyle reasons, within the Region, have a responsibility/duty of care to:

- Maintain any orchards and/or fruit trees in an appropriate manner to minimise the level of pests/diseases, or
- Totally remove the orchard/trees

The Apple and Pear Industry within the Adelaide Hills is working with Primary Industries and Resources SA on a plan to establish 'area freedom' status, particularly for pests/diseases like codling moth. This 'area freedom' status will allow the local industry to achieve new markets and demonstrate an increased commitment to environmental management that may in future, enable the industry to remain competitive in the global market. To achieve such a status the industry is going to need the support and assistance of all landowners/managers within the region to undertake a program of orchard/tree maintenance and/or removal. The types of actions landowners can undertake include:

- Clean up of fallen fruit at harvest and before pests/diseases move from infested fruit,
- Removal and, if possible, early destruction of old, unproductive blocks and 'feral' trees
- Structural pruning to reduce the height and open up large trees,
- Implementation of mating disruption (there may be a minimum area for which mating disruption is most effective),
- Supplementation of mating disruption on individual orchards with a 'soft' insecticide or even an oil spray, and
- Possible use of temperature data to apply supplementary sprays, or
- Remove the trees

Codling moths, mites and black spot are but a number of pests and diseases that an orchardist needs to currently deal with. We need to also be vigilant by thinking ahead and consider that may face the industry/community in the future. One such disease is the bacteria *Erwinia amylovora*, better known as Fire Blight. If this disease was to reach Australia and in particular the Adelaide Hills Region, it would have a devastating effect on the commercial orchard industry, rural living, hobby farmers and the home gardens. By maintaining the orchard/trees in good condition and as free as possible of other pests and diseases, their ability to resist a new disease is somewhat increased.

While there is an issue relating to pest and disease management, there is just as compelling a reason to maintain your orchards/trees and that is FIRE. A poorly maintained orchard – both trees and the associated undergrowth – can rapidly become a major fire hazard. The Adelaide Hills region is a major fire risk area particularly during this season. It is the responsibility of each and every landowner to undertake appropriate fire risk assessment and management. If a fire were to devastate an orchard, the loss would not only be in the death/damage to the trees but also the loss of crop for many years following.

For more information regarding the maintenance of orchards, landowners can contact the Apple & Pear Growers Association of South Australia on (08) 8349 4556.

NPWSA & 6th Creek Catchment Group Working Together

National Parks and Wildlife (Lofty Barossa District) parks in the 6th Creek catchment area include Burdetts Scrub, Marble Hill Conservation Park and Montacute Conservation Park.

NPWSA work in partnership with the 6th Creek Catchment Group to achieve riparian amelioration in joint projects. The funding for projects through the catchment group enables NPWSA to achieve on-ground works that have previously not been achievable within normal budget allocations.

Additional funding for the following projects include:

Marble Hill CP

- Fuel reduction through fire management
- Broom & blackberry eradication in multiple zones

Montacute CP

Blackberry and broom eradication. The removal of these pest plant species will assist in the recovery of *Glycine latrobeana* population (Clover glycine – a legume from grassy woodlands with a deep purple flower), which is listed as nationally vulnerable.

Burdetts Scrub

Contractors under supervision of a NPWSA Ranger complete pest plant projects. In some instances Green Corps teams are used if they are available.

NPWSA Lofty Barossa District hopes everyone had a great Christmas and would like to wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year!

Bryn Troath
Senior Ranger
2IC Lofty/Barossa District

The 6th Creek Catchment Group is supported by:



Patawalonga & Torrens Catchment Water Management Boards



Natural Heritage Trust
Helping Communities Helping Australia



ForestrySA



Mount Lofty Ranges Catchment Program



ADELAIDE HILLS COUNCIL



MT LOFTY RANGES ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL BOARD



Department for Environment and Heritage



Adelaide Hills Natural Resource Centre Inc

The Sixth Creek Catchment Group is a Landcare organisation with private and public landholder membership. The Group's objectives are the protection and rehabilitation of the catchment's natural resources.