

New monitoring program provides better picture of Fitzroy Basin condition

For more than a decade, waterway health collective Fitzroy Partnership for River Health has reported on the condition of Fitzroy Basin waterways and in a significant change in 2023, data from a new monitoring program has helped to create a more complete picture of waterway health for the latest Report Card.

The new Fitzroy Basin-Wide Monitoring Program commenced in 2021 and improves the spread of data across the Basin, with the Basin attaining a 'C' (Fair) grade overall for the 2021-22 year.

Partnership Chair Katy Steele said the new program provided a welcome boost for the Partnership and community with a more representative spread of sampling.

"Ecological data was collected for the first time in the Callide, Upper Dawson, Fitzroy and Lower Isaac catchments this year," Mrs Steele said.

"The overall grade and trend for the Basin continues to track at a relatively stable level which is heartening to see."

"The better spread of data across the Basin helps to provide a more complete picture of ecosystem health."

"The Fitzroy Basin is a hub of agriculture and resources industries so we cannot expect our Basin to be in pristine condition, however with significant natural assets, ongoing monitoring of water quality is critical, and our partners are committed to this year after year.

"In addition to reporting on results, FPRH plays a crucial role in facilitating industry collaboration in the region to encourage best-practice waterway management."

"Given the Fitzroy is a working Basin incorporating a strong resources, industry, agriculture and urban presence, it is good news to note ecosystem health is largely maintained even in years of droughts and flooding rains.

"In the 2021-22 year of this Report Card there was a record year of rainfall, which was a contributor to an 'A' (Excellent) grade being achieved for barramundi recruitment in the estuarine zone," she said.

"Ecology was sampled in more areas under the new program with 10 of the 11 catchments sampled with most catchments attaining a 'C' (Fair) to a 'D' (Poor) result, which may be attributed to range of factors including land use, climate, hydrology, ground cover and geology.

Media Release

Thursday 20 April 2023

“This program is the first of its kind that examines the impacts of industry at a basin-wide scale.

The program allows Fitzroy Partnership for River Health (FPRH) to monitor changes over time, to monitoring cumulative impacts and in turn, better inform industry best practice.

“This could lead to improved understanding of regional water quality guidelines that protect ecosystem health and is another example of how reporting at a whole of Basin scale supports improved management actions.

“Through our stewardship reporting, partners highlight the work they do that goes above and beyond legislative requirements.”

The Fitzroy Partnership for River Health is supported by the Queensland, Australian and local governments, industry, community and other partners. The ongoing support of our Major Partners and Partners is acknowledged as critical to our ongoing success -

<https://riverhealth.org.au/our-partners/>.

Interested community members can drill down to the detail in each catchment on our website www.riverhealth.org.au.

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

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