



ISSUE

Soil is a hugely valuable asset that plays a vital role in primary production, carbon and water cycles and biodiversity. Various physical and chemical characteristics of the soil types found within the Mansfield area, coupled with other factors such as climate, vegetation clearing and over-grazing unfortunately make them fragile and prone to erosion. If not managed correctly it can result in various issues such as the loss of topsoil and productivity, erosion of roads and tracks, and the creation of gullies which can threaten infrastructure and restrict land use and access.

With increasing development there are many newcomers to the area whom have little understanding or experience of the local soils. While there has been a great deal of dissemination of general information over the years regarding soft erosion techniques which many local landholders have capacity to implement, there is a need for more information, guidance and assistance pertaining to hard structures for control of erosion. This is the story of how several local landholders have been assisted in their efforts, through expertise and rock, to save their soils.

SOLUTION

Up2Us Landcare Alliance joined with Agriculture Victoria for the incentive-based program and set about assisting local landholders who had known erosion issues on their property. "Soft erosion control techniques such as fencing and planting have been used for some time now" says Tara Linkhorn, project officer for Up2Us Landcare Alliance. "These tried-and-true methods are effective long-term measures but in certain situations they are not enough, especially with our fragile, erosive soils". She continues "controls that have a more immediate effect, such as hard structures built with rock, are needed".

The process began with visits being conducted to landholders properties to assess the areas of concern and determine a suitable solution.



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SOLUTION CONTINUED

"The majority of the issues were to do with active erosion in the heads of gullies, a very common problem in our district" says Tara. With expert input provided by Agriculture Victoria personnel, a management plan was developed for each property then local contractors were engaged by the landholders to undertake the works.

Although the erosion issues across the properties were of a similar nature, there were several different hard structure control techniques employed, tailored to each site. "Rock chutes, a French drain and pit and pipe structures have all been utilised to help contain areas of active gully head erosion" Tara states.

The extensive knowledge and experience of Agriculture Victoria was further shared with the Mansfield community when an erosion control field day was held on a local property in March. Tara says "The field day was a great opportunity for landholders with erosion control issues and those involved in fixing erosion locally to learn more about the erosion process and the techniques that can be used to help minimise and contain it". Local contractor Campagnolo Excavation and Cartage were on-site undertaking works to control erosion on two gully heads which Tara says "gave those who attended a unique, first-hand experience of hard structure techniques".

IMPACT

The incentive-based erosion control program has given local landholders much needed guidance and assistance in the management of active erosion using hard structures. The structures installed will help to minimise soil loss, ensure assets are protected and land use and access across properties is maintained.

The field day event provided a great platform for information sharing and observation of the installation of hard structures. Armed with this new knowledge, landholders can feel more confident and empowered to make informed decisions about suitable erosion control measures, including hard structures, to successfully manage their areas of erosion and thereby save their valuable soils.



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