

Shire's new plan

The shire has a new strategic plan to take it forward into 2008. Development started on it back in July of 2001 with a series of workshops that identified issues the community saw as being relevant to Council business. This was followed by a broad community survey in September 2002 to determine the communities perception of current services and facilities and to seek further feedback on priorities.

From this process came a clear message amongst others, that the community saw the environment as an important issue and that council needed to take a strong role in. Acting on this feedback the new strategic plan has for the first time Environment as a primary area of activity.

Council's environmental goals are as follows-

Goal 1 - Environmental Planning and Management

That the Shire has developed and is implementing environmental policies on the use of land and water within the shire and that these policies are easily understood and are commensurate with community expectations

Goal 2 - Natural Resource Efficiency

That the Shire's natural resource utilisation per person is reduced.

Goal 3 - Waste Management

That the Shire is managing waste at a level commensurate with 'best practice' for Local Governments of a similar size and nature.

Goal 4 - Built Environment

That the Council's asset development program improves the environmental qualities and visual appearance of the region.



A good example of past environmental considerations within the townsite. Here the road alignment has been altered to bend around a boab tree.

WWF new river project



The World Wide Fund for Nature is embarking on a new project to identify sustainable options for the future of the Ord and associated land development. The goals of the project aim to improve future decision making processes for water management, to benefit both wetland health and people.

To do this the project will identify values necessary for sustainable land and water management decision making. This will include research to identify social, cultural and ecological wetland values and how they relate to each other. For example, a landscape value such as a weed free river-bank may be important for tourism, and also from an Indigenous view regarding river access. Similarly, there will be values in conflict with each other that will need to be identified so that more informed discussion and decision making can occur.

The participation of the community is vital in gaining solutions to safeguard the rivers of northern Australia, including the Ord. Knowledge and expertise makes the local community well placed to seek its own solutions for sustainable water use. Although still being defined, this project will draw heavily on the expertise of a range of people and organisations including OLW, research institutions, local agencies and other organisations through an Advisory Group. For more information on this project, please contact Tanya Vernes, WWF Wetlands Project Officer, on 9168 0903.



Lake Argyle, an important part of the WWF project.

Lily Creek browned off.

The discoloration of Lily Creek that became apparent within days of the finish of the wet and onset of sunny skies appears to be a natural occurrence.

Water and Rivers Commission take monthly water samples in Lily Creek Lagoon for nutrients, pesticides and herbicides. Recent test results do not show any obvious indication as to what may have caused the browning off.

Local opinion puts it as an annual event, possibly more prominent this year with less rainfall.

Also contributing could have been a rapid shift in weather patterns from cloudy monsoon to hot and sunny conditions. What ever the cause the area seems to be recovering with the affected areas gradually returning to normal.

Some of the burnt off weed in Lily Creek.

Editor; Dick Pasfield
08 9169 2222
olw@nits.net.au
PO Box 1804
KUNUNURRA WA 6743

Power connected to de-watering pumps

One of the issues that pulled farmers together back in the mid nineties was rising water tables. Ord Land and Water and the Ord Land and Water Management Plan can trace their beginnings back to the working group put together to address concerns that some agricultural land may become unproductive early into the new century.

A new phase is beginning in the fight to maintain ground water levels at below two metres. The long awaited commissioning of trial de-watering bores situated at the North of the Irrigation Area is due to happen at any time now.

Power is currently being connected via a new line running in from Weaber Plains Road. The Ord Irrigation Cooperative has been instrumental in the installation of these pumps with their negotiations with the Water Corporation who have funded the operation

Once operational the role of the bores will be to give information on the practicalities and costs associated with pumping. Currently the Ord Bonaparte Program is carrying out ground water modeling work. This has built on the early work done by the Water and Rivers Commission and the Department of Agriculture.

Research is showing amongst other things the rate of ground water rise on Packsaddle and Ivanhoe Plains and how ground water pumping and greater on farm water use efficiency could reduce the rate of rise.

This research information combined with the pumping data will be extremely useful in the development of strategies to address the issue of rising ground water in the irrigation area.

