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### **Best Holiday Wishes to SoilCare Members**

Since the SoilCare Inc AGM in November 2009 the membership has increased from 143 to 180 families. We have enjoyed a very busy year with field days, workshops and the biological farming TAFE classes. Our major event of the year, SoilCare Expo, attracted more than 300 people who braved the stormy weather to learn more about healthy soil.

#### **Thank you to the individuals who make it all happen...**

I would like to acknowledge the members of the Executive Committee who served during 2010 (Alan Coates, Pam Woods, Tony Walker and Phil McCarthy) for their continued effort and personal commitment to SoilCare. In particular, I would like to express my appreciation to SoilCare Secretary, Pam Woods, for her enthusiastic 'can do' attitude and Treasurer, Tony Walker, for a special attitude that keeps the accounts and book-keeping in the black with all reports submitted efficiently and on-time. I must include in this acknowledgment Dave Forrest, former committee member, who never reminds me that he is no longer on the committee when I ask for, yet another, favour.

I would like to also recognise the Events Sub-Committee members for their many volunteer hours spent to plan and execute the two major events of the 2010, SoilCare Expo and the SoilCare/TAFE 'Regenerating Our Soils' workshops with Paul Hepperly. The Sub-Committee members, Maurice Collins, Janet Durham, Abigail Jenkins, Debra Lewis, Kate Thompson, Phil McCarthy, Kerrie O'Neill (who also reports on SoilCare activities in the Rural Weekly), Andrew Starkey, Sue Wiley and Pam Woods spent 12 long meetings and countless hours on phones and computers planning the events.

#### **Thank you to organisations that support and fund our activities...**

- ✚ Australian Government - most SoilCare activities during the past year have been funded by the Australian Government through the CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY program. This project makes it possible for us to sponsor the TAFE Biological Farming courses and field days as well as PestWeb activities.
- ✚ TAFE Wollongbar- Phil Harvey and the agriculture staff who are essential to SoilCare projects
- ✚ The Northern Rivers CMA who funded the Ground Covers project and sponsor SoilCare Expo
- ✚ Toshiba and Landcare Australia sponsor PestWeb activities and SoilCare Expo
- ✚ Richmond Landcare a partner & sponsor for many activities including SoilCare Expo
- ✚ I & I NSW staff who support SoilCare Expo as well as other activities

I would like to extend another thank-you to Sue Wiley who has enthusiastically offered to be our first Membership Secretary. With a membership of 180 families we certainly need a person devoted to memberships.

Last but not least, thank you to all SoilCare members who continue to support and guide SoilCare towards positive outcomes for our organisation and our community.

On behalf of the SoilCare Committee I would like to wish everyone a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous 2011. Cheers, Bonnie

Highlights of just some of the activities we enjoyed during 2010.

### February 2010

- SoilCare/CFOC/ TAFE Biological Farming course started at Macksville with Alan Coates
- SoilCare screened 'Dirt: The Movie'
- **PestWeb in-field workshop on identification of Macadamia Nutborer parasitised eggs with Alan Coates**



### March

- **WHAT, WHY, WHERE and HOW to plant your autumn ground covers with Dave Forrest**
- 26 March – 'Ecology of the Fruit Spotting Bug' (FSB) with Dr Ruth Huwer; infield monitoring for FSB; how to catch FSB; update on the FSB Project
- 30 March – FSB Forum meeting



### April 2010

- **SoilCare/CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY/TAFE Biological Farming for Grazing and Cropping started with Dave Forrest at Casino TAFE**
- 5 SoilCare members attend the HAL and AMS sponsored workshop in Brisbane to further a cross industry research and extension program for the control of fruit spotting bug (FSB).
- **'Harvesting macadamias off a green carpet', Biological Farming farm walk at Peter and Meg Fleming's macadamia farm at McLeans Ridges.**



## May 2010

- PestWeb workshop – Fruit Spotting Bug hedge
- **SoilCare /Northern Rivers CMA bus safari to visit five farms involved in the soil health project where innovative farmers are using ground covers, cover crops, insectary plantings and compost to improve soil and farm health.**



## June 2010

- **'Increasing soil organic carbon'... with Dr Yin Chan (right with Brett de Hayre, National Landcare Facilitator)**
- Soil Analysis Interpretation' with Graham Lancaster from EAL



