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Water Week Milestone: 310 km of Western waterways fenced.

Chair of the Western Catchment Management Authority (CMA), Rory Treweeke, has announced that 310km of waterways within the Western Catchment have been fenced since the organisation became operational three years ago.

This is equivalent to the distance by road between Mungindi and Brewarrina or between Sydney and Taree.

Mr Treweeke made the announcement in the leadup to National Water Week, which will be held between October 21 and 27. National Water Week is an annual event which raises the community awareness of the importance of protecting and conserving water resources.

"As a result of the fencing, over 30,000 ha (300km²) of riverbank vegetation is now protected," Mr Treweeke said.

"Fencing allows landholders to manage the riparian area separately from the rest of their property.

"Being able to exclude stock from waterways encourages native vegetation regrowth, reduces soil erosion and silting and improves water quality.

"Cattle defecate twenty-five per cent of the time when drinking. One kilogram of phosphorus from manure can result in the growth of up to five hundred kilograms of algae, which can choke waterways and may be toxic to fish, other aquatic life, livestock and people.

"There has been a huge turn-around in landholders' attitudes towards river fencing in the past decade. It used to be considered unworkable, but over time people have realised that it can save them time and money to water stock off-river and that protecting their riverbank can increase the value of their property," Mr Treweeke said.

The Ervin family of Backwood Station near Hungerford is one of many who have fenced their waterways.

Terry Ervin fenced 5.2km of his Paroo River frontage and installed one off-river watering point for sheep, which are now excluding from the riverbank.

520ha of riparian vegetation is now protected from stock and in the three years since the fencing was completed, Mr Ervin says he's already seen improvements despite the drought conditions.

"We've had a few flood events since the fencing was done and the regeneration has started," Mr Ervin said.

"The floodplain is nowhere near as bare and barren as it was and the regrowth has stabilised the soil.



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"Of course the kangaroos and goats are still having an effect, but with the fencing we can trap the goats a lot more easily.

"There are more birds, especially parrots, and we've seen brolgas, which we hadn't seen down there before," he said.

Mr Ervin agreed that there had been a big change in attitude towards riverine fencing in recent years.

"People can see that there is a financial and an environmental advantage to fencing the river. It has to be a win-win situation, otherwise it's not going to work," he said.

"On our side of the riverbank about sixty or seventy kilometres, from Wanaaring to Willara Crossing, has been fenced," he said.

Water quality issues are particularly important on the Paroo River as it feeds the Paroo River Wetlands, which last month joined the list of internationally important wetlands recognised under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

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For further information:

Maree Barnes, PR and Media Officer, Western CMA. Ph: 02 6883 3058/0427 256814.

Rory Treweeke, Chair Western CMA. Ph: 02 6829 0301/0428 634 204.

Caption: Terry, William, Mary and Jacqueline Ervin of Backwood Station.

