2007 President's Report

THANKS TO ALL for attending our AGM

It has been predicted that in the next 10 years we can expect more rural properties change hands. Also, Mongarlowe as well as other villages around Braidwood, and Braidwood itself, has seen an influx of subdivision applications. This is nothing new except the trend of tree changing has gained momentum hence making a distinctive difference to the social, economic and environmental impact of Braidwood and its surrounds. Views of the Budawang Mountain range and the tranquil flowing waters of the Mongarlowe River are much sought after real estates. With the mounting pressure of substantial subdivisions and water fast becoming a precious commodity, FMR urges the Palerang Shire Council to do more within the new LEP to protect the river and its tributaries. I, for one, don’t mind sharing this special region but it is up to the Friends of the Mongarlowe River, other local groups and Govt. bodies to reach these new owners and inform them of different ways to protect their new bush block and connected environs. Most newcomers, come here to be a part of the bush, and some need direction in keeping its environmental integrity intact.

For the last two years FMR has been actively networking with the local landcare group, the bush fire brigade and a newly formed local community group. It has been a positive outcome bringing together not so  likeminded people but all wishing for the Mongarlowe area to remain as close to what it has been which is possible with such growth. Obviously more people mean a larger footprint on the land. FMR and these groups have a responsibility to protect the integrity of both land and river. Campaigning together has been very positive and we ARE making an impact.

Just how do we get ourselves known to these new people, some who are only here on weekends and just want to relax? Well, “Getting it out” – the Bushfire brigade newsletter is aptly named. The blackboard at the village, the local paper “Braidwood Times”, the internet and of course word of mouth. The more we all get it out, the more the newcomers understand the importance of protecting and improving upon, their piece of natural bushland.

It is with sadness to mention Peter Herbst who recently died. Peter was our well-respected President for 6 years. He realised at the end of his presidency he had to hand the reigns over to someone he trusted to carry on the fight for Monga, Harry Laing. We now have Monga National Park thanks to Peter, along with Robyn Stellar (deceased) and Harry on FMR’s behalf. I have spoken to members of FMR what they knew of Peter and here is what they said.

* Dedicated environmentalist
* Universally liked
* A lot tougher than he looked
* Elder statesman for the forest
* Passionate about Monga
* Good strategist with a long conservation background

Peter will be missed. But never forgotten as the man who would drive his MG through the forest and get bogged, go for a walk amongst the ferns contemplating who knows what then return to the bogged car and finally drive it out to be confronted with an almost impassable track down a cliff.

The **Macquarie Perch Project** has put focus on FMR around Braidwood and further.  It is unfortunate that Australia is loosing many species due to human intrusion and the Macquarie Perch has recently been changed from vulnerable to nationally endangered. Way back early 1900’s the Macquarie Perch was put into the Mongarlowe River. For decades people relished this fish and, at times, survived off it. There are records of large schools of Mac Perch swimming upstream in the river. Unfortunately this does not now, seem to be the case, it seems that the Mac Perch are struggling to survive in the Mongarlowe River. To date we cannot say exactly why this is so but the drought seems to be one main factor of their reduction.

It is an honour that FMR has the chance to research the Mac Perch and we hope to bring this fish back to its original healthy population. Thanks to the Threatened Species Network for giving us this opportunity and just last month, FMR was granted another sum of money towards the Mac Perch project from the Australian Govt. Small Equipment Grants.

Because of this project, FMR has reached out to a multitude of different people. We now have close river contact from the junction at the Shoalhaven River all the way to Monga. Seeing parts of the river that is normally inaccessible has been the cement binding FMR closer to the river and, as important, to the riparian owners. The Braidwood Fishing Club has been a great example of partnerships between groups as well as meeting other dedicated individuals.

The Mongarlowe River, has shown during this research, to be as healthy as ever. There are a few improvements to be done by some riparian owners but most have done the river proud, weekenders, farmers and environmentalists alike.

I must now mention Su Wild-River. Su and her family have enriched FMR by their presence. Though somewhat more like a wild river than a gentle flow, it was Su who broached the idea of applying for a grant to research the Macquarie Perch. Heaven forbid, we all thought it a grand idea not realising the massive effort involved. But, once committed there was no turning back and with Gail, the Efficient, the application was presented AND  accepted. A first and a first for FMR. Gail, the Efficient then had another quest so handed the grail back to Su and myself. Gail is now back to our relief.

To date the hours of voluntary work for the Mac Perch project is 635. We have newly met approx. 40 local individuals and approx. 10 officials of various govt depts. The Braidwood Fishing Club has come “on board” as an important contributor to the Mac Perch project. And to all of our members, thanks for your support and remember to sign up again & keep up with this great project. Never to forget Mark Lintermans our leading expert on Mac perch, a thousand thanks.

In between all the above, the group has been dealing with smaller but not less significant matters. The website has provided individuals to contact us with requests for information and help.

Singularly, the core council definitely need personal thanking. Sandra for all her catering, supplying us with the venue as well to delivering food to other meeting areas. Thanks Sandra.  Marina, took back the treasurer’s position last year– thanks Marina. Gail, our secretary who is the one who has given us the reputation of being efficient, thanks Gail. Paul Dann, our expert networker and  mediator, someone all groups must have. Thanks Paul. Su, for suggesting the Mac Perch project and taking it on with amazing energy, the likes FMR has not seen since Harry was arrested for protesting in the Monga. Thanks Su. Harry for his support in my first year as president. Thanks Harry. Flavia, our official bag lady and Alison our bag artist, please buy some of our bags they make great gifts for xmas and your money helps us to continue our work. To those who come to the meetings when they can, your fresh ideas are really appreciated, keep on coming.

We also have a new aptly named website thanks to Su Wild-River. [www.wild-river.com.au/fmr](http://www.wild-river.com.au/fmr) please bookmark this address and check it out. It has an interesting amount of information and photos. The Mac perch project is updated regularly. I wish to thank Paul Cockram for running our website till now.

That’s about it for the last year. And thanks again everyone for coming today and hope you are staying for the talk by Brendan Mackey.

Di Bott

President