

Autumn 2003

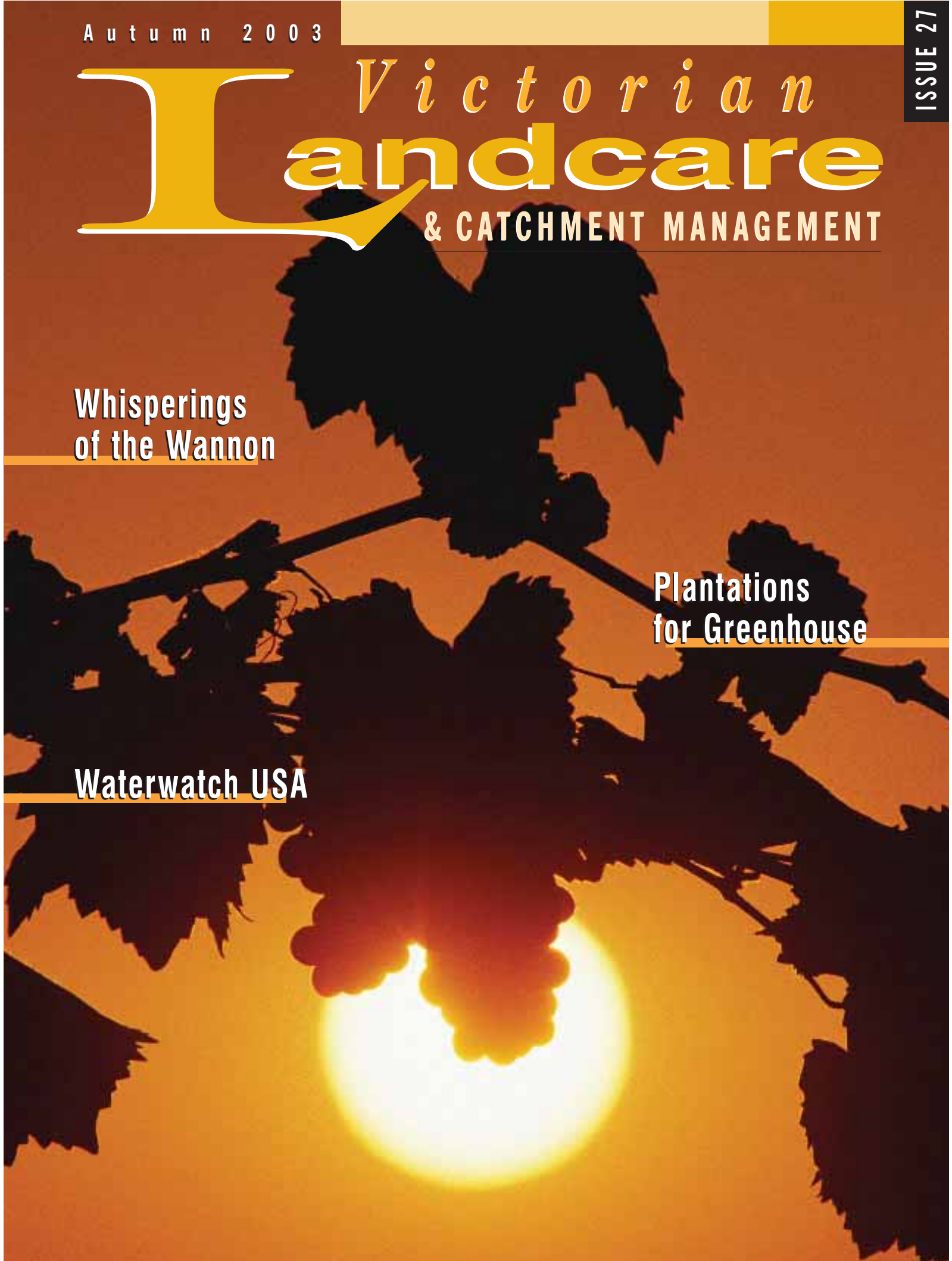
ISSUE 27

L *Victorian* **Landcare** & CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

**Whisperings
of the Wannon**

**Plantations
for Greenhouse**

Waterwatch USA



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Sunset over the Yarra Valley.

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CONTENTS



Fine dining
at Milloo

◀ 8-9



The Holdens
from Overdale

◀ 12-13



The Wannon
River story

◀ 16-17



Waterwatch USA

◀ 20-21

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management is published for the Victorian Landcare community by the Victorian Farmers Federation in partnership with the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Alcoa World Alumina Australia, the Victorian Catchment Management Council and the Natural Heritage Trust.



