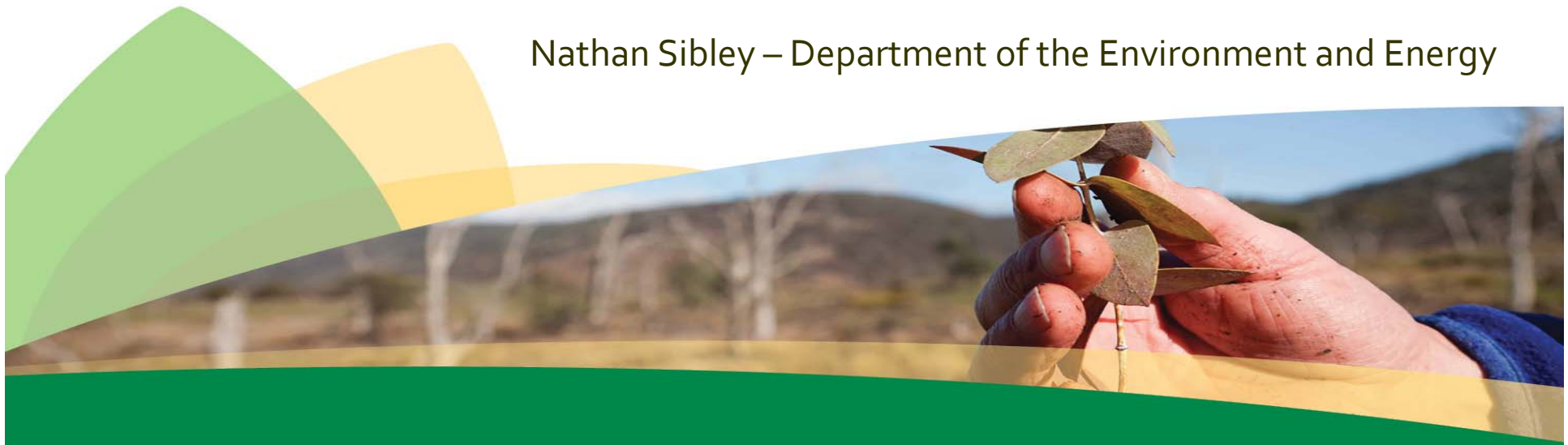




MERIT: a new paradigm in Natural Resource Management investment data capture for the Australian Government.

Nathan Sibley – Department of the Environment and Energy



What is MERIT

- MERIT - Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvement Tool
 - collect and store planning, monitoring and reporting data for Australian Government NRM investment.



Background

Reporting:

- Didn't integrate into larger story
- Poor public information
- Many information holders, shadow systems, few champions
- Systems for spending, not reporting
- Little cumulative public learning
- Departmental black box...

ANAO (1997, 2004, 2008): we've been spotted



The fundamentals

- Open source
- Data upload / download
- Data and info is being used – aggregation, transparency, standardisation, stories exposed
- Data quality is improving (junk in, junk out)
- System continues to mature
- Not a silver bullet



http://fieldcapture-test.ala.org.au/ Home | Field Capture

(446A5BFF-8F33-4440-B5... Citrix XenApp - Applicatio... Google Maps Google Home Page - Australian G...

CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

MERI data capture prototype Home About Dashboard Peter Brenton My projects Administration Logout

Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Tool (MERIT) Beta

The Online MERI Tool is being developed in collaboration with the [Atlas of Living Australia](#), and will soon be available for Biodiversity Fund and Caring for our Country funding recipients to report on their projects. It is anticipated that the tool will be available for funding recipients to use later in 2013.

This tool aims to enhance the reporting process by allowing funding recipients to record and upload data about the progress of their projects on a continual basis and submit reports online. It will also enable information sharing within and across NRM communities and the broader public.

Filter results

Program

- Biodiversity Fund (353)
- Caring for our Country (202)
- NRM Planning for Climate Change (51)
- Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund (45)
- National Wildlife Corridors Plan (9)
- choose more...

Sub Program

- Round 1 (376)
- Indigenous Protected Areas (48)
- Reef Rescue (40)
- Round 2 (23)
- Targeted Area Grants (18)
- choose more...

Organisation

- Department of Trade and Investment Regional Infrastructure and Services (21)
- Department of Environment and Primary Industries (20)
- Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources (17)
- OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE (10)
- Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (7)
- choose more...

