

## GET PAID FOR STORING CARBON IN THE SOIL

*A new financial incentive for sustainable land managers in the Northern Agricultural region.*

Everyone who has ever done any gardening will know that humus is an important part of soil fertility. It is part of the nutrient recycling process and helps give structure to the soil, as well as providing substrate for the diverse community of soil animals – like the mites that were featured in the last issue of *Western Wildlife*. Humus develops from the decomposition of organic matter such as plant debris and animal faeces. Soils with plenty of humus will be healthy and productive, and all good land managers will be aiming to increase the humus levels in their soil, whether it be in garden, paddock or bushland.

Being organic matter, humus and the material that forms it, contain carbon. Therefore, if you build up this stuff in the soil, apart from being a good land manager, you are also 'sequestering carbon' and so fit into the great 'greenhouse gasses/carbon trading' funding scenario.

As an incentive to persuade farmers to plant and maintain perennial pastures, the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) is developing an initiative under the 'Australian Soil Carbon Accreditation Scheme'. As an initial starter, it is necessary to measure the carbon storage under perennial pastures (it is minimal or, under conditions of wind erosion, negative under annual crops/pastures). In future, set payments would be made to the farmer, dependant on the quantity of carbon being stored, and a number of other conditions.

If you are in the NACC area, and have perennial pastures (or wish to establish some) that you think might be eligible for inclusion in the current pilot scheme, find out more from the NACC website: [www.nacc.com.au](http://www.nacc.com.au)

NACC hopes to expand the soil carbon measurements to take in other measurements on all sites where they are funding a change in land management. Re-sampling the same sites several years later will provide a clear indication of the amount of carbon sequestered under each of these activities, and provide farmers with the opportunity to sell carbon credits from these landcare activities.

The Avon Catchment Council ([www.avonnrm.org.au](http://www.avonnrm.org.au)) is also considering a soil carbon trading scheme.