

Voices in ALMS

Number 6, June 2008

Your e-newsletter from the Australian Landcare Management System Group

Voices in ALMS

Voices in ALMS is produced by the Australian Landcare Management System Group. For information about the ALMS Group and ALMS go to the ALMS [website](#)

©Copyright ALMS Group 2008

CONTACT

Tony Gleeson,
CEO, ALMS Group,
'Avondale'
Vinegar Hill Rd
LEGUME NSW 2476
P: 07 46664112
E: syncons@bigpond.com

SUBSCRIBE or UNSUBSCRIBE

You have been sent this newsletter because you are on the ALMS Group database. To UNSUBSCRIBE click [here](#)
To SUBSCRIBE, click [here](#)

GATE SIGN

The ALMS gate sign has proved a real hit with ALMS members. Become an ALMS Member and fix it to the gate of your property and show your community that you are managing your land in a responsible way.

HIGHLIGHT

The highlight of the last few months has been the participation of all the South Australian ALMS Foundation Group in an ALMS Review & Renew Workshop in the Adelaide Hills.

Only those familiar with the teething problems suffered by these landholders would appreciate how significant is the commitment of these Foundation men and women ably guided by ALMS Board Member, Bruce Munday. Having begun with the paper based Australian EMS Manual and Workbook they graduated through the various versions of the *myEMS* software to the great version it is today.

But their legitimate gripe is that they don't get recognition for having a whole-of-farm catchment linked externally audited management plan focused on the landholder activities having environmental impacts. Why? Well to large extent it is because taxpayer dollars are not directed to leveraging private dollars to prevent land degradation. So much of the public investment is directed towards remedial activities (a never ending catch-up game), towards discreet parts of ecosystems (without taking account of ecological interactions and landscape considerations) and towards iconic issues identified through political processes.

Will it change? No, probably not, at least not before the agro-political organisations start looking after environmental and other innovators.

ALMS WEBSITE

Want to find out more about ALMS? Find publications to do with ALMS? Become an ALMS member?

And catch up on

- The ALMS Group [submissions](#) to the 2020 Summit, and on
- A [paper](#) on why we should use land managers to care for country

Check out the ALMS [website](#).

AROUND THE TRAPS

A roundup of developments with ALMS around Australia.

Forum for ALMS Members at Wodonga, Victoria. The North East CMA and the ALMS Group sponsored a Forum for ALMS Members at Wodonga on Thursday 3rd April 2008. Over 60 landholders participated. Guest speaker Mick Keogh, Executive Director, Australian Farm Institute made a compelling case for further differentiation of our agricultural products citing a large range in prices for differentiated milk and egg products in domestic supermarkets as evidence of the preparedness of consumers to pay for differentiated products.

Recruitment of ALMS Members in the NECMA region has been an outstanding feature of ALMS activity in 2007/08. On the request of local landholders the ALMS Group and NECMA will facilitate the establishment and operation of a Local ALMS Action Committee to help ensure the needs of local landholders are met. Many landholders at the Forum spoke of the need for recognition from Governments and markets for good land management



FOR THE DIARY

Landholder Training
Clinic, Warwick: Friday
4 July

Landholder Training
Clinic, Stanthorpe:
August

Landholder Training
Clinic, Taree:
August/September

Landholder Training
Clinic, Singleton:
August/September

IMPROVING LAND MANAGEMENT

In this recent [paper](#), Tony Gleeson identifies that a lack of motivation is the primary constraint to improving land management. Most analysts don't recognise this, rather they paint a complex picture of the constraints to improving land management and of the necessary features of interventions. However, unless the primary constraint is addressed in pragmatic ways then returns on investments to remove secondary constraints will be severely constrained. Read the paper here.

ALMS BOARD

ALMS board members
are:

John Drinan (Chair)
Jock Douglas (Inaugural
Chair)

Yunta, Birdwood, Yass and Armidale woolgrowers participate in ALMS Workshops. Considerable effort over the past few months has been directed to completing a major eco-ethical wool project partnered by Elders, AWI, Landcare Australia and the ALMS Group. Groups of landholders at Yunta and Birdwood in SA and at Yass and Armidale have developed certified ALMS Management Plans. Additionally AWI has profiled ALMS with Japanese wool processors with encouraging responses.

