

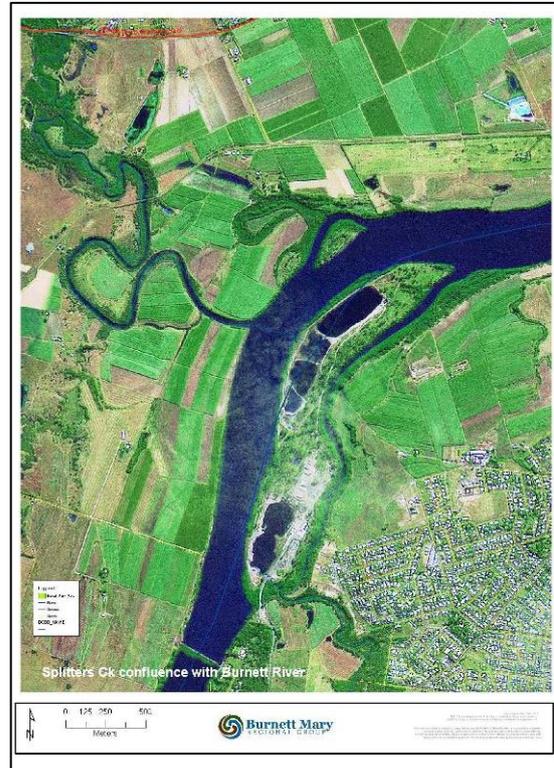
## Splitter's Creek - Heales Road Crossing – Retrofitting project

### Site Context:

The Splitter's Creek sub catchment has been described as a "little gem" in the Burnett River system. It has significant values including:

A lack of constructed fish passage barriers (weirs, dams, barrages), fish nursery habitats, a diversity of wetland habitat types including mangrove forests, brackish sedge lands, deepwater lagoons, billabongs and swamp forests, a regionally significant platypus population, EPBC listed Lungfish, listed rare riparian plant species, threatened regional ecosystems and a continuous riparian corridor with linkages to other native vegetation remnants [Tait, J (2006) DRAFT – *Splitters Creek Reach Values and Management Issues*. Wetland Care Australia]

Most significantly for fish habitat values, the confluence of the Splitters Ck with the Burnett River is downstream of the Ben Andersen Barrage which creates a significant barrier to fish migration in the Burnett River estuary. Splitters Ck therefore provides both brackish water habitats for particular species and preferences in various life stages, as well as connectivity to high value freshwater habitats.



### The Site – The Problem:

A concrete structure of three box culverts built at bed level. Generally provides fish passage at low flows but at medium flows was expected to create velocities greater than the swim speeds of the species likely to be moving in those flow conditions (Juvenile upstream migration & Adult spawning migration).



## Background to project:

The Friends of Splitter's Ck Group has been very active in developing and implementing projects with local landholders in partnership with local government, grower industry groups, Landcare and the Burnett Mary Regional Group.

The group had Wetland Care Australia consultant Jim Tait prepare a report on the reach based values and management issues for the whole system from which they have developed a reach based Management Plan. They also sought assistance from DPI&F to assess in more detail, some of the informal barriers that were identified in the WCA Draft report.

At the time when Tide to Table was getting started in the Burnett Mary region (August 2007), BMRG had commissioned DPI&F to complete a Biopass Strategy for the whole catchment and some funding was available for a demonstration fish barrier remediation project.

Through a number of on site meetings and a prioritization process, the Heales Road crossing was identified as a high value project for demonstration purposes, with minimal investment as well as strong community support.

On site meetings were held with local government (at that time Burnett Shire Council, now Bundaberg Regional Council) and an agreement was made about collaboration to achieve the desired outcomes for restoring fish passage at this site whilst maintaining the structural integrity and function of the road crossing.

DPI&F became the proponent for Tide to Table funds (which come through BMRG from Australian Government funding) with in kind provided by the Friends of Splitters Ck Group, Bundaberg Landcare and Burnett Shire Council.

## Implementation:

Environmental Engineer, Ross Kapitzke from James Cook University was engaged by DPI&F to undertake an assessment of the hydraulic conditions and fish passage requirements and to recommend a design strategy for the site which incorporated a small rock ramp to raise the water

level within one of the box culverts and a series of baffles within the culvert to facilitate fish movement through the culvert in medium flow conditions.



Construction was completed over a two week period in mid April 2008. Some minor modifications will be carried out in June when flows are minimal and DPI&F will incorporate monitoring at the site to assess the effectiveness of the structures.



## Community Engagement:

One of the aims of this collaborative pilot project was to raise awareness within local government about the need to consider fish passage in road crossing design and repair works as well as raising broader community awareness of fish habitat degradation issues. A number of activities have been organized to facilitate this.



Channel 7 Local News 16/04/08

Catchment to Coast Tour 09/05/08

The construction phase also generated much interest and debate amongst local landholders!