

Bright future for forest

A FOUR-HECTARE patch of rainforest at Kairi is set to make a comeback following a study to determine the benefits and costs of its restoration.

Manager of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries' Kairi Research Station, Brett McCahon was delighted when the Yungaburra-based School for Field Studies expressed a desire to research the fauna and flora of the remnant, situated on the banks of Lake Tinaroo at the DPI&F property.

The study soon developed into a full-blown report on the costs, labor requirements and benefits of a complete restoration package.

The research station now has a comprehensive guide to the restoration, while at the same time the School for Field studies has benefited from the opportunities for giving student first-hand planning experience.

Mr McCahon said that, as the report points out, surviving Mabi rainforest is Commonwealth-listed as endangered as well as being protected under Queensland legislation.

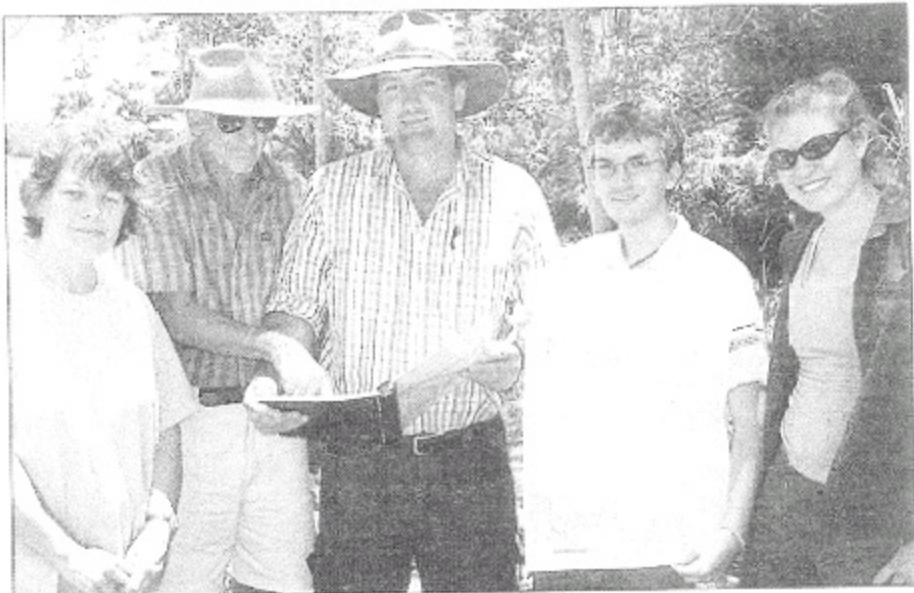
"While the patch has escaped clearing, it has become degraded with grass and weeds, lessening its value as a wildlife sanctuary," he said.

"The remnant rainforest was previously regarded as having little benefit to the station. But it is apparent that it could be a valuable asset and help facilitate research and demonstration.

"James Cook University and the School for Field Studies will be able to access the remnant and collaborate with DPI&F researchers.

"A possible research question is the nature of interactions between remnants and agriculture.

"Another important benefit would be



SCHOOL for Field Studies centre director Dr Amanda Freeman, lecturer in environment policy and socio-economics Dr Colin Hunt, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries' Kairi Research Station manager Brett McCahon, and students James Planey and Jamie O'Connell.

as a demonstration to farmers attending our field days techniques on restoration techniques.

Dr Colin Hunt of the Centre for Rainforest Studies, School for Field Studies, who co-ordinated the study, said that given that rainforest restoration could be expensive, it was important to spell out cost-effective methods as well the benefits.

"The cost of this restoration is less than half the usual cost of restoration per hectare on the Tablelands because the Station can input its own plant and labour."

Director of the Centre, Dr Amanda Freeman, said access to the rainforest remnant and assessing its status and potential had benefited the school's teaching.

"The school appreciates the opportuni-

ty provided by DPI&F to work towards improving the local environment and contributing to the local community," Dr Freeman said.

Staff and students from the School for Field Studies handed the report to Mr McCahon at a special ceremony held at the site earlier this month.

He said the contents of an early draft of the report had sparked interest at the station and was optimistic about securing funding to allow the restoration project to go ahead.

Those involved thanked School for Field Studies Senior Research Fellow Alastair Freeman in his absence for assisting with fauna research and handling, as well as having permits granted by the Environmental Protection Agency and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.