Shire offers environmental grants to the community

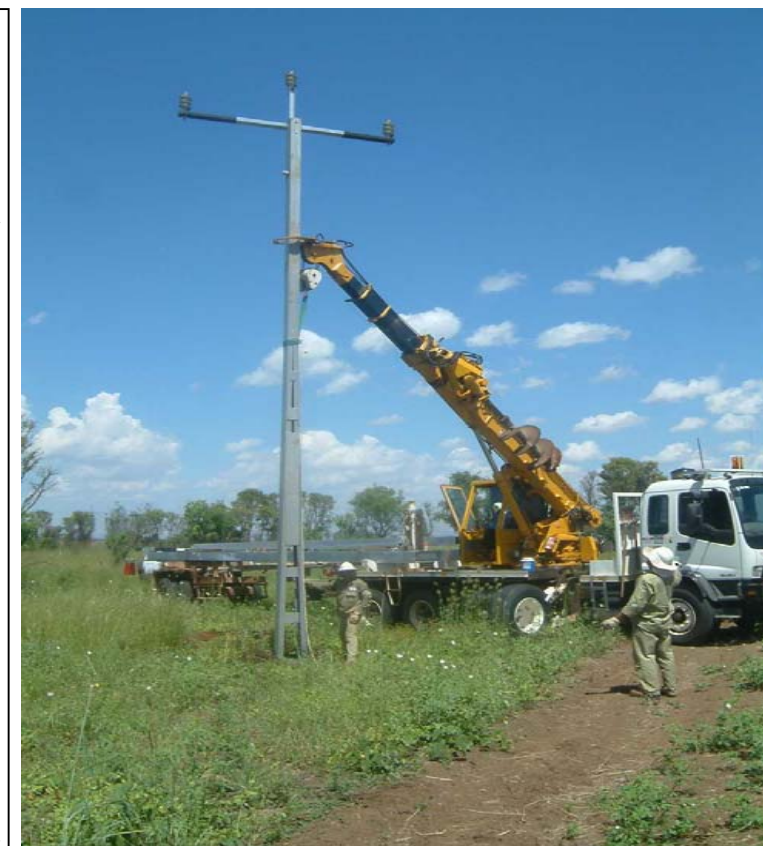
Council has recently voted to create an Environmental Allocation Fund to assist community groups in establishing and implementing environmental betterment initiatives within the shire.

Projects should be in keeping with the Councils environmental direction as determined by the 2003-2008 Strategic Plan.

Funding will be limited to 50% of the project with applications closing on the 30th April for consideration in the following financial year.

This initiative is in keeping with the inclusion of goals and strategies within the new Council Strategic Plan that deal specifically with environmental issues.

For further details of the plan see back page-



The first power pole is lifted into place.

OLW membership now available

Since its beginnings the Ord Land and Water focus has been on service to the community. Through the building of the Ord Land and Water Management Plan the different sections of our community have been able to plan together a direction for the management of our natural resources.

Community members and organisations can now become members of Ord Land and Water. Membership is an ideal way to ensure that the linkages between the community and the Ord Land and Water Board are strong and self sustaining, it creates greater opportunities for the community to express their views and contribute to the decision making process on local issues.

Membership funding is used as an important leverage tool to secure government funding for projects. Community support committed to local goals generally gains a significant commitment from government through funding and support of the relevant agencies.

Ord Land and Water believes that local development needs to include economic security, the aspirations of the community and a healthy environment, This way we all gain and our community becomes a great place to live and work in.

Those interested in becoming a member should look out for the membership brochures or can call the OLW office to have one sent out.

Pesticide Project

Nearly all is set to go for trial work on farms this year. The project will be looking at several different methods to remove pesticides from tailwater running off farm. At a recent workshop scientists and farmers were brought together to map out the upcoming trials ensuring that they were practical from both a farm and scientific perspective.

A total four trials were selected, they are as follows-

- Chemical absorbing material placed in the drainage area to pull chemicals out of the water.
- Grass buffer strips grown in the drains to allow chemicals to settle out.
- Use of polyacrylamide, currently being used to stop sediment moving off farm, but little is known about its abilities to stop pesticides.
- Farm management options, this would include spray and irrigation timing, incorporation of pesticide into the soil and spraying only the tops of the beds.

The project has grouped pesticides into two groups, those with high water-solubility and move predominantly with water and those with low water solubility and move with clay and organic matter particles. Trials were selected to ensure that both these groups would be looked at.

Some of the first work will be on sugar cane looking at the problems associated with atrazine use. Atrazine moves with water and needs to be watered in as soon as possible after spraying to ensure a good weed kill. This will present a significant challenge to the team and there could be few options tested prior to the right combination being found.



Flood irrigation has the potential to move both pesticides and fertiliser off farm if not managed correctly

What's OLV up to?

