

MEDIA RELEASE

22 January 2021

EMBARGOED until 1:00PM 26 January 2021

Local Leaders Honoured for Dedication to Natural Resource Management

Improving the management of our region's natural assets has become a part of Australia Day award ceremonies for Shire Councils in the Southern Gulf region. Local Governments with Southern Gulf NRM support present Sarus Crane Awards in recognition and celebration of individuals and groups making significant contributions in the field of natural resource management.

Geoff Penton, CEO of Southern Gulf NRM, said "I would like to congratulate all the 2021 winners and thank them for their tireless contributions to a productive and sustainable future for the Southern Gulf region. Their recognition through the award is well deserved".

The five 2021 winners are Paul Johnson (Mount Isa), Drew and Annie Hacon (Cloncurry), Colin Malone (McKinlay), John and Susan Bellingham (Richmond) and Trevor Pugh (Flinders).

Collin Malone is recognised for his enduring efforts and accomplishments as the longstanding McKinlay Shire Council Ranger. Colin continues to run the McKinlay Shire stock yards, feral animal baiting program and has overseen the clearing of prickly acacia and mesquite from all Council managed lands. A wealth of knowledge to the region, Colin shares his wisdom with regional landholders to improve land management on a larger scale.

The Richmond Shire Council award goes to John and Susan Bellingham for sustainable land management with particular focus on soil conservation. John and Susan practise excellent grazing land management and are very mindful of the vital role soil plays for productive pastures. They continually seek opportunities to learn and have hosted field days that have brought erosion control experts to the region to further educate landholders in best practice land management.

ENDS

For further information or comment:

Geoff Penton, CEO Southern Gulf NRM
p. 0408871978 e. geoff.penton@southerngulf.com.au

More information on the award and 2021 recipients is included below. Images provided on request.

SARUS CRANE AWARD

Background to the Sarus Crane Award

Since 2007, Southern Gulf NRM has proudly recognised individuals and groups making a significant contribution to the fields of land management and the environment by means of the well regarded Sarus Crane Award. That Award was announced at the Annual General Meeting of Southern Gulf NRM (then known as Southern Gulf Catchments). From 2016, Southern Gulf NRM offered partnerships with local councils in our region to offer the Sarus Crane Award as part of Australia Day Award ceremonies. The objective is to enable wider recognition of achievement across all shires in the Southern Gulf region.



Story of the Sarus Crane Award's name

The iconic Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*), which features in the organisation's logo, was picked for the name of the Award in 2007. The Sarus Crane is the tallest flying bird in the world with some adult males reaching up to 1.8 metres tall. The only known breeding area for Australian Sarus Cranes is in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria. This area is important not only for native flora and fauna species that call this region home but also for the numerous migratory bird species that travel vast distances along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to reach these feeding grounds. This bird signifies the distinct environmental values of the Southern Gulf region and its importance at local and international scales.

About Southern Gulf NRM

Southern Gulf NRM is the natural resource management (NRM) organisation for the Southern Gulf region of north west Queensland. We work with our partners and the community to protect our region's natural resources and maintain the prosperity of industries and communities that rely on these. The region comprises all the land whose creeks and rivers run into the south of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

2021 SARUS CRANE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Flinders Shire Council

Trevor Pugh is the Caretaker at Elvira, Elton Downs and Saranac. As caretaker he has almost singlehandedly cleared Elton Downs and Saranac of prickly acacia and is following up on Elvira after a joint Southern Gulf-Desert Channels Queensland project which cleared the property of the invasive plant.

Richmond Shire Council

John and Susan Bellingham are conservative grass managers and innovative prickly acacia fighters. They are very mindful of the value of their soil and do everything they can to prevent soil loss. In recent years, they undertook a major project, partly funded by Southern Gulf NRM, with the construction of whoa boys on all station tracks and fence lines. He did far more than required under the project. John and Susan have hosted Southern Gulf NRM Erosion Control field days and often attend extension events. They actively seek opportunities to develop their land management practices.

McKinlay Shire Council

Colin Malone is the longstanding McKinlay Shire Council Ranger. He runs the stock yards, feral animal baiting program and provides advice to landholders. He has overcome many challenges to oversee and manage the clearing of prickly acacia and mesquite from all Council-managed lands.

Cloncurry Shire Council

Drew and Annie Hacon have undertaken intensive infrastructure work over the last two years to achieve more even grazing pressure across the property. They have fenced off several dams and installed many new water points associated with each fenced off dam to water adjacent paddock corners that were previously undergrazed, as well as subdividing paddocks to spell overgrazed areas. They have undertaken earthworks to address erosion on station tracks and fence lines. In July 2020 Drew and Annie hosted Southern Gulf NRM Erosion Control workshops presented by Darryl Hill. Many of the producers subsequently requested on-property visits by Darryl.

Mount Isa City Council

Paul Johnson is President of Mount Isa Landcare Group and Treasurer of Gregory River Landcare Group. He is a longstanding member of the groups and has been an active contributor to environmental and heritage projects. He is a corner stone of the community groups as well as a member of local Rotary.