

OLW's goals

With the release of the Ord Land and Water Management Plan in late 2000 the community has committed itself to working towards achieving the goals of the Plan. Some of the goals committed to are-

- Reduce ground water levels to below two metres from the surface across the whole irrigation area within five years while preventing any new areas from rising above that level.
- To reduce the load of chemical contamination in tail water by 40% within 5 years.
- To develop a recreational and commercial use plan for the Ord River within 3 years.
- Within ten years develop a full catchment plan for the Dunham River that involves all the stakeholders.
- Ensure that there are no uncontrolled outbreaks of new weed species in the area in the future.
- Maintain and protect the biodiversity of the plants and animals within the Ord River Irrigation area and surrounding areas included within this study.
- To ensure that recommendations from the Kununurra Wyndham Area Development Strategy are adhered to for the time-frame of the plan (25yrs) and that any changes to this and other town planning schemes only occur through due process.
- To increase the utilisation of recyclable refuses including green waste, aluminum, glass, etc by 50% in four years.

The Plan also identifies the organisations whose responsibility it is to ensure these goals are met. They range from farmers and community groups like OLW through to Government organisations such as the Shire and Water and Rivers Commission.



Salvinia: A weed recently eradicated from Lily Creek before it could spread and potentially choke the waterway as it has in some parts of the NT (see right) Photos courtesy Noel Wilson



SEEKS SPEAK

How is our native fauna faring in the Kimberley? What effects are extensive wildfires having? What will be the impact of the arrival of cane toads? SEEKS (Save Endangered East Kimberley Species) members are involved with several projects to learn more about the status of wildlife in the East Kimberley.

SEEKS is assisting with research on the effects of fire on the fauna of Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park. Surveys were carried out during July with various small reptiles and rodents found. No medium-sized mammals and very few small marsupial mammals were recorded. Surveys will be repeated several times during the next few years.

During August SEEKS is assisting CALM with fauna surveys in Mirima National Park. Ongoing monitoring will help establish the effects of current fire regimes on wildlife. Along with frogwatch surveys, impacts from the arrival of cane toads will also be detected.

At a recent SEEKS meeting, CALM conservation officer, Allan Thomson spoke about the North Kimberley Mammal Survey conducted by CALM during May. Recent surveys in Kakadu have shown that numbers of small mammals have declined drastically. It was not known if this was the case in the North Kimberley as no surveys had been conducted there since the 1960s. Although the results of the survey are still to be scientifically analyzed, despite greater trapping efforts for small and medium sized mammals, five species were not recorded that had been previously recorded.

Some interesting findings closer to Kununurra have been a northern brown bandicoot run over near the sugar mill and the tail of a sugar glider found at Spillway.

SEEKS meets on the third Wednesday of the month. Anyone is welcome to attend meetings or join in activities. For more information phone Allan Thomson on 91684200 or Jenny Wilksch on 91682276.



The Northern Quoll's range in the Kimberley appears to be shrinking



**ORD
LAND AND
WATER INC.**

Newsletter

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

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Trials for Pesticide Project looking good!



Local farmers inspect the weed kill in trial sugar cane crop.

The Pesticide Project started its on-farm experimentation work in June of this year. Two methods of applying the chemical herbicide Atrazine to sugar were trialled and compared with the existing methods currently employed by farmers.

Results were both surprising and pleasing. One trial recorded a 45% decrease in the chemical moving off farm compared to the existing practice whilst the second trial recorded a whopping 75% decrease in chemical movement off farm!

A field walk was held in July to look at the weed control within the trials. It was decided that a weed count should be done to gain a complete picture of what differences there were between the treatments. Results from the count indicate that there was very little difference between the trials and controls in this instance.

Further work will be needed to see if these trials can maintain the weed control and runoff results recorded in this round of experiments. If so farmers will be encouraged to take up the new methods as a part of their farm management practices.

