

Coming together for soil health

Karuah & Great Lakes Landcare



Landholders working together to protect and enhance our foundational agricultural resource

The issue

The Great Lakes has a favourable mild climate and good rainfall, but our soil health is a key limiting factor for sustainable productivity. Common problems include acidity, erodibility, nutrient deficiency (especially Phosphorus) and depleted organic matter. Large areas in the upper catchments have sodic subsoils, while floodplains in the lower catchment are underlain with potential acid sulphate soils. Many of our landholders are observing issues with fertility and erosion. Meanwhile, we have an ongoing influx of new landholders with little or no experience in land and soil management.

The solution

Karuah and Great Lakes Landcare held a series of soil health themed workshops in 2015-16 with partnership funding support from Hunter Local Land Services – “Dung Beetles in Great Lakes” with Dr Bernard Doube of Dung Beetle Solutions Australia, “Champagne Soil on a Beer Budget” with Jeremy Bradley of Beechwood Biological Solutions, and “Down and Dirty” soil health and monitoring fundamentals with David Hardwick of Soil Land Food. The strong interest in monitoring and improving soil health led to the formation of Great Lakes Soil Health Group in September 2016, hosted by Dyers Crossing Landcare.

The impact

Great Lakes Soil Health Group has attracted a diverse cross section of landholders, with both experienced land managers and people new to farming, graziers and horticulturalists, and a wide geographic spread, from Gloucester in the West to Coomba in the East. The group aims to share experience and knowledge and support one another in improving soil management and soil health across the district. They will meet every second month at members’ properties, and via Karuah and Great Lakes Landcare have already hosted a public workshop on farm-made biological soil supplements presented by Jeremy Bradley.

Learnings

A practical, hands-on approach to workshops gets participants more engaged and more likely to implement ideas at home.

Landholders can get useful information on the state of their soils using readily available materials.

Soil monitoring techniques that are simple and low-cost are more likely to be regularly used.



Key facts

- 70 landholders and 5 local groups engaged in soil health workshops in 2015-16
- 19 participants in Great Lakes Soil Health Group thus far

Project Partners



This activity is part of the Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative



**Local Land
Services**

The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.

