

## More OLV Goals

Here are a few more of the Goals that the community committed itself to in the writing of the Ord Land and Water Management Plan 2000

- To improve irrigation management to achieve 65% average annual water use efficiency on all irrigation farms within five years.
- A 100% increase in the adoption of integrated pest management for all compatible crops within five years.
- To maintain and protect existing fish stocks with a view to increasing them if required in the future.
- To prevent further damage and modification to the natural riparian vegetation.
- Increase the understanding of causes and frequency of unplanned fires and their impact to enable effective management.
- Increase the understanding of and interrelationships between native plant and animal species in the area.



Barramundi are an important component of local fish stocks that need to be protected from over exploitation and habitat reduction.

## Aquatic Weed Alert

Declared aquatic weeds are spreading throughout the Perth metropolitan area again this summer. The Department of Agriculture has asked Kununurra residents to be on the lookout for them in the waterways here. Salvinia, Water Hyacinth, Water Lettuce, Sagitaria, Hydrocotyl, Parrot Feather and Elodea have all been found in Perth this year and all could survive in the waterways in the East Kimberley.

These are all declared aquatic weeds that seriously threaten our environment. Often they look quite attractive and people sometimes believe its ok to have them restricted to their ponds. However these weeds spread rapidly and can cause thick mats over the water surface, stopping light and oxygen from entering and resulting in fish kills and the death of native plants and tadpoles. They can also encourage the breeding of mosquitoes, and in lakes and rivers they can inhibit recreational activities such as boating and fishing.

It's important for the community to be aware of declared aquatic plants and their dangers, to report them when sighted and to ensure people do not cultivate these plants or contribute to their spread by dumping them in waterways and drains.



Salvinia plants will easily chock out a pond.



A water hyacinth infestation covering a pond.

## Kimberley Natural Resource Management (NRM) Update

Natural Heritage Trust 2 is the second stage of a Commonwealth funding program to help conserve, manage, maintain and restore Australia's natural resources and environment.

A requirement of the Program is that regional strategies and investment plans are developed before further investment is made. The three overarching objectives of the NHT2 are, biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of natural resources and community capacity building and institutional change.

This means that projects seeking NHT2 grants must address at least one of these objectives to be considered for funding. A strategy addressing the above issues is being developed by the W.A. Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group in consultation with the community, government, tourism, industry, farmers and pastoralists. The Kimberley Sub-Regional component of the strategy will address initiatives and priorities relevant to the Kimberley region. The purpose of the Kimberley NRM strategy is to-

- Identify targets and priorities for future NRM investments in the Kimberley.
- Ensure funds are directed to projects that the community deems locally important;
- Help the Kimberley community take a lead role in finding solutions to local problems;
- Take a strategic role in gaining investment from NHT2 and other stakeholders.

NRM strategies are being developed across Australia by community, Industry and government agency partnerships. Accredited strategies will help direct funding from NHT2 and other sources towards regional priorities.

# Ord Land and Water Newsletter

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

## OLW welcomes new members on Board

There was a changing of the guard at the OLV AGM held earlier this year. Three of the longer term Board members retired and four new faces were elected to make up a new look and larger team.

Retiring after three years service was Greg Cummings and Scott Goodson who were part of the original Board when it was established in late 2000. Also retiring was Tanya Vernes who had served on the Board for nearly two years and was on the original steering committee back in the late nineties. All the retiring Board members were particularly active and helped to shape the organisation in its early stages of development.

New members elected were Wilhelm Bloecker, John Buchanan, Duncan Palmer and Susie Williams. Wilhelm is no stranger to OLV as he also sat with Tanya on the original steering committee. The new members will bring skills and knowledge to the Board ranging from Farming and Rangelands to River and Local Government experience.

At a subsequent Board meeting Fritz Bolten and Andrew Kelly retired from the positions of Chairperson and Vice chair. Fritz had held the position for the previous three years and like the retiring Board members had played a major part in the early development of OLV. The new chair elected was John Buchanan with Ian Davies becoming vice chair.

OLW would like to especially thank Fritz, Andrew, Scott, Greg and Tanya for the big effort and countless hours each of them put into building the foundations of the organisation and ensuring its relevance with all the community

Also showcased at the meeting was the project work of last year and a view of the proposed work for next year. This will involve more work on farm with water quality and water efficiency and some community projects involving weeds, fire and toads.

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## New Office for OLV

With the opening of the new office facilities for the Ord Irrigation Cooperative OLV finally has a permanent home office.

Up until early this year OLV had been generously hosted for its first two years by the Ord-Bonaparte Program while waiting for the completion of the new building.

OLW is very appreciative of the assistance given by both organisations and their stakeholders and the commitment shown to assist with meeting the community goals identified in the plan. Much of OLV's work is focused on water issues on farm. Working out of the same office as the Irrigation Cooperative's Environmental Officer will assist both organisations contribute to sustainable water use in the irrigation area.



Pictured are members both past and present, Back row – John Buchanan, Wilhelm Bloecker, Ian Davies and Duncan Palmer. Second Row - Andrew Kelly, Susie Williams, Tanya Vernes and Liz Kirkby. Front row - Scott Goodson and Fritz Bolten.

## Water re-use report complete.

OLW recently completed a report that identified likely points within the irrigation system where drainage water could be potentially reused back on farms. Currently there are a few farmers who are pumping from the system's drains as the opportunity arises. This report looked at places where large volumes of water could be moved efficiently and at the lowest cost.

The report has been circulated to relevant organisations and is expected to be used as a starting point for any demonstration reuse trials undertaken by the Ord Irrigation Cooperative.

Also in the report are the results of some monitoring work done to see if it could be determined how effective existing wetlands were at filtering contaminants leaving farms from tail water prior to it running into the river.

