

Improving farm water for livestock and biodiversity

Program guidelines



An incentive program to assist landholders improve the water quality of farm dams and other water bodies which are regularly used by livestock on their farm.

This program is supported by Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, through funding from the NSW Government

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1. About the program

The objective of the 'Improving Farm Water for Livestock and Biodiversity' incentives program is to assist landholders implement works which contribute to improved water quality for the benefit of livestock production and biodiversity. The program will link with research at UNE into the benefits of dam management on livestock productivity, habitat quality, and aquatic wildlife.

Project sites will focus on farm dams or other contained water bodies (wetlands or lagoons, not streams, rivers, channels etc.). Works may include exclusion or restriction of direct stock access, establishment of alternative watering points, improvement of native vegetation, installation of structures for habitat, sediment control measures, and other approaches that may contribute to the program objectives.

Maximum incentive funding available is \$10,000 (ex GST) per project. Applicants are entitled to apply for one (1) project.

Incentives will be allocated through a competitive application process assessed against various criteria. The application process and anticipated timeframes are detailed in the table below:

Project Stage Round 1	Anticipated Timing
Grant rounds opens	4 October 2022
Closing date for applications	11 November 2022
Offers made to successful applicants	Nov/Dec 2022
Contracts executed	December 2022
Works Completed	16 June 2023

2. What can I apply for?

Eligible activities and expenses

The table below details the eligible activities and the level of funding that applies to them under this program. Total funding available is up to \$10,000 (ex GST) per project.

All projects need to have a minimum of 50:50 Local Land Services and Landholder cost sharing (including in kind contributions)

Eligible activities	Items included	Funding available
Fencing	Fencing materials	Full cost of materials up to \$6 per lineal metre. Other costings by exception

Alternative watering points	Water troughs, water tanks, pipes, pumps, (including solar pumps and associated required infrastructure) and associated hardware such as valves, joiners etc	Up to a maximum of \$3,000/project.
Remote monitoring devices	Sensors used for the remote and/or constant monitoring of water levels in tanks, troughs etc	Up to a maximum of \$4,000/project.
Other	Other activities or items that Northern Tablelands Local Land Services deem suitable for a successful individual project. Such examples may include solar electric fence energisers, sedimentation traps, revegetation, erosion control structures etc.	Up to a maximum of \$5,000/project

All funded projects must comply with Australian Standards (including installation) where required by regulation.

Installations must comply with the manufacturer's instructions and use licensed tradespeople when required by legislation, council regulation or the manufacturer's instructions. This is the responsibility of the farm business. Northern Tablelands Local Land Services is not liable in any way in relation to or in connection with the Eligible Project, other than as expressed in the Guidelines.

Ineligible activities and expenses

The following activities are not eligible for funding under this program:

- Site preparation costs
- Computers / laptops / servers / smartphones
- Projects, activities, or purchases already undertaken prior to written approval-in-principle of the grant application
- Labour costs associated with construction of fences
- Construction of boundary fences
- On-going operating expenses or other 'business as usual' expenses (including salaries; council rates; utility costs – water, electricity, gas; advertising and social media marketing; operational wage-related costs; online costs – such as ongoing internet connectivity costs, website domain names and hosting).
- Fees associated with permits for planning or certification
- Buildings and/or support structures
- Ongoing or routine maintenance costs
- Costs associated with applying for government grants, funding programs and approvals
- Any (land) clearing which may be required

- The purchase, lease or acquisition of land
- Purchase of livestock, motorised vehicles, water or its transport
- Irrigation infrastructure, including new or upgraded bores
- Enlarging, deepening or construction of new water bodies
- Project management, administration, accounting, legal or insurance costs.

This list is not exhaustive, and grant recipients will have identified in their grant contracts what items are eligible to receive an incentive.

Budget

The budget is a very important aspect to every project application as it is where the assessors get a very detailed understanding of the proposed activities. It is also used to determine how cost effective the project is.

The budget should outline the requested funding from Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and outline any in-kind contribution from the applicant (such as your labour, time, materials, maintenance etc). There is no requirement for applicants to include any in-kind contribution, however, such contributions will be highly rated as part of the assessment process.