Ord Land and Water has plenty on its books for this year already. Following are some of the issues we are assisting with-

- Pesticide project is moving into the on-farm trial stage (see above)
- The project that is to look at drainage water re-use and wetlands has been split into two separate projects. The first will look at water reuse and will be lead by project partners Ord Irrigation Cooperative; the second will be the wetlands component lead by OLV. The reason for the division was to allow the partner organisations shape the components with the specialist skills relevant to the organisation.
- We are awaiting work back from the Lotteries Commission to see if our application for translation of the Ord Land and Water Plan into Miriuwung language was successful. The intention is to broadcast relevant parts of the plan in both English and Miriuwung on Waringarri Radio. The expectation is to increase the involvement of the aboriginal community in local natural resource management decisions.
- Actively supporting the weeds group with the campaign to reduce weed pressure on Lake Kununurra.
- Negotiating with project partners on the details of a sedimentation study on Lake Argyle. The last one was done in the early 90's, with a couple of major flood events since then this work needs to be repeated.



How much silt is moving into Lake Argyle? Is a question that needs to be answered to help with catchment management.

Most Wanted Weeds

Jane Rapkins from the Water and Rivers Commission is in the final stages of putting together her weeds brochure for the East Kimberley. The brochure will have information on distribution and plant description as well as identifying photos. The weeds covered include those already present and some hopefully we will never see here.

Tress, shrubs, creepers, grasses and some of the aquatic nasties that could turn the lake into a boating and environmental nightmare all feature. It will be a handy reference guide for landholders and those who just like to get out into the bush.



Jane shows off her soon to be distributed weeds brochure.

Farm sustainability

Outcomes of two grower's workshops held earlier this year highlighted farmers interest in creating a sustainable agricultural industry in the ORIA. Many people have trouble with the word 'sustainability' either unsure of what it means or not happy with what it could imply. Most definitions include a strong message that current generations should be considering future generation when making decisions. Many ORIA farmers have a good grasp on this and view sustainability to include farm economic security, reducing their impacts on the environment and keeping the satisfaction in the lifestyle. With a concept as wide as what has been described no single group can tackle all the issues. What is for certain is that farmers, agencies such as the Department of Agriculture and organisations like Ord Land and Water need to be working together to deal with it.



Planting and mulching cover crops for improved soil health is one of many new farm practices being incorporated into the ORIA

Volunteers tackle Lake Kununurra's weeds

There is a good chance of the local weed group receiving a grant to employ Conservation Volunteers Australia to spend ten days on Lake Kununurra to continue in the control and eradication of weeds. To date small groups with an interest in the area have carried out control where possible. One such group, SEEKS have been especially active working with agencies and local Government to eradicate salvinia in Lily Creek and noogoora burr elsewhere on the lake.

If funding is approved the work SEEKS have put into the lake will be carried on, hopefully reducing the threat of those weeds and other on the lake.

To assist with the weed clean up the Agricultural Protection Board has been asked to declare the weed bellyache bush between the two dams. Currently there is only a small area with the plant present in close to the Ord Dam. It's important to eradicate invasive weeds such as bellyache bush salvinia and noogoora burr before they become established.



Belly ache bush growing around the sewage treatment plant overlooking the Ord River.

You know you're from the north when-

- You mow your lawn and find a car.
- You think 18 degrees is cold.
- The only warm trousers you have are flares.
- You have 15 recipes for mango chutney.
- You've driven 400 kilometres to a party.
- Its difficult to remember whether July or February is the middle of winter.
 - When you take rubbish to the tip you come back with more than you left with.
- You can keep your temper in the build-up.
- Your hair drier is converted to a room heater in July.
 - Your tape cassettes have all melted because you left them on the dashboard.
- Your parrot knows the phrase open up, Police!
- Your daughter in the brownies can back down a Hells Angel.
- The cockroaches left you a note saying. "Clean this place up!"

Government funding delays to priority projects

There has been a good deal of stalling by the Federal Government recently in regard to funding of NHT priority projects in Western Australia and other states. A decision on projects and the associated funding that was due to be finalised late in 2002 has still yet to be sorted. Currently no one has any idea when that will happen except for a report that it may actually carry on into the new financial year.

If this is delayed for much longer many of these projects will run short of funds and may have to close down until the funding became available. This would mean that projects face the likely event of losing their staff and much of the project knowledge with them. Projects in the Kimberley that will be affected by these delays are the Kimberley Fire Project and Implementing the Ord Land and Water Management Plan. Fortunately funding of other projects associated with Ord Land and Water such as the pesticide project will not be affected by this delay.