As a result of this early work OLW has applied for further funding for some longer term monitoring on the wetlands to gain a picture of it's effectiveness over a wet and dry season.



Furrow irrigation needs to be carefully managed to gain water use efficiency. Reuse of tail water can help with that.

## Farmer Workshop sets direction

A farmer workshop was held in March to determine what on-farm trials were needed to be done in 2004 to help reduce pesticide runoff. The workshop began by discussing what was achieved last year and the issues that came out of the work, as well as any gaps in the research.

Of particular interest to the group was the success in the 2003 trials of use of Polyacrylamide to reduce the flow off farm of both water soluble and soil attractant pesticides by dropping out sediment from irrigation water.

This was tempered by to some degree by the lack of long term knowledge of the product's effect of moving water and perhaps chemicals deeper into the soil profile.

As a consequence a further trial to look at the use of Polyacrylamide on different chemicals as well as the infiltration of those chemicals into the soil was prioritised highly.

Also prioritised was a trial to further refine the mechanical incorporation into the soil to reduce losses.

The workshop also viewed monitoring information that showed in 2003 farmers were able to significantly reduce the movement off farm of endosulfan, however there still needs to be more work done to gain a similar success with the chemical atrazine.



There's plenty of natural resources to manage in the upper catchment.

## From elsewhere

A local landcare group in the Denmark River catchment is making some progress against the salt problem that has existed for over 30 years in the area. The Kent-Denmark Recovery Team that was initially formed in 1988 to address water quality has recently released a Salinity Situation Statement for the river. The key findings of the salinity situation statement are that:

- Annual salinity at the Mt Lindesay gauging station peaked at 1520 mg/L TDS in 1987 and has, on average, been declining since.
- Salinity in an average year is now about 700 mg/L at Mt Lindesay.
- Plantations (tree crops) established since 1988 are expected to further reduce the salinity of the river water but not enough to reach the drinking water target.
- There are feasible options to meet the 500 mg/L TDS target including tree planting, pasture establishment, revegetation and engineering works.
- Meeting the 500 mg/L target still means variability from about 400-800 mg/L.
- Most management options focus actions in the Upper Denmark catchment.

The Kent-Denmark Recovery Team is a partnership group between local landholders and government agencies. Their goal is to bring the quality of the river water back to drinking water quality by 2020.

## New OLW projects

OLW is looking at addressing some of the off farm goals of the Land and Water Management Plan in the coming year ahead. This will be done in partnership with other local organisations such as the Shire, DAWA and CaLM. The emphasis of the program is to pool the resources of the groups and deal with the issues in a coordinated way. The projects were selected based on all the participating organisations own priorities including goals identified within the Shire's Strategic Plan. The program will consist of some existing projects such as the weed and catchment work OLW has already been involved in and some new work that will include-

- Trying to reduce the incidences and effects on unplanned fires,
- looking at waste reduction and reuse options locally,
- coordinating a response to the arrival of cane toads and
- developing some river and vegetation management strategies.

The program is designed to collaboratively address the issues seen by the community as important, get good value for the money invested by the Natural Heritage Trust and some good on ground outcomes of value for the community.



An adult cane toad, how long will it be before they are in town?

## Some major threat to Australian birds

In the first of a series of reports summarising the fortunes of Australia's birds some major threats have been highlighted. These include -

- Broad scale clearance of native vegetation.
- Increasing fragmentation of native vegetation, degradation and loss of remnants and lack of recruitment.
- Grazing pressure.
- Changed fire regimes.
- Intensification of agriculture.
- Firewood collection and general cleaning up of litter and fallen wood.
- Changed hydrology – altered flow regimes, deteriorating water quality and dryland salinity.
- Climate change.
- Introduced animals.
- Longline fishing.

Across the North of Australia there was the recognition that some fire practices are harmful to bird species. Whilst in the relatively low density well vegetated cities of Australia some birds are finding suitable habitat.

In all, the fortunes of birds in Australia are mixed, though with the reduction of broad scale clearing the expected decline of some species will be reduced.

## Plan hits the radio

Indigenous people are now starting to hear about the Land and Water Management Plan through broadcasts now playing on Waringarri Radio. The project had its beginnings two years ago through talks between OLW and the Mirima Language Centre looking at the options of communication with Traditional Owners on local natural resource management issues.

Ten themes considered important by Mirima were selected from the Plan and the work of translation began with funding from Lotterywest. The themes put to air include Native Animals, Fish Stocks, Weeds, Fire and Water Quality.

To ensure that all the messages get out to as many people in the community as possible there are three language components to the announcements, English, Miriwoong and Kriol. One of the 'spin off' benefits to the project is that the announcements can also be used as a language learning tool.

It is envisaged that this project will be the one of the many ways of securing an equitable cross cultural approach to natural resource management locally.

You can hear these messages at 12.45pm weekdays on Waringarri radio.

## Catchment communications

A recent OLW survey conducted in the Ord River catchment has revealed some valuable information on communication methods and other resource management issues. Through a series of interviews with Pastoralists, Indigenous landholders, Government Agencies and Industry a picture has been drawn of how people talk to each other and more importantly 'what works best' for what situation.

Not surprisingly talking face to face and on the phone were said to be the best methods and e-mail also showed a marked preference. Newsletters and publications such as the Pastoral Memo also rated very highly as a means of getting a message out.

Other clear messages to come from the survey were -

- A lack of coordinated community NRM planning within the catchment.
- A seen need by Indigenous and Non-Indigenous landholders for some NRM coordinating role to be active within the catchment.
- There has been a lack of activities and/or projects for LCDC members to focus in recent years.