

# Carbon Coalition Against Global Warming

## Newsletter March 2007

---

*Please pass this letter along to your contacts. We are building out database of supporters and need your help. Thank You!*

---

### IN THIS ISSUE:

A Year On... Soil C on the Map  
Still Seeking Scientific Measurement  
Debunking the AGO's Soil C Myth  
First Soil C Sales  
We Make A Market  
Register NOW to Sell your Soil C  
Donations Needed  
12 Month Activity Report  
List of Coalition Blogsites  
Soil C Can Be Measured For Trading

Greetings! It's been a long time...

Sorry it's been a long time between drinks. We have been incredibly busy, what with the drought and climate change issues and Coalition work. We hope you have been able to stay in touch via the blogsites. A major computer crash disappeared your contact details until earlier today when we were able to reload a list that is a little shorter than it was, but most of you are still there. *If you know of someone who was on the Coalition list, please ask them if they received this and, if not, ask them to register again, please.*

Happy Anniversary!

Last month we passed our first year as an organization. At the end of this newsletter is an Activity Report which touches briefly on the work of the Convenors, the Advisory Council, and Members.

We've come a long way from where we were a year ago. For most of the time since February 2006, we have been dismissed as lunatic fringe dwellers pushing an impossible dream and creating unreal expectations among landholders. All that has changed...

Soil Carbon Credits on the radar

≈

- This week – only 3 days ago – the Carbon Coalition presented the soil carbon case to a press conference at Parliament House in Sydney, the event organised by the NSW National Party to launch its soil carbon trading policy. The Coalition provided the

substance for that policy. The NSW Nats are the first political party to adopt the Coalition's position.

- Two days ago the NSW Farmers' Association passed a motion that commits it to seeking incentives for curbing emissions. Earlier in the NSW Election campaign President Jock Laurie called for a carbon trading scheme for soils. The Coalition has briefed Jock several times in the past 12 months, and also briefed the Wellington Branch members who originally took the motion to the State Conference.
- In the previous month, Australian of the Year Tim Flannery made a statement supporting the soil carbon trading concept after receiving briefing material from the Coalition via another Coalition – Patrice Newell's Climate Change Coalition, which is standing 21 candidates for the NSW Upper House.
- Carbon Coalition Convenor Michael Kiely and CC Member Bruce Ward are standing for the CCC as a platform to promote Carbon Farming and Soil Carbon Trading. Tim Flannery has endorsed the CCC and greeted the founding of the Carbon Coalition with a public endorsement back a year ago.
- Also in February, the NSW Commissioner for Natural Resources John Williams came out in favour of soil carbon credits at \$25/tonne. The Coalition has made another friend.
- More recently, the Federal Shadow Minister for the Environment Peter Garret said: "Why did Campbell hate you?" when the Convenors introduced themselves at Rockhampton Airport last Saturday, after delivering a 4 hour seminar on carbon trading to an RCS gathering in Yeppoon. Mr Garrett indicated he read our blogsite regularly. "I keep up with your stuff..." (Campbell was the former Federal Minister for the Environment, Senator Ian Campbell, who refused to meet with us and fobbed us off with meaningless letters stating implacable resistance to carbon trading. We blogged his demise only two days before the Garrett meeting.) We also met Kevin Rudd at the same time and registered the Coalition with him.
- Rod Rush put together a brilliant briefing paper to present to the Federal Minister for Agriculture, then the climate sceptic Ian MacFarlane (which was ignored and dismissed.) Rod's work was so useful we were able to use it as the Coalition's submission to the National Emissions Trading Scheme enquiry. Thanks Rod. (The Coalition's 2 submissions were the only ones dealing with agricultural issues.)
- Late last year, in December, Bruce Ward and Tony Lovell arranged for the Coalition to present its argument to the NSW Premier's Advisory Panel of Climate Change. Many opportunities have arisen as a result.
- Earlier, in November, at Christine Jones' Carbon Forum in the ACT we were able to present the Coalition's position to MP for New England Tony Windsor who

subsequently asked the Prime Minister a question in Parliament which flushed the PM out on carbon markets.

