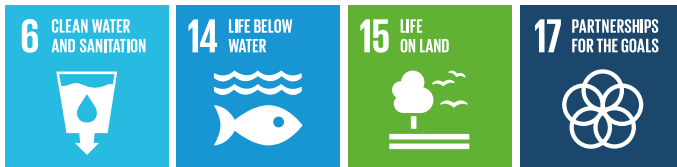




Managing wetlands for sensitive waters

Unitywater



Unitywater has 17 sewage treatment plants (STPs), 13 of which discharge to a waterway or the ocean, and the other four discharge to land. Unitywater has investigated options that would allow investment in catchment management works, such as wetlands, to offset increases in nutrient loads released from sewage treatment plants. As a result of investigations a large former sugar cane plantation (190 Ha) has been purchased that will become a managed wetland. This will enable nutrients to be taken up in vegetation.

Implementation

With its understanding of the importance of waterway health and operating within environmental licence standards, Unitywater is considering options to offset increases in nutrient loads released from sewage treatment plants.

The Queensland Government's nutrient management mechanism enables Unitywater to invest in alternative options to meet water emission discharge limits for sewage treatment plants, while delivering an improvement in water quality in receiving waterways. Nutrient management solutions include riparian area restoration, constructed wetlands and stormwater management. Unitywater has implemented nutrient management opportunities for the Maroochy River catchment and the Caboolture River.

Unitywater purchased two lots of former cane-farming land on River Road, Maroochy River as part of a larger program to improve the health of the rivers and creeks in the area. Much of the former cane land will be restored as wetlands. These wetlands will remove nutrients and sediments from the river, which will improve river health.

Unitywater will be able to offset the amount of nutrients removed by these wetlands against the nutrients discharged to the Maroochy River following treatment of the local community's sewage.

The project has led to further opportunities including the potential for an education/tourist centre for this site, to bring together neighbouring sites, which include a 15 megawatt solar plantation built and run by Sunshine Coast Council, and a State owned forest reserve, to provide an eco-information hub and tourist destination. Other future nutrient management opportunities to explore include Yandina Creek Wetland, Caboolture River, Pine River, South Pine River, and the Mooloolah River.

Benefit / Outcome

- Environmental outcomes at lower cost using alternative approach.
- Improved river health.
- Improved stakeholder relationships.

Future References

For more information please go to Unitywater's website (unitywater.com.au/Coolum-Demonstration-Wetlands-Project).