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Fixing the Landscape Jigsaw

If you fly over south-west Victoria in a light plane the landscape looks a bit like a jigsaw. There are pieces of bush, pieces of farmland, and many missing pieces. The pieces of bush are often small and isolated.

A pilot project funded by Alcoa World Alumina Australia and being run by Greening Australia Victoria is helping to link up the pieces of bush around Portland and improve the survival chances of our native animals.

The project is called Alcoa Living Landscapes. According to Doug Phillips, Alcoa Living Landscapes Community Liaison Officer, the isolation of these areas of remnant vegetation is potentially catastrophic for the survival prospects of native fauna, particularly woodland birds.

“Habitat isolation greatly hinders the spread of genetic diversity. In the long-term, inbreeding and local extinction is a strong prospect for many species.

Living Landscapes aims to provide the necessary tools to help private landholders restore the connections between remnants in the Portland regional landscape.”

A recent field day saw around 30 people touring the area’s remnant vegetation. Representatives from natural resource management agencies, industry, non-government organisations, landholders and community groups and Portland Aluminium visited the Narrawong property of Portland Aluminium employee Ron Panozzo, the Milltown property of Nick and Dawn Claydon and Mount Eccles National Park.

Joan McGovern, Alcoa’s Community Affairs and Landcare Manager for Victoria, explained that Living Landscapes focuses on ‘icon’ fauna and encourages neighbouring land managers to link their smaller pieces of remnant vegetation to ensure the animal’s survival.

“For example, Nick and Dawn Claydon have focused on the Yellow Bellied Glider that lives in a small patch of their eucalypts and are working to link with neighbours Timber Corp to provide a sufficiently large enough area for the glider to survive. On their own, the Claydons don’t have enough forest for the glider to survive. The link to Timber Corp’s patch of remnant vegetation will help to achieve that,” Joan said.



“The Alcoa Living Landscapes pilot is exciting a lot of interest locally and around the State. It is being funded this year with a view to extending the lessons to other areas of Victoria in the future,” added Joan.

The Alcoa Living Landscapes Portland project has established three cell groups in Cashmore, Narrawong and Milltown. Neighbouring landholders have been encouraged to participate in the project to help facilitate vegetation links.

The Portland area is fortunate in that large areas of vegetated public land and privately owned native remnants already exist relatively close together. This means that, with further cooperation of private landholders and government, more links can be achieved at a reasonably low cost.



Ken O'Connor (left) was one of Portland Aluminium's representatives at the Alcoa Living Landscapes field day. He's pictured with Heather Buihth from the WindaMara Aboriginal Corporation, Marcel Hoog Antink from Parks Victoria and Nick Claydon a property owner from Milltown.

From the editors

Drought and dry seasonal conditions continue to have a serious impact on many parts of the State. We encourage those affected to reach out and make contact with the many agencies that are providing assistance.

A drought preparation and survival guide can be downloaded from the Department of Sustainability and Environment's website at www.nre.vic.gov.au or by contacting the call centre on 136 186.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the many volunteers who fought serious bushfires during January and February. Without the tireless efforts of the many CFA brigades involved the loss of stock and property would have been much higher.

NRE becomes DSE (and DPI too)

The State election late last year has seen the creation of a new Department of Sustainability and Environment which will take on the environmental functions of NRE, the planning functions of the Department of Infrastructure and have an overarching strategic role.

A separate Department of Primary Industries will take over the areas of agriculture and fisheries. A third new body, the Department of Victorian Communities, will have the role of strengthening communities and integrating services across Victoria.

Please keep your letters and articles coming. We would particularly like to see more stories from irrigators about the problems and projects they are tackling.

Mike Gooley, Lyall Grey and
Carrie Tiffany



Message from the Minister for Environment

Victoria's rural landscapes and communities increasingly reflect long-term land stewardship as a shared goal and this will be fostered through the new Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The Victorian Government is committed to effective treatment of land and water degradation problems and recognises Landcare as an important program which allows landholders to work together to address problems in their local area.

As the Minister for Environment I am delighted to be responsible for the Victorian Government's support of Landcare.

The Victorian Landcare Action Plan: *Healthy Landscapes – Sustainable Communities* is well under way with a new State Landcare Team including ten regional Landcare Coordinators.

This is an important and positive step in ensuring a regional focus for Landcare support on an ongoing basis.

It gives me great pleasure to call for 2003 Victorian Landcare Awards nominations. The Awards are a great opportunity for individuals, groups and networks to reflect on their achievements and celebrate their successes. I encourage all Landcarers to consider nominating themselves and others.

Over the coming months I am keen to meet with Landcare groups in regional Victoria to see first hand the vital work they are doing to shape a sustainable future. I am proud to have the task of building on the success of Landcare and maintaining Victoria's leadership in community-based natural resources management.