So, important people are now talking about soil carbon credits. Thank you to everyone who opened doors for us: Mark Roberts, Hamish Munro, Christine Jones, Rod Rush, Maartin Stapper, all the good folk at the Central West CMA, John Lawrie, Tom Gavel, Col Seis, David Marsh, Angus Maurice, Rick Maurice, Jane Wilson, John Muller, John Williams, Bruce Ward, Tony Lovell, Tom Green, and all the people who invited us to speak at gatherings across the nation. (Many names have been missed here. Apologies.) A special thank you should go to Rhonda Willson for a large donation towards Christine Jones's research into the measurement issue.

*'NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD; INDEED, IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.'*  
Margaret Mead

## SOIL CARBON CAN BE MEASURED FOR TRADING

### The Holy Grail... Measurement

So we had two goals: 1. Establish the soil carbon market. 2. Gain access to the top value market. The biggest barrier is to be found with the scientists. Conventional wisdom says soil carbon is too "slippery" – or subject to flux – to measure definitively. We despaired recently when speaking to one of the leading soil scientists and he told us that the more they studied soil carbon the harder and more difficult it is to pin down. Remember this: in any conversation about measuring Soil C for trading, if you hear the word "accuracy" it spells doom. Based on a paper by Dr Brian Kimble of the US Dept of Ag, we advocate moving in the opposite direction: away from precision and towards practicality. (A short section of Dr Kimble's paper is attached to this email.)

***'Remember this: in any conversation about measuring Soil C for trading, if you hear the word "accuracy" it spells doom.'***

We know of at least 4 or 5 trials that are underway to prove up MMV systems (Measurement, Monitoring, Verification). We wish them the best because we need a system, and we will rejoice the moment IPART (Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal) approves a system.

The Coalition (including several leading 'carbon farmers') will be attending a 'summit' with a group of prominent soil scientists on 22 March, 2007 in Dubbo. The Coalition will be seeking a practical solution and hopes this meeting is a watershed in the journey towards full value/direct measurement soil carbon trading.

## CCX order for 25000 acres

While we were in the USA in October, we managed to secure the first order for Australian till to no till soil. The only technical detail we needed to fulfil was to provide “peer reviewed data” that validated the 0.5t/acre/year rule of thumb US farmers were trading under. While this sounds like an easy task, we ran into a wall of costs and confusion. We need to be able to pay for a scientist to extract the necessary data from the Australian Greenhouse Office data sets.

The Coalition has no financial resources (especially after funding the USA trip and most speaking engagements to date). So we will be embarking on a fundraising campaign to overcome this frustrating blockage. This issue will also be raised during our ‘summit’ with the soil scientists.

## Soil scientists can save the world

This is the title for a new blogsite:

<http://soilsscintistscansavetheworld.blogspot.com/>

It appeals to soil scientists to help solve the greenhouse gas emissions overload problem by contributing to a practical measurement solution. We are hoping to use every means to engage soil scientists to broaden their paradigm and help us develop a means for trading.

## A major breakthrough

The biggest blockage to our progress is the officially-sanctioned myth about Australian soils that surfaced in the Australian Greenhouse Office and has since been promoted by the Australian Farm Institute. The AGO states: "Typically Australian soils have a poor capacity to store large quantities of carbon." This generalisation was based on the data sets developed over 10 years for the Carbon Accounting scheme.

Executive Director of the Farm Institute, Mick Keough, elaborated on the myth: “The bulk of Australian farms may not operate as carbon sinks, due to the age of the soils.” This myth is promoted by the Institute in the form of papers by John Carter, MSc., former AGO scientist and currently Principal Scientist, OLD Department of Natural Resources and Water.

The myth carries the weight of science because it is based on ‘the data’. But if ‘the data’ was so reliable, why has the NSW DPI launched a set of trials to test soil carbon performance under various pasture management approaches in the last month?

Answer: There are gaps in the data sets. Gaps so big you could drive a carbon trading scheme through them. Working through the AGO Technical Reports, we noticed that

what the data covered was largely business as usual land management – which we know is carbon depleting. There was little, if any evidence of ‘carbon farming’ techniques being included in the studies. This is understandable. Regenerative (soil C promoting) techniques were less familiar 10 years ago, and in all the Technical Reports, the scientists complained that they were constrained by time and resources from filling gaps in their data sets.

This is a major breakthrough for the Coalition.