- all budget figures must be GST exclusive.
- money allocated to projects will be based upon the submitted budget and no allowances will be made for price increases.
- monitoring and on-going weed control are ineligible costs.

Please seek assistance from Northern Tablelands Local Land Services if you are unsure, as the project budget is critical to the approval of the project. Contact Sara Paton - Land Services Officer, on 0457 029 235.

3. Project and applicant eligibility

1. All project activities must directly contribute to the implementation of works which contribute to improved water quality for the benefit of livestock production and biodiversity. Projects that are primarily focused for example on aesthetics, improving irrigation infrastructure, or recreational assets will not be considered.
2. Projects must occur on a holding larger than 10 ha and must take place on land within the Northern Tablelands LLS region.
3. Applicants must be the owner of the land where the project will take place, or must have written authority from the landowner authorising their ability to commit to the project on the landowners behalf.
4. All previous works funded by Local Land Services on the applicant's property must be completed or maintained as per any current management agreement.
5. State, Federal and Local government authorities, bodies, departments, statutory corporations, state-owned corporations and other similar entities, and land owned by such entities, will not be eligible for this program (including crown leases).
6. Applicants must:

- a. have no outstanding debts to Local Land Services
 - b. be willing to enter into a written agreement with Local Land Services and undertake certain works in accordance with set specifications and agreed timeframes
 - c. be an Australian citizen
 - d. be registered for tax purposes in Australia and have an Australian bank account
 - e. be willing to declare any conflicts of interest when submitting an application. Persons who have associations that are considered by Local Land Services to represent a conflict of interest which cannot be managed will not be eligible
 - f. have public liability insurance for a minimum of \$20 million
 - g. abide by and implement as required all Local, State, and Federal Government laws, regulations, and Acts as they are relevant to an individual project, and
 - h. be able to complete all on-ground activities by 16 June 2023
7. Applications must contain a fully completed application form and a map or sketch of the proposed site.
 8. Any water body that is the subject of this incentive program must be able to store water for a full 12-month period based on median rainfall for the area where the site is located.
 9. Project sites must be no smaller than 0.5 ha in total.
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4. Conflict of interest

Local Land Services staff and board members are required to identify and declare conflicts of interest so that they can be managed in an open and transparent way. This policy extends to external parties or individuals who may be associated with Local Land Services staff or Local Land Services board members through immediate family relationships, close friendships or business relationships. Should a conflict be identified, a conflict of interest declaration form will be provided to the applicant to complete.

5. Conditions of funding

If your application is successful, the following conditions of funding will apply:

- you must formally commit to undertaking your project by entering into a Funding Agreement with Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.
- you must not commence your project until you have signed a contract with Local Land Services.
- the term of the funding agreement will be for a period of 10 years.
- a maximum of \$10,000 (ex GST) per property will apply.
- payment of up to 100% of the requested grant amount upon the execution of a compliant contract with Northern Tablelands Local Land Services. The remainder of the grant funds will be provided upon successful completion of works and a final report. Inspections of the contracted works may be conducted by a Local Land Services staff member.

- if the works are deemed unsatisfactory, the final payment may be withheld, funds recovery action may be taken and restrictions on future funding may occur. Appropriate measures to remedy the issue will be discussed.
- all contracted works must be completed by 16 June 2023. Note that an inspection may be carried out by Northern Tablelands Local Land Services staff to verify the successful completion of the project.
- variations to the funding agreement must be requested in writing to the project manager and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Northern Tablelands Local Land Services may publish information about your project on our website, Facebook page and other communication channels and products.
- you must provide fully compliant Tax Invoices confirming your project expenditure.
- if your project is funded you will be required to undertake basic monitoring of your project's environmental outcomes for 10 years, such as photo point monitoring. This monitoring information will assist Local Land Services to assess project and applicant successes and is necessary to justify future funding rounds.
- you may be requested to complete a survey or review following the successful completion of contracted works.
- you may be requested to complete and submit a follow-up survey or project review ten years following the completion of contracted works.