A further round of trials will be held again in September on melons using the chemical endosulfan. The chemical is one of the few options for local farmers to control the aphid that can destroy large areas of crops at this time of year.

The results of this project will help farmers develop effective methods for keeping chemicals on the farm, a positive outcome for farmers, the environment and the community.

OLW funded for a further year

Ord Land and Water has recently received a further 12 month funding from the Natural Heritage Trust. This money will be used to-

- Assist farmers to deal with ground water, water efficiency and water quality issues.
- Work with the shire on environmental and sustainability issues.
- Build communication networks with Aboriginal people and the wider catchment.

Although a lot of this work has been started the Board is mindful of the fact that as we draw closer to our review date 2005 there is still much to achieve.

Farmers have started down the road to achieving their respective targets and the Shire has flagged its intent to consider environmental issues with the inclusion of an environmental section within its new Strategic Plan.

These goals will only be achieved by such organisations recognising the importance of these initial actions and commit to following them up with further actions.

Weed work on the lake kicks off!

The local Weeds Working Group started its weed control program for Lake Kununurra in mid June by arranging for nine members of Conservation Volunteers Australia to spend two weeks on the lake destroying weeds along the foreshore.

For this initial year the volunteers concentrated on some of the newer weeds that are still restricted to small pockets. They included horse radish tree, coral vine, bananas and bellyache bush. They also spent time removing patches of the more wider spread weeds such as parkinsonia, leuceana and date palm.

Weeds such as date palm and bellyache bush are serious problems in other areas, creating large monocultures that destroy the habitat of many native animals. Other weeds such as feral bananas and mangoes directly threaten horticulture in the irrigation areas by being a potential harbour for introduced pests and diseases that create quarantine restrictions.

Throughout the two weeks the Weeds Working Group was assisted greatly by local businesses keen to play a part in the weed control.

Accommodation: Argyle Expeditions, Kununurra Agricultural Society and Go Wild Adventure Tours.

Fuel: Munnern Pty Ltd.

Safety Equipment: Ord River District Cooperative.

Transport: Triple J Tours and Go Wild Adventure Tours.

The Group is keen to make this an annual event and is currently seeking funding for next year's activities. Putting CVA volunteers on the ground to concentrate on the larger areas supports local groups such as SEEKS who to date have been very active controlling spot outbreaks of weeds on and in the lake.



CVA member surveys bellyache bush infestation below the Ord Dam

Traditional Owners concerns on water quality

Members of the local Indigenous community met with representatives from Water and Rivers Commission and Ord Land and Water in late July to talk about land and water issues that local Aboriginals are concerned about.

It was expressed at the meeting that there was a general lack of communication between Aboriginal people and local agencies and organisations. This meant that some of their fundamental questions have been unanswered.

Some of the issues discussed were –

- Are there pesticide residues from the old days in the animals they hunt for food?
- What can be done about cumbungi blocking their access to the river for fishing?
- How can they gain access to areas of water currently not available to them?
- Where is it unsafe to swim?

An outcome of the meeting was to bring the relative organisations and local Aboriginals together to work through the issues.



OLW Coordinator Dick Pasfield and Leith Bowyer from WRC listen as Marjorie Ward

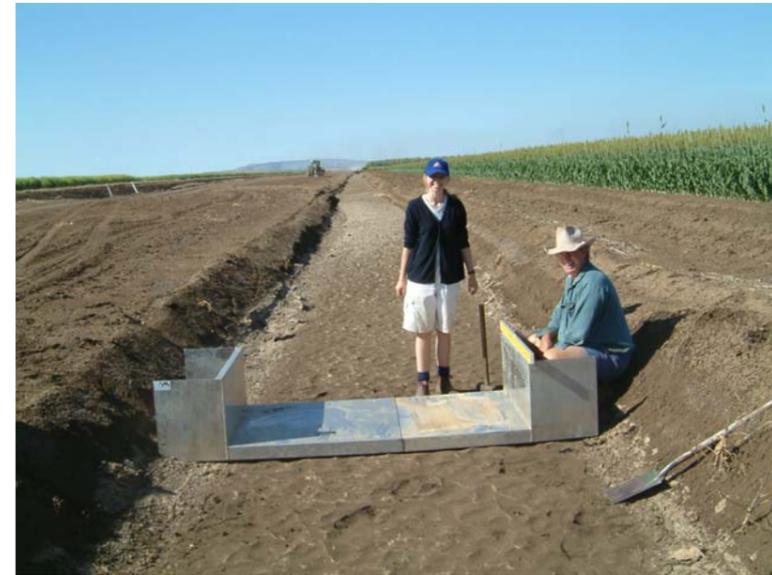
Regional Governance for Sustainability Conference