The AGO remains ignorant of this deficiency in the data upon which public statements have been based. In the Coalition’s position paper, Rod Rush reports: “At the wind-up sessions of the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) in the middle of 2006 the CSIRO Land & Water project leader on soil carbon stated that it just was not possible to sequester carbon in soils at the rate necessary for it to be of advantage as a part solution to the problems of global warming. However, when the practices of “regenerative” agriculture were explained to him, and later to his successor, they expressed surprise and interest in conducting research into the contention that soil carbon levels can be raised, and raised quickly. There is currently no funding available for this project and to succeed in raising the required funds, years of prejudice have to be overcome.”

## Coalition opens the Carbon Trading Register

The books are open for landholders to register their soils for soil carbon trading. The Carbon Coalition has several initiatives currently underway to generate demand for Australian Farm Soil Credits. A form will be posted on the website ([www.carboncoalition.com.au](http://www.carboncoalition.com.au)) shortly. Please encourage your contacts to register. The more numbers we have a landholders demanding to be given access to trading, the more ‘weight’ we will carry in our battle with myths and prejudice. And the more likely we will attract support from buyers.

You can register two levels of involvement:

1. Growers who have soils on which land management has changed since 1990 (the baseline date used under the Kyoto Protocol):

- from till to no till cropping
- from cropping to pasture
- from set stocking to grazing management

2. Aggregators who can organise groups of growers into pools for trading purposes.

## Creating demand for Australian Farm Soil Credits

The Convenors of the Carbon Coalition have launched two initiatives to generate orders for Australian Farm Soil Credits:

1. CarbonCreditedBrands: a service for corporates that guides them through the process of becoming carbon neutral and brings their customers, staff, suppliers, etc. with them on the journey. After the company's emissions have been audited and all efforts made to bring them down by power savings, etc., the company chooses 'abatements' or 'offsets' (credits). The range of options includes Australian Farm Soil Credits.
2. Adopt A Farmer Fighting Greenhouse: a retail enterprise selling Australian Farm Soil Credits on the "voluntary" market for abatements. This is the fastest growing market overseas. "Voluntary" means the credits cannot be used to meet mandatory caps. They are chosen largely by consumers to offset their lifestyle emissions and by companies seeking to make a contribution to the battle against climate change. Voluntary Credits are usually bundled. Ours include Provisional Carbon Credits, a contribution to environmental restoration on farmland, and a contribution to the work of the Carbon Coalition in spreading the soil carbon message far and wide. Soil Credits offer the buyer unique benefits.

The first orders for both offerings have been received during a test marketing phase.

We hope to reduce the leakage of value to middlemen by offering growers the opportunity to have a share in the trading company.

But how will you measure it?

A 'voluntary' market product is often bundled with a donation to a cause. The precision required to sell a bare tonne of carbon is not required by the buyer. The AUSTRALIAN FARM SOIL CREDIT is based on the following indicators:

1. The history of soil management for the plot in question.
2. The history of soil management for the entire property.
3. The training record of the land manager.
4. The land management techniques used on the entire property.
5. The imputed increase in soil carbon in the plot in question over the period since the change in land management.
6. Membership of Carbon•Farmers™, a group of conservation land managers who are also actively working to restore the natural resource base.

AUSTRALIAN FARM SOIL CREDITS are Provisional Carbon Credits. They are set at a very conservative rate of 2 tonne per hectare where land management has changed since 1990 (the baseline date used under the Kyoto Protocol):

- from till to no till cropping
- from cropping to pasture
- from set stocking to grazing management

Each category represents an amount of greenhouse gas emissions not released, as well as an amount of soil carbon stored.

These categories are based on estimates published by the Australian Greenhouse Office: "The review clearly indicated that the introduction of a cropping phase into uncleared land or a well-established pasture with high plant biomass, reduced soil carbon density by 10 to 30 t/ha in soils to 30 cm depth... Likely changes in soil carbon densities associated with changes in soil tillage practices are of the order of 5 to 10 t/ha when they occur..." (National Carbon Accounting System, Technical Report No. 43, January 2005.) Our estimates are also informed by K.Y. Chan's work on soil carbon levels under different land management methods in NSW which revealed that soil carbon levels were 2 to 2.7 times higher in pasture soil than in cropped soils, and significantly higher in minimum till than in conventional tillage soils. (Chan, K.Y. "Soil particulate organic carbon under different land use and management," *Soil Use and Management* (2001) 17, 217-221.) Eminent soil C expert Professor Rattan Lal says: "Conversion from conventional till to no-till farming reduces emission by 30 to 35 kg C/ha per season. ("Soil Carbon Sequestration Impacts on Global Climate Change and Food Security," *Science*, Vol 304, 11 June, 2004)

Once the science catches up, the surface area will be rescaled to meet the amount 'measured' in the soil below. Provisional Carbon Credits allows the Soil Storage of CO<sub>2</sub> to start.