It is recommended that you do not apply for funding if you are unable to meet these conditions.

6. Project Standards

To be eligible to participate in this program, certain minimum standards are to be applied to aspects of projects.

1. Fencing Standards

Any permanent fencing supported by this project will be constructed using new materials. The preferred materials and construction methodology is as follows:

- Minimum of 5 lines of high tensile wires and stock proof
- Maximum line post spacing of 5 metres apart
- Site must contain at least one permanent gate for site access, minimum 12 feet wide
- End assemblies are to be appropriate to soil type
- Electrified wires may be used, but fence must be stock proof without the power on, in case of electrical failure.

Variations to this standard, including electric fencing, may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Any clearing of native vegetation deemed necessary for the construction of the fence line must be to the minimum extent necessary and be undertaken in accordance with allowable activities under the Local Land Services Act 2013.

The landowner will be responsible for maintaining all new and existing fences, which enclose the project site, in a stock proof condition for the duration of the agreement. The site may be subject to checks from time-to-time to ensure the fencing is stock proof.

Fencing under this project must be an average distance of 20 metres or greater away from the dam edge (high waterline) and no new fencing can be less than 10 metres away from the dam edge (high water mark) at any point. If the dam is on a slope, the minimum fencing margin at the inflow point (upstream from the dam edge) is 25 metres.

2. Stock Water Supply

a. Reticulated Water Systems

Contributions to the establishment of reticulation water systems will be considered where fencing excludes livestock from a dam which serves as a current permanent water source. Landholders can apply for support in providing alternative water access points to the immediate paddocks that are affected by the dam exclusion, provided they currently own livestock that are accessing this water source.

Landholders must ensure any reticulated water supply installed under this program has sufficient capacity and capability to meet the consumption requirements of livestock using the system. It is recommended landholders consult with industry professionals to ensure the system is appropriately designed and constructed. Systems should be capable of meeting the peak demand in the middle of summer and account for all livestock types that may be watering off the system (refer to NSW DPI for further information).

All water point infrastructure must be permanent.

All materials purchased must conform with appropriate Australian Standards.

Polypipe used within proposed systems should be designed for the specific site, considering the slope and potential water pressure.

All pipelines must be buried at recommended depths.

All stock water works must comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements, including but not limited to, the Local Land Services Act 2013 (NSW), the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and Water Management Act 2000 (NSW).

b. Dams

Only dams, wetlands or lagoons existing at the time of grant application will be considered for incentive funding.

Existing dams may be enlarged / de-silted at the landowner's expense and contribute to the projects in-kind contribution.

Any dam enlargement works must be carried out by a suitably qualified person and must meet the requirements of the Farm Dams Harvestable Right Policy and approved / licenced when necessary.

8. Assessment and notification process

In general terms, applications will be assessed on whether they align with desired outcomes of the program, provide public benefit, deliver long-term outcomes and represent good value for money.

Specifically:

1. An Evaluation Panel will be convened and will assess projects deemed to meet the eligibility criteria.
2. The Evaluation Panel will assess projects according to the Evaluation Criteria and rank them in order of highest to lowest. The Evaluation Criteria will be based on: The scale of the project and the water body, the expected improvements in water quality and biodiversity, the expected benefits to livestock production (particularly cattle), value for money, the type of work(s) being proposed, the location of the proposed project, demonstrated ability to complete the project.
3. Applications will then be offered funding in ranked order until the allocated funding is expended
4. Successful applications will receive a site visit to confirm site and project details.
5. Where an on-site assessment is undertaken, and there is found to be significant variation between information provided during the application process and data collected on-site, Northern Tablelands Local Land Services reserves the right to review the project ranking for that project. Any changes to the assessment will be based on advice from the Northern Tablelands LLS staff member completing the site assessment and will require the Evaluation Panel to review such projects.
6. Any applications that meet the assessment criteria but do not receive funding due to higher ranked applications exhausting the available funding, will be placed on a second round offer list in order of ranking. If further funding becomes available offers may then be allocated in order of that ranking by the panel using the same principles/process as outlined in this plan.
7. Any disputes over eligibility or ranking will be resolved by the Evaluation Panel.
8. The program aims to ensure some geographical spread of projects across the Northern Tablelands LLS region so projects can act as local demonstrations to encourage adoption of improved practices. Northern Tablelands LLS will reserve the right to review application rankings to achieve a spread of projects accordingly, without compromising on the quality or expected outcomes of individual projects and the program in general.
9. In the event the program does not receive sufficient eligible applications to achieve the outcomes required, Northern Tablelands LLS reserve the right to make direct approaches to landholders or community groups to help identify projects that would contribute to the program outcomes. Any projects that are developed in this way will be subject to the same funding conditions and expectations of those projects developed through the open call process.

