

This project is supported by the Australian River Restoration Centre, through funding from the Australian Government.



ALLANS MUNNS 'SUFFOLK VALE'

Corporate conservation



Sustainable production and environmental responsibility are priorities for investment company MH Premium Farms, who own Suffolk Vale and Springfield, prime lamb operations at Boorowa, New South Wales.

According to farm manager Allan Munns, MH Premium Farms decided to become involved in the new Rivers of Carbon project because they felt they had a responsibility to be proactive about managing the environment and protecting their on-farm resources.

A five kilometre stretch of the Boorowa River runs through Suffolk Vale. Speaking about the project Allan said:

“It also fits with our production goals of reducing labour costs and improving stock management. Fencing off creeks and riparian areas has provided significant cost savings in running our farms.”

FARM FACTS

Farmer: MH Premium Farms
Location: Boorowa, New South Wales
Property size: Suffolk Vale 2185 hectares, Springfield 2858 hectares
Enterprises: Composite prime lambs, Angus and Hereford cross cattle
Annual rainfall: 625 millimetres

“The stock losses were time consuming and these days you don’t have the labour to be always fixing flood gates or getting stock back from neighbouring properties or across the river.”

“The Rivers of Carbon project provided the incentive, and the company was more than happy to get right into it.”

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION

Suffolk Vale and Springfield total 5043 hectares, and run a commercial sheep breeding operation comprising 10,000 composite breeding ewes along with a herd of 650 Angus and Hereford cross cattle. They aim to finish off about 12,000 prime lambs per year.

The pasture is a mix of native perennial grass species including Red Grass (*Bothriocloa*), Weeping Grass (*Microlaeana*) and Spear Grass (*Stipa sp*), as well as improved perennial pastures such as *Phalaris*, Cocksfoot, sub clovers and lucerne. This area is also home to a range of significant bird species including the Superb Parrot.

Involvement in the Rivers of Carbon project builds on earlier work completed at Springfield, where a two kilometre stretch of the Pudman Creek was fenced off and revegetated. The Pudman Creek is home to the endangered

native fish species, the Southern Pygmy Perch. At Suffolk Vale, the riparian area that has been fenced off covers the entire five kilometre (50 hectare) section along the Boorowa River, which is a permanent water source. The fencing was completed in 2013. Materials were funded through the Rivers of Carbon project with Allan providing the labour. This included fencing, off-river watering for stock, and tubestock.

“The river corridor has been fenced wide enough to prevent the fence being lost if the river floods, we have also fenced it according to the contours of the land which will provide areas where we’ll carry out some revegetation,” Allan said.

“There is also enough remnant riparian vegetation existing in patches along the river to enable natural regeneration of reeds, shrubs, grasses and trees,” he said.





As part of the Rivers of Carbon project, a five kilometre stretch of the Boorowa River which runs through Suffolk Vale has been fenced off and will be revegetated.

“The river corridor has been fenced wide enough to prevent the fence being lost if the river floods, we have also fenced it according to the contours of the land, which will provide areas where we’ll carry out some revegetation. There is also enough remnant riparian vegetation existing in patches along the river to enable natural regeneration of reeds, shrubs, grasses and trees.” - Allan Munns





REVEGETATION FOCUS

At Springfield, a 'shotgun' mix of native species was used to revegetate the riparian areas and only the River Red Gums survived. The revegetation at Suffolk Vale will be more tailored.

Some of the proposed tree species include River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*), Blakely's Red Gum (*E. blakelyi*) and Apple Box (*E. bridgesiana*), along with several different varieties of Acacias, Bottlebrushes and Teatrees, all of which are found in the local areas. Managing ground cover will also be a priority to assist with regeneration of native grasses to reduce erosion.



“We want to focus on improving the water quality, so we need to get the ground cover and trees established. This will stabilise the banks and encourage regeneration. Now that the river has been fenced off, I think a lot of natural regeneration will happen anyway.”

The project provides alternative water sources for livestock, and troughs are currently being installed, along with another 3.5 kilometres of poly pipe to access the river water. New dams will also be dug, with these costs not part of the Rivers of Carbon project. According to Allan, the mix of troughs and dams will provide sufficient water for livestock.

“We have a combination of bore water and surface water, so the additional water sources will fit with the system Suffolk Vale has in place already.”

“We are installing the water troughs on the paddock ridges away from the river which will

encourage the sheep to graze the paddocks more evenly, and not put so much pressure on lower lying areas of the paddocks nearer to the river,” Allan said.

Some of the fences have been placed so they can be used as laneways to allow access to the sheep and cattle yards.

Ongoing management of the project site will include Crack Willow control and strategic crash grazing to manage fire fuel and enhance biodiversity. Site monitoring will be carried out by Greening Australia using photo points and the Rapid Assessment of Riparian Condition tool.

Follow the progress of farmers like Allan involved in the Rivers of Carbon project through regular updates on the project’s website:

www.riversofcarbon.org.au





MH Premium Farms manager Allan Munns and his son Fergus on the banks of the Boorowa River at Suffolk Vale, Boorowa, New South Wales. According to Allan, the company decided to get involved in the Rivers of Carbon project to better manage the environment and improve their production goals.

This story was written by Kylie Nicholls in collaboration with Allan Munns.



Kylie Nicholls
fk.nicholls@bigpond.com

Rivers of Carbon is managed by Siwan Lovett and Lori Gould.



Siwan Lovett
siwan.lovett@arrc.com.au



Lori Gould
lgould@act.greeningaustralia.org

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RIVERS OF CARBON PROJECT

R_{CC} The Rivers of Carbon project is extending riparian corridors into the wider terrestrial landscape to facilitate species movement in response to climate change, as well as leveraging biodiverse Carbon Farming Initiatives in these highly productive areas. Science and local knowledge are being used to identify priority areas for on-ground works with a particular focus on restoring and linking threatened species habitat.

Allan Munns 'Suffolk Vale' is one of many stories that you can read about at www.riversofcarbon.org.au/our-stories



Australian Government

