

Fitzroy Basin maintained C grade for 2017-18

The region's eighth waterway health report card was released today by Fitzroy Partnership for River Health, providing the most up-to-date information on the health of Fitzroy Basin waterways.

Fitzroy Basin's aquatic ecosystem health has been assessed for 2017-18, with the Basin's collective health awarded a C grade for the second consecutive year. Summary grades were also presented for the 11 freshwater catchments and the estuary.

Fitzroy Partnership for River Health Executive Officer, Dr. Leigh Stitz said catchment results remained stable or recorded only minor shifts in scores and this led to the Fitzroy Basin retaining an overall C grade.

"Grades for drinking water and agricultural use suitability were also awarded. Drinking water again received A's for Rockhampton and Central Highlands Regional Council townships and a mix of A's and B's for stock and crop suitability of water across the Basin," Dr. Stitz said.

"The overall score for ecosystem health for the Fitzroy Basin was comparable to last year, this is due to similar conditions to the previous year influencing the same overall results.

"The Comet catchment improved to a B grade in this report card. The estuary, Lower Isaac, Fitzroy and Upper Dawson catchments maintained B grades; while all other catchments maintained C grades.

"Slight shifts in catchment scores, both up and down, were recorded for a large number of other catchments however these were not significant enough to alter overall catchment grades," she said.

As part of our reporting process we examine climatic factors such as rainfall. The amount, duration and intensity, impacts directly on water quality and ecology and is a natural climatic driver.

Like the previous year, eastern catchments received above average rainfall, with dry conditions in the west and large areas of central and western Queensland receiving below average rainfall for the year influencing results.

"The report card, now in its eighth year is made possible thanks to our partners - 24 organisations from different backgrounds working together and providing funding and data to enable the Partnership to create detailed reports year on year," Dr. Stitz said.

"More than 450,000 sample results, contributed by our partners from 187 sites across the Basin, were assessed and analysed to develop the report card grades. Lack of ecology data has prevented ecology from being included in grade development for some catchments again this year.

"Trend data for the Fitzroy Basin and all catchments is available for the past eight years of reporting as well as trend data for the past 20 years for the estuary and indicates that despite being a working catchment, the Fitzroy Basin is quite resilient.

"The Independent Science Panel have once again guided report card development and scrutinised results to ensure methods used for assessment are locally relevant and based on best available science.

"We encourage central Queenslanders to visit www.riverhealth.org.au to access the latest report card results for ecosystem health, agricultural suitability, and drinking water," she said.

Hard copies of the report card are available for use at events, for school resources and to display at businesses throughout the Fitzroy Basin, please email info@riverhealth.org.au to arrange copies.

Fitzroy Partnership for River health was formed in 2012 and includes organisations from government, agriculture, resources, industry, research and community, working together to provide a more complete picture of river health in the Fitzroy Basin.

To find out more about the report card visit www.riverhealth.org.au

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