State

http://fieldcapture-test.ala.org.au/report/dashboard

New South Wales (191)

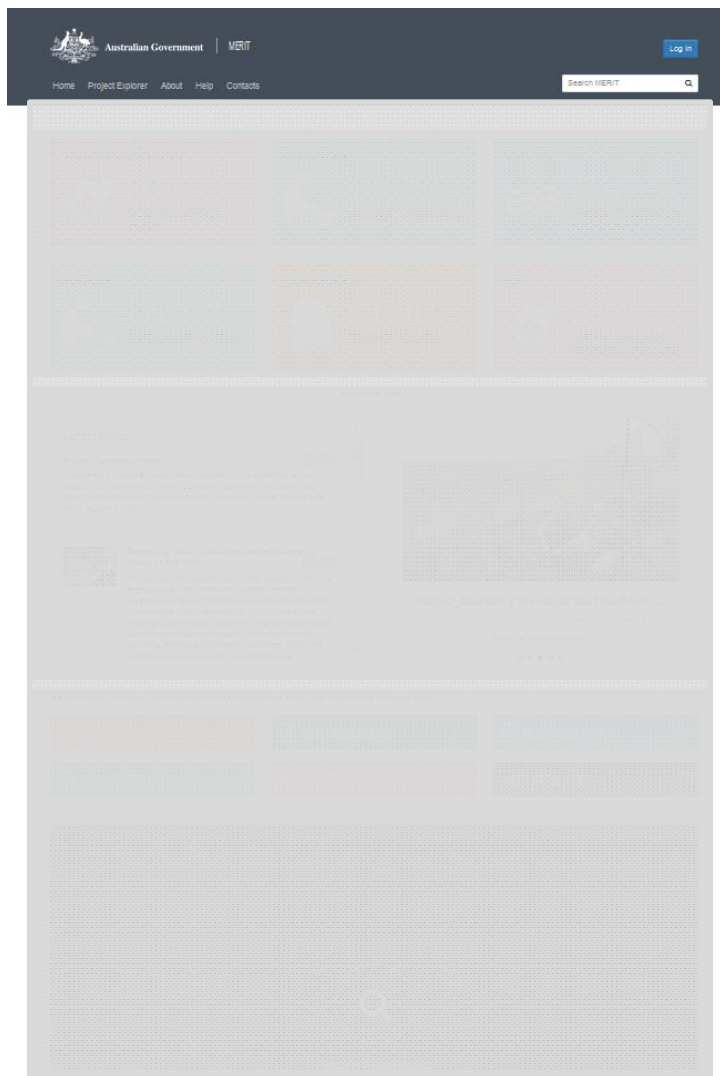
Map Projects

Google

812 projects with 267 sites

Map data ©2013 Google, MapIT Terms of Use

5:11 PM 17/10/2013



[Home](#) / [Projects](#) / Managing the natural resource base

[Add to favourites](#)

Managing the natural resource base

[Overview](#) [Documents](#) [MERI Plan](#) [Activities](#) [Sites](#) [Dashboard](#)

Recipient: Greater Sydney Local Land Services

Programme: National Landcare Programme Regional Funding

Project start: 01-01-2015 **Project finish:** 30-06-2018

Project Status: ACTIVE

Grant id: A0000011165G

External id: NLP-Rt128

The project will deliver an integrated landscape approach to promote sustainable agriculture practices. These practices will increase productivity and resilience, improve land management, identify opportunities to store additional carbon and support the maintenance of ecosystem services. Sustainable land management outcomes will be achieved through a combination of capacity building activities such as training, demonstration, extension and the support, promotion and adoption of innovation as well as delivering incentives that are consistent with national, state, regional and local priorities for sustainable agriculture. Specific projects will address sustainable practices such as grazing management, water use efficiency, energy use efficiency, nutrient management, soil management, reduction of invasive species' impact and support for aquatic based industries.

Project blog

Project photos



Participants get hands on at a Paddock...



Fencing to protect an endangered ecol...



Menangle Fox Campaign



Menangle Fox Campaign - first workshop

News & events



Protecting habitat and water quality along Wyong Creek

Invalid date

This project is for the installation of 2100 metres of stock exclusion fencing along Wyong Creek at Manyale Farm preventing cattle accessing 3.4 ha of riparian Lowland Rainforest Endangered Ecological Community. The fence will also protect the quality of the waterway as excluding stock will prevent erosion of the creek bank. Minor bank restoration works will also be undertaken to prevent further riverbank erosion along a 10 - 20 m section of Wyong Creek.



