

Central Region

Marian Mil's main boiler suffered serious damage during preparations for steam trials. Workplace Health and Safety released the No. 1 Boiler site to Mackay Sugar progressively over the last weekend of May and has allowed evaluation of the scope of works to reinstate the boiler. Final inspections were to be completed by the 4th June, however work has commenced to prepare the boiler for reinstatement. Current estimates, with no wet weather allowance, indicate that the boiler should be returned to operation in early August.

Every effort will be made to reduce this timeline and bring the start-up forward where possible. The impact of this estimated downtime, with no wet weather delays, would be an extension of the crush by 12-14 days. A large amount of planning and implementation has gone into this work effort. An investigation into the chain of events that led to this incident is underway with the goal of reducing the possibility of a reoccurrence at all of the sites. Mackay Sugar will reallocate cane across the group as needed, to achieve relatively synchronised finish dates.

During the first week of crushing, the area received falls of rain from 40 – 60 mm. Although it affected the start of harvesting, it was welcomed to help support the 5.4 million-ton estimate for this season. The weather has been very warm up to the start of June. A lot of early planting has taken place with good germination. The rain was very welcome on top of ideal planting conditions.

The 38th Annual Conference of the Australian Society of Sugar Cane Technologists was held on the Wednesday 27 April 2016 - Friday 29 April 2016 at the Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre (MECC), Alfred Street, Mackay. The ASSCT conference was attended by 383 Members and delegates which included day registrations.

The Welcome & Official Opening of the Conference was Cr Greg Williamson, Mayor of Mackay Regional Council.

Keynote Speakers of the Conference was Pramod Chaudhari, Executive Chairman of Praj Industries and Simon Usher, Chief Executive of Bonsucro. Manufacturing and Agricultural sessions followed at this location.

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) presentations were made on Thursday morning. The Closing Ceremony was held on Friday 29th April, where the ASSCT President, Terry Doolan, announced the awardees for the best research paper and the best industry paper and poster papers. The Executive of the ASSCT announced the winners of the bursaries for 2016.

2016 PRESIDENT'S MEDALS President's medal for the best Research Paper: A Robson, MM Rahman, G Falzon, NK Verma, K Johansen, N Robinson, P Lakshmanan, B Salter, D Skocaj for the paper titled: Evaluating remote sensing technologies for improved yield forecasting and for the measurement of foliar nitrogen concentration in sugarcane.

BURSARY AWARDS Rod Rookwood Design Award: The award went to: David Ruhle for his paper titled: Cracking of prestressed concrete girders on BL Creek bridge. The recipient received a plaque and a \$500 cheque. Keeping it in the family, the Paul Qualiata Engineering Award – Donated by SEW – Eurodrive – TAFE went to: Steven Ruhle of Mackay Sugar.

Steven is currently an Instrumentation apprentice with Mackay Sugar at Marian Mill. He completed his Electrical Apprenticeship in 2015 and has been the Mackay Sugar Electrical Apprentice of the Year for 2014 and 2015.

Irrigators of Qld electricity charges are rise another 12.3%

Any plans for growing irrigated agriculture in Queensland and increase the value of farming to the state's economy will never progress if electricity prices are not brought under control.

The Variety Adoption Committee met on the 20th April

Major items discussed were:

- a. Current approved variety regulations will be discontinued on the 1 July 2016. Industry and government agreed that Industry will manage biosecurity of varieties.
- b. Currently the disease thresholds are only set for varieties that risk a region wide endemic.
- C. Barry Croft suggested one of the reasons the new system will be more flexible and more responsive than the past system where Industry had to apply to State Government when changes were needed.

Major items of discussion:

- a. Pachymetra - would like to see a trend toward more Pachymetra resistant commercial varieties in Central region.
- b. Fibre Quality Testing – Material needed from three different sources. Aiming to test clones earlier in the program: Accelerated rather than Max Prop. New NIR calibrations are being assessed in Southern region to improve the data quality and efficiency for Fibre Quality Testing. Currently calibration is promising to continue with the work.

There was a further 100mm of rain over the district which has brought harvesting in the Mackay Area to a halt. Plane Creek and Proserpine received similar amounts also which will affect the commencement of their startups.

Steve Fordyce
Central region Director