

NSW SUSTAINING THE BASIN *Irrigated farm modernisation*

Peter Maxwell, Gunnedah

March 2014

Location: 'Top River', Gunnedah

Water sources: Namoi Regulated Water Entitlement

Soil type: Chocolate to black alluvial soils

Enterprise: Irrigated cotton, sorghum and wheat

Existing irrigation system: Furrow irrigation

Total area irrigated: 700 ha

Total savings: 810 ML with 80% returned to the environment

"This opportunity has allowed us to make improvements, already earmarked for 10 to 15 years, a lot sooner."

Peter Maxwell and his family came from Wee Waa to 'Top River' near Gunnedah in 1996.

Peter has grown cotton for 30 years, and knows the value of having enough water on hand to finish crops when rainfall is below average.

"The summer rain just doesn't seem to be there anymore.

"When it does come, it comes in a rush in five or six inches then you've got nothing for a month or two.

"Just being able to store it and have it there on hand saves you at the end of a crop and really reduces the risk of farming," Mr Maxwell said.



Peter Maxwell, 'Top River' Gunnedah at his storage reconstruction site. Image: S. Bray

Description of the project

Peter Maxwell's project is all about improving the efficiency of his on-farm storage system, pumping capacity and irrigation efficiency.

It included:

- The construction of a storage cell in an existing storage
- The installation of a new pump station
- The installation of a new lateral move irrigator
- Laser levelling of the remaining furrow irrigated areas.

The benefits of the project

The benefits of this project include:

- 810 ML of water savings
- More efficient on-farm storage
- Extra pumping capacity
- Improved reliability of supply
- Increased on-farm production

Landholders experience

Peter says he was happy with the STBIFM process.

"Everything, in terms of implementing the project and meeting our administrative responsibilities went very smoothly!

"Having all of the project details up to date with the help of the local DPI contact, meant any of the necessary reports were easy to finalise and get any payments," Mr Maxwell said.

What aspect was most challenging?

For Peter Maxwell, the most challenging part of participating in STBIFM was not the paperwork and red tape, but getting the large amount of earthworks completed before the weather changed.



*Getting the large amount of earthworks done before changes in the weather was the biggest challenge.
Image: S. Bray*

What advice would you give others?

Mr Maxwell encourages others to consider improving the efficiency and capacity of their on-farm storage to overcome the issues with unreliable summer rain and have water on hand to finish crops and reduce their risk.

What are your thoughts on STBIFM?

Mr Maxwell says that STBIFM has been very important to him.

"We've had all these works earmarked to do for 10 to 15 years but just couldn't ever afford it.

"This funding has enabled us to do it a lot sooner," Mr Maxwell said.

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