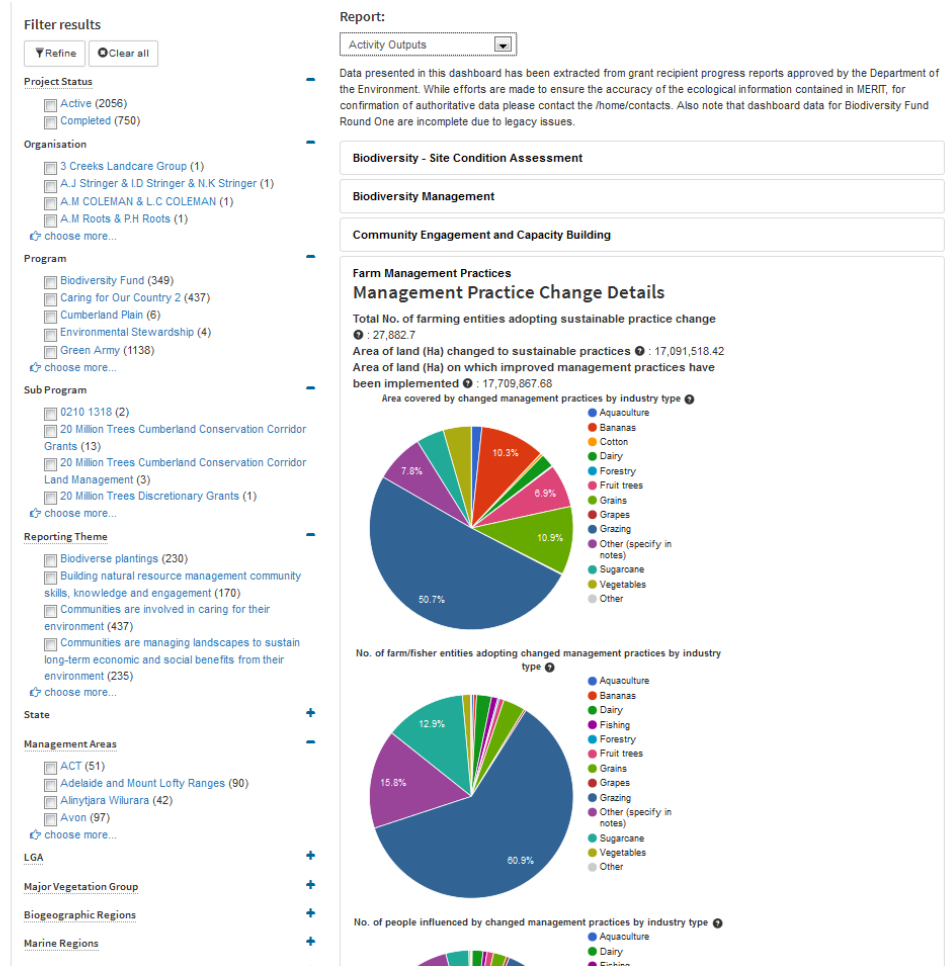
Protecting riparian habitat and improving stock access

Invalid date

More than 600 m of fencing will be installed to exclude stock from access to Jilibby Creek on the lower boundary of the property located at Dooralong on the Central Coast of NSW. The fencing will protect the waterway and lowland rainforest area along the creek to prevent stock damage to 1.55 hectares of endangered lowland rainforest in a riparian zone and to also protect the quality downstream in what is considered a significant waterway. The fencing will enable the property owners to allow stock to graze on the lower half of the property which is currently not practised due to concerns that stock will damage the waterway and lowland rainforest.