### Initiative: Social-C-Central

Soil-C-Central is a MegaWeb site dedicated to Soil Carbon. It aims to provide landholders and those who advise them a central source of information about Soil C.

Its content will include: news; upcoming events, conferences and courses; new research findings and papers; new research studies and timetables for results; new websites; and new newsletters and publications.

The Soil C Library: will include Bibliographies - lists of publications; Academic papers; Articles; Interviews; Links; Websites; and Blogs.

A Soil-C-Community will be encouraged as a place where scientists, agronomists,

and landholders and anyone interested can swap information and discuss issues. It might include Profiles of Members (voluntary); Notice Boards; Chat room; Online events; “Webinars”; etc.

This promises to be a great addition to the Coalition’s work, but there’s a catch... it will cost money.

DO You support the Carbon Coalition?

The work of the Carbon Coalition has been entirely voluntary for the past year.

The Convenors have funded:

- lobbying,
- outreach,
- speaking engagements,
- website activity,
- blogging,
- research,
- overseas study tour,
- attending conferences to make contacts,
- appearing before official enquiries...

Please see the attached activity sheet. The time involved has grown to consume time previously devoted to income-producing activity. We can't go on this way. We need to professionalise the operation. Get serious or get out.

We believe the mission of the Coalition is too important to wind down at this important point.

We are on the point of creating the soil carbon market in Australia, We are enrolling landholders for trading. But the challenges we have coming up include:

1. Being fobbed off with Federal Government Stewardship Payments instead of carbon credits. These are a poor substitute for three reasons: i. it puts you in the hands of the public servants; ii. They could never be as lucrative; iii. They represent handouts, not payments for produce. We believe the Howard Government is implacably opposed to soil carbon credits. (Leopards don’t change their spots.)
2. Missing out on offsets when on-farm emissions are measured/estimated and landholders are required to buy credits to offset CO<sub>2</sub>, methane, nitrous oxide etc.
3. Put an end to the myth about Australian soils and carbon.
4. Force the hand of the regulators (IPART) by forming markets.
5. Promote the notion of Carbon Farming among business as usual growers.
6. Maintain pressure for Australia to join Kyoto.
7. Protect landholders from exploitation by unsympathetic middlemen and opportunists.
8. Teaching landholders about the carbon trading markets.

We need your help...

We need your help to achieve the goals of the Coalition:

- Making the family farm more economically viable
- Strengthening rural communities
- Restoring the ecological health of farmland
- Reducing the extremes of Climate Change

What we need resources for...

- Website development
- Membership database system
- Publicity
- Management
- Lobbying
- Research
- Conferences
- Subscriptions
- Travel/Acc

There is so much more we can do... getting Members involved in our activities is **FIRST AND FOREMOST**... but it takes time and time is always short when you're short of money.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

There are many ways you can help:

You can **send a cheque** to the Carbon Coalition Against Global Warming C/- MB & AL Kiely, "Uamby", Uamby Road, GOOLMA NSW 2852

You will find a **"Donate"** button on the blogsite (<http://carboncoalitionoz.blogspot.com>), the website ([www.carboncoalition.com.au](http://www.carboncoalition.com.au)) and on the other blogsites.

You can **buy Australian Farm Soil Credits** from <http://carbonfarmers.blogspot.com>

You can **engage CarbonCreditedBrands** by visiting <http://carboncreditedhowto.blogspot.com>

Your contribution is an investment in the greatest opportunity to solve the problems of declining land health, declining economic health, and declining personal health in agriculture.

Thank you for being part of this historic moment.

Michael, Louisa & Daniel Kiely  
Convenors

PS. Please pass this email letter on to others you may know who would be interested.

NB. YOUR TAX DEDUCTION: While we cannot offer tax deductibility as a CHARITY, we can arrange a deduction for you by the following means: 1. You make your contribution. 2. The Coalition invoices you for CARBON ADVISORY SERVICES (which is a legitimate part of our activities) and your receipt can be used for deduction.