Contracts will be offered to eligible project proponents until program funds are exhausted. All works will be funded through a standard contract linked to the application. The contract will require ongoing maintenance of the works for a 10 year period and the submission of (basic) monitoring and evaluation information, such as the provision of photo point monitoring.

Once a fully executed contract is received by Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, up to 100% of the maximum grant application will be provided to the applicant to be spent on works and

activities related to the project. The project is to be fully implemented to the satisfaction of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services to enable eligibility for future funding opportunities. Landholders will be required to provide a compliant Tax Invoice and evidence of (any) in-kind contribution(s) where appropriate.

9. Application feedback

If your application is not successful, you will receive notification. Landholders may seek further feedback contacting Sara Paton - Land Services Officer, on 02 6770 2000.

10. How your information is used

The information you provide to Northern Tablelands Local Land Services in your application will be stored and used in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988.

By signing the funding agreement, you provide consent for Northern Tablelands Local Land Services to use this information to communicate to the public about the program. This may include publishing communication articles on our website, Facebook page and other communication channels and products, as required.

11. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage assessment

It is the responsibility of the Local Land Services and the landholder to ensure due diligence takes place with respect to Aboriginal cultural heritage values. If the application is successful, a site assessment may be required, with the clear intent to protect cultural heritage.

12. Compliance with existing State and Commonwealth Legislation

Local Land Services only approves the amount of funding for your project. This does not authorise you to implement the project. You must ensure that your project has all necessary approvals, licenses, permits, consents, etc. and that your project complies with all relevant legislation.

13. How to submit your application

If you believe that your project fits the criteria, you can lodge an application form, found on our website

Alternatively, contact Northern Tablelands Local Land Services to receive an email or hard copy application which will be mailed to interested landholders upon request. Call 02 6770 2000.

Application forms will be assessed if they are received via email or post-marked by 5 pm on Friday 11 November 2022. You will receive an acknowledgement to confirm receipt of your application form.

- Email your application form to: eo.northerntablelands@lls.nsw.gov.au
- Alternatively, post your application form to: Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, Farm Water Project Application, PO Box 411 Inverell, NSW 2360.

Late applications may be received, however they will only be considered should the project be under-subscribed.

14. Useful Resources

Landholders requiring further information are encouraged to review the following:

Factsheets and written resources

Farm Dam Handbook (Water NSW)

Managing Sediment in Farm Dams (Northern Tablelands Local Land Services)

Farm Water Supply (Northern Tablelands Local Land Services)

Enhance Farm Dams (Sustainable Farms)

New England revegetation options and species (Armidale Tree Group)

Increased livestock weight gain from improved water quality in farm dams: A cost-benefit analysis

(Dobes et al., Plos One)

Webinars and farm case study video links

Importance of water quality to ecosystems and natural capital (Deb Bower, UNE)

Improving farm dams: a farmers perspective (Murray Local Land Services)

Farm Dam Enhancements for Multiple Benefits (Sustainable Farms)

Making wildlife welcome (Farm Dam Blitz)

15. More Information

Any queries or questions can be emailed to: eo.northerntablelands@lls.nsw.gov.au Alternatively, contact:

Sara Paton

Land Services Officer - Livestock Northern Tablelands LLS

Armidale

Ph: 02 6770 2000

Mobile 0457 029 235