

SANTFA wins \$2.45 million for revegetation

WAYNE BROWN / ENVIRONMENTS BY DESIGN

SANTFA has secured \$2.45 million in funding that will enable members to revegetate parts of their properties.

The funds, from the Federal Government's Clean Energy Futures Biodiversity Fund, are to be used in the Murray Mallee.

Targets for the initiative are 1,000 ha of revegetation and improvement of 500 ha of existing native vegetation on land not considered suitable for farming.

"Once these targets are met SANTFA cannot guarantee further investment from the Biodiversity Fund so members would be well advised to get their applications in early," said SANTFA R&D Manager Greg Butler.

"This is a unique opportunity for SANTFA members who want to better manage land they understand is of low agricultural value.

"This is an opportunity not to be missed. Landowners will be able to access specialist advice and other resources at no charge to them. Some of the funding will also be used for follow-up and support to ensure the revegetated areas are well managed and provide maximum benefit for the environment and the landholder."

Mr Butler expects much of the funding to be used in revegetating land found to be not profitable for continuous agriculture due to topography, stones, salinity or erosion risk.

"Revegetating the top of sand dunes has been useful for several Mallee-based land management systems and this is one area that could be of interest to more growers in the region," he said.

Funding will be available only for areas of at least 10 ha and one of the conditions is that livestock must be excluded for 10 years from areas for which funds are provided.

The money is to be used on revegetation expertise and resources.

Objectives of the initiative are to link existing patches of native vegetation, improve existing bushland areas and increase biodiversity for the long-term sustainability of agricultural systems and the environment.

Growers who access the Mallee restoration package will also be able to investigate the carbon sequestration potential of revegetation and explore aspects of carbon trading.

"Carbon trading is not an essential part of the program but SANTFA wants to provide a cross section of members with detailed financial assessments so they can consider carbon trading as part of a process of developing case studies for the benefit of SANTFA members," Mr Butler said.

"We will provide information to SANTFA members regarding carbon farming as the project develops."

The project is scheduled to run for five years, but the earlier interested landholders can be identified and an implementation schedule developed the better organised and successful the project will be.

Successful applicants will be expected to make a significant contribution to the initiative, particularly in the areas of property planning, project design and management including weed and pest control.

Many are also expected to be involved in collecting local seed resources for use in the revegetation initiative.

Control of rabbits will be essential. Sites with high populations of rabbits will not be included in the program until the pests have been controlled.

The Clean Energy Futures Biodiversity

funding is to be used on land in an area bounded by the Victorian Border to the east, the River Murray on the west and north, and a line down to approximately Pinnaroo and back to Taillem Bend.

However, there may be potential for similar initiatives in other districts and SANTFA is keen to hear from members in other areas regarding the biodiversity fund and carbon farming.

"Providing us with your ideas will enable us to gauge the potential for future funding applications or corporate sponsorship opportunities," Mr Butler said.

"We can also link landholders up with their local Natural Resource Management Boards, who might be aware of other similar opportunities."

Wayne Brown, principal of Environments by Design, has been appointed Project Manager for the biodiversity revegetation program.

Mr Brown has more than 25 years experience in large-scale revegetation and land management projects in SA, with skills in the areas of landscape design, species selection and technical implementation processes. He has been instrumental in the adoption of direct seeding of native species in Southern Australia.

For more information, or to register interest in the scheme, contact the SANTFA office on 8842 4278 or email admin@sanfta.com.au



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