Public dashboard

- outputs by themes
- filterable
- dynamic

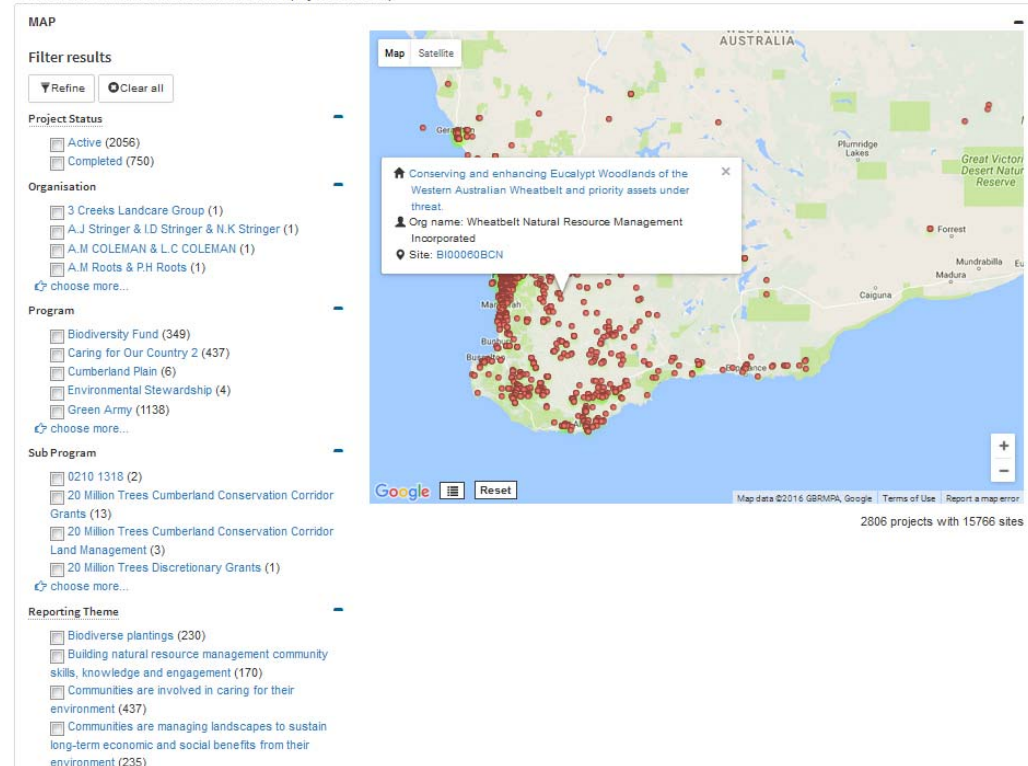


Project locations

- Zoom in and out
- filterable
- dynamic

Project Explorer

Use the facets on the left to narrow the selection of projects on the map



Usage

- Average 400 log-ins per day (weekdays) with peaks exceeding 5000 per day around key reporting periods.
- Bounce rate is 21%




What data do we collect?

- 2 804 projects (699 completed)
- 15 658 works areas mapped
- Wide range of on-ground actions
- Aggregation capability
- Linkages to recovery plans, other strategies
- Project partners



What we are learning from the system

1. Spatial data tied to activity data is key.
 2. Good reporting needs to be a team effort, Department (policy/delivery) and recipients.
 3. Outcomes vary wildly and are really hard to capture in a single system
 4. With targeted programs MERIT can significantly streamline reporting
 5. If re-keying is required the Commonwealth losses out.
 6. Perceived bureaucratic burden isn't going away but neither is the need to justify expenditure.
- 

Continual improvement

1. Spatial data improvement
2. Clearer guidance up front on reporting
3. USING the data - greater buy in (not a black box)
4. Interoperability –
 - Reduce admin burden = more \$ on-ground
 - Aligned systems = better quality data for commonwealth.
5. Value add back
6. Full data downloads at the press of a button are coming soon.



Efficiency gains

- Resource savings
 - External: cost savings from existing systems (between \$4k and \$40k), and upfront requirements
 - Internal: reduced admin and staffing
- Stories are publicly accessible in real time



Efficiency gains cont'd

- On time reporting performance (from $<\sim 25\%$ on time to $>70\%$ in last 12 months*)
- Audit trail for reporting
- Less reliant on individual corporate knowledge
- Better track and plan work



The unfortunate reality...

- Most programs funded are not evaluated beyond the funding period (timing isn't good for outcomes – see next presentation)
- People move on, governments change, great projects can go un-noticed from a AG perspective

But,

- Geo-referenced photo points and monitoring data now available electronically for long term impact evaluation.



Independent evaluations and Research using our data

- The old days (2000-2012).....not a lot or not with our data
- Requests for data – contributing to scientific papers, book chapters, conference papers
- Aggregated data is public, filterable and searchable
- Full data set available under licence.
- Aus Gov evaluations using data not just case studies
- Opportunity.....



Want to know more?

- Check out MERIT -
<https://fieldcapture.ala.org.au/> or
- Google: MERIT
- Email MERIT@environment.gov.au
- Come see me after the session

