

Bus Load at Engineered Woodlands Field Day

Mr Tony Windsor MP accompanied 65 landholders at the Engineered Woodlands field day on 31st March.

The tour visited three demonstration sites: 'Kallaroo' and 'Alfoxton' in the Arding area, 'Lakeview' near Uralla and 'Blaxland' in the Wollun area.

Project coordinator Mr Shane Andrews said, "There was a good roll up to the field day, no doubt in part due to the great interest in the carbon issue that was discussed avidly.

"It was very pleasing to see the number of people interested in the concept and the opportunity to share some of the early findings and farmer experiences," he said.

Topics covered included site selection, species selection, establishment practices, engineered woodland design, grazing management, and the future management of the woodlands.

Also discussed at 'Lakeview' were the use of saltbush, acacias and tagasaste as potential fodder shrubs for the New England.

Peter Lytton-Hitchins, Southern New England Landcare Chair, launched four information sheets developed as part of the Engineered Woodlands project:

1. Tree Establishment
2. Design
3. Carbon Trading
4. Economic Aspects.

These are available at www.snelandcare.org.au and in the SNELCC office.

In the comfort and dry of the 'Blaxland' woolshed, the group heard from Shane Andrews about carbon flows in the rural landscape – focusing mainly on those functions that will be important to the "Carbon Tax Man".

James Street of 'Blaxland' and Sandra Eady (CSIRO) provided an overview of the recent Carbon Audit study conducted on 'Blaxland', which prompted much discussion. It seemed the majority of the participants were very surprised by the results.

James Street took the opportunity to highlight areas where the carbon accounting policies need refining to the Federal MP Tony Windsor.

David Thompson from the Northern Inland Forestry Investment Group spoke on the economic aspects of engineered woodlands, providing results from farm modelling, and the dollar returns of farm shelter and carbon trading from engineered woodlands.

The weather eased enough (as planned!) for the group to view the 'Blaxland' Engineered Woodland site, where James Street discussed the history of the paddock and his tree establishment practice.

James' site has established very well to the point where sheep have been re-introduced for short graze periods with the trees being well over 2 m tall at only 15 months old!

James also commented that the pasture condition and quality has improved markedly in the paddock due to the 20 month rest during the tree establishment phase.

Shane Andrews briefly discussed the use of engineered woodland's as carbon sinks.

"To me the greatest potential of engineered woodlands as a land use is their ability to act as a tree-based carbon sink while at the same time enhancing the capacity of the grazing enterprise in the same paddock. It's trees complimenting agriculture, not trees in competition with agriculture!" he said.

Many thanks to the landholders; Chris and Cindy Clonan; Jim and Robin Reid; Cam and Lel Banks; and James and Caroline Street who opened their properties and shared their experiences.

"All of the landholders with demonstration Engineered Woodlands on their properties did a great job, both in terms of the presentation of their plantings and in terms of their ability to communicate to the crowd and generate a great deal of interest," Mr. Andrews concluded.

Southern New England Landcare would like to acknowledge the continued support of Northern Inland Forestry Investment Group, the Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA and the Namoi CMA. Many thanks to the Kentucky School P&C for doing such a wonderful catering job on the day.

For more information, contact Shane Andrews on 0427 753808 or the Southern New England Landcare office on 6772 9123.



Above: Participants amongst the Engineered Woodland on site at 'Lakeview'.

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