The WA Government is hosting the third conference of the Regional Government Network for Sustainable Development. Fifty sub national Governments from five continents have been invited to the conference. This will be held in conjunction with an academic and community forum. The conference will focus on climate change, water, Indigenous issues and tourism. OLW has encouraged the attendance and participation of a representative from the shire. Isolated regions such as our shire need to make a special effort to keep abreast of new developments and take the opportunity when available to put forward local perspectives on issues relevant to the region.

On farm water efficiency measured.

Ord Land and Water and the Department of Agriculture are currently trialling the measurement of water efficiency levels for farmers at a paddock level. Using a portable flume matched with some Doppler technology borrowed from Water and Rivers Commission it's hoped that the unit will be able to work with a wide range of flows and situations

This will give farmers valuable information on how much of the water they buy is used in crop production and how much flows through to the drains. Due to the portability of the equipment paddocks can be tested simply and quickly, this will mean that a farmer can try different methods of watering and be able to measure the differences. The Ord Land and Water Management Plan has the goal to improve irrigation efficiency to 65% on all farms within the ORIA by 2005.



Tara Gawned and Peter Smith from DAWA install the flume on David Menzel's farm.



OLW chairperson Fritz Bolten inspecting local groundwater pumping.

Ground water project could be lost

Major funding parties CSIRO and Land and Water Australia have indicated that the water resources component of the Ord-Bonaparte Program will no longer be a priority for funding under the coming OBP restructure.

The water resource work is seen as being of immediate relevance in addressing issues that need to be tackled by the farming industry. One project is building a picture of the extent and influence that rising ground water is and potentially could be having on the irrigation area.

OLW is currently lobbying both State Government, CSIRO and LWA to ensure the project is not lost.

Last Laugh

- 1.The bigger the hat, the smaller the farm.
- 2.The shorter the nickname, the more they like you.
- 3.Whether it is the opening of Parliament, or the launch of a new art gallery, there is no Australian event that cannot be improved by a sausage sizzle.
- 4.If the bloke next door swears like a wharfie, he's probably a media billionaire. But on the other hand, he may be a wharfie.
- 5.On the beach, ALL Australians hide their keys and wallets in their sandshoes. No thief has ever worked this out.
- 6.Industrial design knows of no article more useful than the plastic milk crate.
- 7.There is NO food that cannot be improved by the application of tomato sauce.
- 8.If it can't be fixed with pantyhose and fencing wire, it is not worth fixing.
- 9.The phrase "a simple picnic" is not known. You should take everything you own. If you don't take at least three trips back to the car, you're not trying.
- 10.On picnics, the "Esky" is always too small, thus creating a food versus grog battle that can only be solved by leaving the food behind.

Fish of Lake Kununurra

A recent study by Murdoch University identified 21 species of fish in Lake Kununurra. By Western Australian Standards the fish fauna of the lake is very diverse. For example the 21 species found during this study, compares to 23 freshwater species found throughout the entire Fitzroy River and 18 species from the Prince Regent River. This high diversity is further emphasized when it is compared with the Pilbarra and South-western Drainage Divisions which have a combined total of only 22 freshwater species.



Giant glassfish (*Parambassis gulliveri*) photo : Gerry Allen