## July 2010

- **SoilCare/CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY TAFE Advanced Biological Farming started at Wollongbar with Dave Forrest**
- SoilCare/CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY TAFE Biological Farming with Alan Coates started at Wollongbar



## August 2010

- PestWeb Workshop - Macadamia Lace Bug Identification/Management/ workshop with Alan Coates

## September 2010

- Macadamia Nutborer Workshop with Alan Coates and Paul Moosberger at TAFE Wollongbar
- SoilCare/CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY TAFE Biological Farming for Macadamia Production with Alan Coates started at Gympie

## October 2010

- PestWeb workshop for new members
- SoilCare/CFOC - TAFE Biological Farming for dairy farmers started with Dave Forrest
- **'Legumes and Herbs of the North Coast' workshop with Carol Rose (I & I NSW Kempsey) at Wollongbar TAFE**



- **November 2010 - SoilCare Expo 2010 at the Wollongbar Agricultural Research Centre. Over 300 people attended the day with 36 exhibitors showcasing their sustainable soil management products & services**



- **SoilCare/TAFE – Regenerating Our Soils Workshops with Paul Hepperly in Grafton, Tweed, Casino and Wollongbar**

- SoilCare AGM 2010

## December 2010

- Bio char update with SoilCare member, Lukas Van Zwieten



## Other SoilCare activities for 2010:

- **In March SoilCare conducted a survey of members to gauge interest for future events.**
- **FSB Bio Control Initiative**

Early in 2010 SoilCare/PestWeb members initiated the Fruit Spotting Bug Biological Control project which the Australian Macadamia Society took to HAL with a view to developing a cross industry funded project. This project is being funded and is now underway. I would like to thank Pam Woods and Andrew Starkey for their considerable efforts in organising this initiative along with the other committee members, Frank Adcock, Alan Coates, Cath Ford, Dave Forrest and the DPI partners, Ruth Huwer and Craig Maddox. Richard Llewellyn has also been very helpful in the initiative. Thank you to all the committee members and our partners for the time, effort and enthusiasm they have expended to further this initiative.

- **Bulk Buying**

With members supporting the idea of bulk buying of sustainable farming products a sub-committee was formed to investigate a system or framework for operating. The sub-committee requested members to nominate products/timing for bulk buying opportunities.

## ➤ **Gate Signs**

SoilCare gate signs started appearing on SoilCare member farm gates this year. We ordered 25 signs in the first order and will order more as needed.

## ➤ **PestWeb Website**

Our PestWeb website received a facelift this 2010. It is more inviting and colourful now and the interactive map has had some improvements as well. During 2011 we hope to upload useful information regarding pest monitoring and individual insect pest information.

## **What's on for 2011?**

**Biological Farming Courses** - Through continued funding from the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program we will offer more TAFE Biological Farming courses next year. During the first semester we will run courses in Grafton and Wollongbar. Biological Farming for avocado production will be offered in the first semester as well as an extension for the dairy biological farming group. The basic Biological Farming course will also run at Wollongbar if we have sufficient numbers.

**'Farmscaping'** – Farmscaping is a whole-farm approach to pest management. It can be defined as the use of hedgerows, insectary plants, cover crops (also for plant/soil nutrition) and water reservoirs to attract and support populations of beneficial organisms such as insects, bats, and birds of prey. Farmscaping, like other components of sustainable agriculture, requires more knowledge and management skill on the part of the farmer than conventional pest management. The investment of knowledge and management may yield such benefits as reduction in pesticide use, savings in pesticide costs, reduced risk of chemical residues, healthy soil, a safer farm environment and more on-farm wildlife.

We plan to hold a series of short workshops on 'farmscaping' during 2011. We have identified a few individuals from Australian universities and CSIRO who we will invite to share their research findings on beneficial insect ecology/habitat.

**PestWeb** – We will continue to develop our PestWeb program. Visit the site at [www.pestweb.org.au](http://www.pestweb.org.au)

**Market Value of Biological Capital** – Can we work out a commercial value for the ecological relationships that build production capacity and improve profitability over and above simply cutting costs? We will look to economists who are doing exactly that and learn how we can make these assessments for our farms.