LAND MANAGEMENT

Introduction

The economy of the Johnstone Shire relies mainly upon primary and agricultural production. The State of the Shire therefore relies heavily upon Land Management. Efforts continued in 2002 to minimise impacts, through the promotion of responsible and improved land-use practice.

News

The South Johnstone River Management Plan by the JRCMA progressed. The plan aims to integrate land practices with water quality issues.

Promotion of Agroforestry within the Shire was investigated in 2002. Although at present in its infancy, the incorporation of this type of alternate production holds great economic and environmental potential for the Shire.

2002 saw the successful continuation of the Council's weed control program. 20-30% of identified weed species have been controlled since the program's recent inception. The weed Hymenachne is the primary target at present.

Sustainable production methods are an important step towards successful land management. The aim is to minimise the effect on the environment. Producers have had access to best practice information on a variety of issues. Included were:

- The COMPASS self assessment course for cane farming
- Minimum tillage trials and sustainable water usage for cane farming
- Environmental Management Systems for fruit and vegetable growers
- Integrated Pest management for fruit and vegetable growers
- Water use efficiency for fruit and vegetable growers

2002 saw a continuing expansion of Fruit production, in many cases replacing traditional cane harvesting. The industry includes bananas, papaya, and tropical fruits such as rambutan, lychees and mangosteen. 2002 was a highly successful year for the tropical fruits, due mainly to the dry weather.

Issues facing the Tropical fruit industry were as follows:
Banana – Quarantines due to Bunchy top, Black sigatoka, and Moko disease
Papaya – Insect pests and root rot phytophora
Tropical Fruits – Pest management

Indicators

There has been no significant change in the area utilised for primary production within the Shire since 2001.

Cane Production—
Approximately 900 cane suppliers operate in the Shire
35,500 hectares were harvested in 2002, of 47,500 hectares gross Cane Production Area.

Area	Mourilyan	South Johnstone	Babinda
Tonnes of Cane	1,012,485	1,215,334	943,399
CCS	13.17	13.37	12.47
Average tonnes/ha	84.3	84.8	94.7
Value	$30,000,000	$36,000,000	$27,000,000

Green trash blanketing is practised on the following land areas as: Mourilyan (98%), South Johnstone (84%), Babinda (92%).

Fruit Production—
Approximately 400 growers operate within the Shire.
An increase of approximately 1000 hectares of banana crops was planted in 2002.

	Bananas	Papaya	Tropical Fruits
Area (ha)	5500	200	200
Growers	250	100	50
Value	$130,000,000	$8,000,000	$3,000,000

Land Use change - Information on land use change is released biannually by the DNRM. The information from 1999-2001 will serve as a comparison for future State of the Shire Updates.

Rate of Woody Vegetation Change in Johnstone Shire (ha per year) – Data for the Interval 1999-2001

Area (ha)	New woody regrowth	CLEARING							% Wooded vegetation cover	% Of total clearing in QLD
		Pasture	Crops	Forest	Mining	Infra-structure	Settle-ment	Total Cleared		
163,400	0	15	8	0	0	2	0	25	62.41	0.0043

Adapted from: Department of Natural Resources and Mines (2003) Land Cover Change in Queensland, A State-wide Landcover and Trees Study Report (SLATS), Jan 2003.
It is worth bearing in mind that the Johnstone Shire comprises 47% World Heritage Area. This accounts for the high percentage of wooded vegetation cover. Other parts of the Shire not protected also include important vegetation and habitat types.

A total of 36 complaints were received by Council in 2002 regarding noxious weeds. 6 complaints were received regarding various beach issues including safety and inappropriate usage.

Conclusion

Steps have been taken by most organisations towards enhancing land management practices, and reducing the impacts of land use on aquatic environments. Data to describe the state of landholder practices would assist with Shire planning. The addition of stormwater monitoring by Council will help greatly in detecting adverse impacts from land practices.

Future Direction

As more agricultural industries incorporate best practice principles into production the state of the shire and surrounding ecosystems will improve. The philosophy of this goal is that, although land use may operate amidst highly fluctuating natural processes, it is our duty to minimise those impacts that arise from our technological practices.

Report Card for Land Management

Criteria	Grade	Recommendation Group	Explanation
Action on recommendations **18 of 20** recommendations actioned to date	**A**	- Best practice and sustainable land practices - Waterways and riparian areas - Pest species	- Outside organisations were active towards promoting these goals. - The quality of Integrated catchment management has improved. - Weed control.
Filling deficiencies in data	**B-**	-Waterways and riparian areas - Land practices	-Stormwater monitoring began for sediments, nutrients, pesticides and herbicides. -No plans to gather other data types.
State of the Shire	**C+**	- Land practices - Waterways - Pest species	-Traditional land practices are the norm. -Waterways still under pressure. - Weed control is achieving success.
Goal Achievement	**C+**	- All	- A shift to proactive land management through landholder involvement is progressing. Changes have been slow due to politics and tradition.
Community Awareness	**B-**	- All	Landholders have been the target audience for education. Involvement is still low.

OVERALL GRADE B