Emissions Trading Scheme. ALMS CEO, Tony Gleeson, has participated in several events related to carbon trading to assess the potential for ALMS to be used as a platform for carbon assessment when agriculture is brought into the emission trading scheme. Clearly there are substantial issues yet to be resolved. The ALMS Group position being that carbon-based signals for improving environmental outcomes need to be translated through to the individual property manager and that use of so called best management practices as a surrogate for carbon sequestration would be impractical and a constraint on innovation.

Regional NRM/CMA-ALMS Meeting. In early May we convened a meeting in Canberra of NRM Board/CMA representatives who had indicated an interest in ALMS over the past year. It was an opportunity for some robust chat about the advantages and disadvantages of EMS highlighting just how confusing and inefficient has been the proliferation of facsimile EMS approaches and how destructive has been the baseless contention that EMS more than any other NRM instrument EMS should be supported by food and fibre consumers. The reality of course is that consideration of the public investment should be based on the effectiveness and efficiency of achieving particular outcomes and not on the nature of the instrument used. Unfortunately there was no participation from Australia Government Departments in spite of having cleared the suitability of the date with DAFF before settling on it. Nevertheless we are continuing discussions with agencies wishing to support the ALMS approach.

THE BIG PICTURE

ALMS Group CEO, Tony Gleeson, contends that we need to cut through the fog preventing better land management. Gleeson says we need to focus on the primary constraint—a lack of motivation. Unless this primary constraint is removed then returns on investments to remove secondary constraints will be severely constrained.

Many natural resource management programs constrain motivation through the external establishment of goals, targets and processes, through excessively high transaction costs, through fragmentation, through inappropriate time frames for funding and execution and through ineffective and laborious accountability processes.

Generally speaking we have the knowledge and tools necessary to avoid these problems. For instance:

- We can have a greater focus on supporting positive impacts and avoiding adverse impacts as compared to focusing on the state of the resource *per se*
- We can have informed property-up approaches to determining goals, targets and strategies, and
- We can integrate rather than fragment ecological and reward considerations.

It is ironic that Australian farmers lament being price takers but generally are reluctant to develop markets that reward features, including environmental considerations, for which they have comparative advantage.

It is also ironic that the strong advocacy of market-based instruments to improve land management has not led to a realisation that we don't have

Genevieve Carruthers
Drew English
Tony Gleeson (CEO)
Bruce Munday
Geoff Penton
Nelson Quinn

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

Voices is the e-newsletter of the ALMS Group. You have received this issue because you are on the ALMS database. You will continue to receive *Voices* unless you decide to unsubscribe.

PRIVACY NOTICE

This email may contain personal information as defined in the *Privacy Act* 1988, or confidential information. Please do not disclose personal information in this email, other than that of the sender, to another party without the consent of the sender. If you are not the intended recipient, or believe that you have received this email in error, please do not print, copy, retransmit, disseminate, or otherwise use the information. Also, please notify the sender that you have received this e-mail in error, and delete the copy you received

a way to define the product, the product of improved land management. There is no way markets can work effectively if the product is not defined.

The drivers for improving environmental outcomes vary between land managers, over time and between regions and land uses. However existing and potential drivers include:

- The intrinsic reward/self satisfaction from implementing improved practices
- Improved productivity
- Decreased legal risk
- Maintained or enhanced land values
- Increased/maintained access to natural resources, particularly to water and leased land.
- Improved market access/profitability through improved product differentiation
- Improved access to public support for improving environmental outcomes
- Improved regulatory frameworks

But just having the drivers is not enough. We need a voluntary cost-effective system for recognising improved land management that is integrative, credible and which enables wide recognition across communities and markets. This is what is necessary to enable the drivers to be effective.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Our partnership program has progressed steadily and we now have or are well advanced in negotiating partnerships with:

Apple and Pear Growers Association SA Inc.
Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Board
Australian Wool Innovation Ltd
Elders
Gipps Beef
New South Wales Hunter and Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority
Private Forestry Southern Queensland Ltd
Queensland Murray Darling Committee Inc.
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board
South East Queensland Catchments
Victorian North East Catchment Authority