John Thwaites
Minister for Environment

DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT

2003 VICTORIAN LANDCARE AWARDS

You are invited to enter the 2003 Victorian Landcare Awards to help promote Landcare and recognise the contribution members of your community make to the environment.

ENTER NOW

Awards categories include: Individual, Rivercare, Nature Conservation, Community Group, Research, Local Government, Catchment, Primary Producer, Education, Indigenous, Sustainable Farming, Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship and the Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award.

Entries close: Friday 30 May 2003

For more information or an entry form contact the Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or visit www.nre.vic.gov.au



A tribute to Wally Shaw

By Alex Arbuthnot

Farmers and Landcarers across Victoria were saddened to hear of the recent death of Wally Shaw. As a past-president of the Victorian Farmers Federation Wally worked hard out front and behind the lines to support Landcare.

Wally was very aware of the leadership role the VFF played in the establishment of Landcare and was totally committed to ensuring that farmer organisations continue to be involved.

Wally was an active member of the Landcare Foundation Victoria Committee.

He will also be remembered for his leadership and commitment as a member of the Organising Committee for the first International Landcare Conference held in Melbourne in March 2000 where he chaired the Marketing sub-committee.

As a farmer, Wally and his family are among Australia's largest producers of chicken meat. The home farm at Red Hill is a model Landcare and Land for Wildlife property.

I know I speak for the many, many friends of Wally when I say he was one of the finest and most valued people that I have had the pleasure to know and to work beside.

He recognised the importance of family and mateship which is why he believed in Landcare. He was always humble and friendly – never cross. He could tell a good story and to many of us was a ball of fun.



Wally and Wendy Shaw at the Victorian Farmers Federation Open Farm Scheme

We thank you Wally for your contribution to the family of Landcare. Our deepest sympathies to Wally's wife, Wendy, and to all the members of the Shaw family.

IN BRIEF

Tree growers plan for Ballarat 2004

A national tree-growing conference will be held in Ballarat next May. The Australian Forest Growers' 2004 Conference will look at the benefits farm forestry can bring to farms, communities and catchments.

The conference is being hosted by Ballarat Region Treegrowers who have thrown down the challenge to presenters to demonstrate how their tree-growing endeavours not only enhance their farms or enrich their investors, but add value to their rural communities and catchments.

Run over three and a half days, the conference will be a practical exercise with daily field tours as an alternative to paper and workshop presentations.

For further information contact Gib Wettenhall on 5334 4643 or on email gib@netconnect.com.au



Phil Kinghorn, President Ballarat AFG Branch (left) with Nick Dear, owner of Pentland Furniture, with two chairs made of Sugar Gum. Ballarat AFG is keen to upgrade the lowly Sugar Gum from firewood to a fine furniture species.

Landcare Co-ordinators launch at Coonoor Bridge

The Landcare Co-ordinators program for the Shires of Buloke and Northern Grampians was launched at a well-attended barbecue breakfast at Coonoor Bridge on the Avoca River last December.

Over 60 people attended from Landcare groups, Buloke Learning Towns, the Federal Government, the two Shires, North Central CMA, the then Department of Natural Resources and Environment and Parks Victoria.

The program was launched by the Member for Mallee, John Forrest, MLA, who said it was appropriate for the event to be held at Coonoor Bridge which is located on the Avoca River, at the border of the two shires.

John also noted that the modern and well-equipped hall had been built entirely through the will and resources of the community and pointed out that this sort of community spirit was the backbone of Landcare.

Farmers have their say on EMS

By Greg Smith

An Environmental Management System (EMS) is a structured process to assess and improve environmental performance. Farmers with an EMS have a systematic approach to responsible management of the impact of agricultural activities on the environment.

A VFF-DSE EMS Policy Group has been established to ensure that any inconsistencies in relation to EMS publicity, policy, training and implementation are minimised.

It also aims to operate as the EMS focal point and oversee the development of EMS so that a realistic, uniform and practical framework for EMS implementation at the farm, regional/catchment and State level is achieved.

During October and November 2002, the VFF in conjunction with the then Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Catchment Management Authorities and the Victorian Catchment Management Council conducted a series of consultative workshops about EMS across Victoria.

The workshop participants gained a clear understanding of EMS, defined the potential benefits and threats to its widespread implementation, provided advice as to how farmers and land managers can practically and realistically get started with EMS and considered what key elements should be included in EMS and how it can be linked to quality assurance programs.

There was keen interest and plenty of enthusiasm at the workshops. Farmers appreciated the opportunity to have their say in the development of a farmer-friendly EMS program.



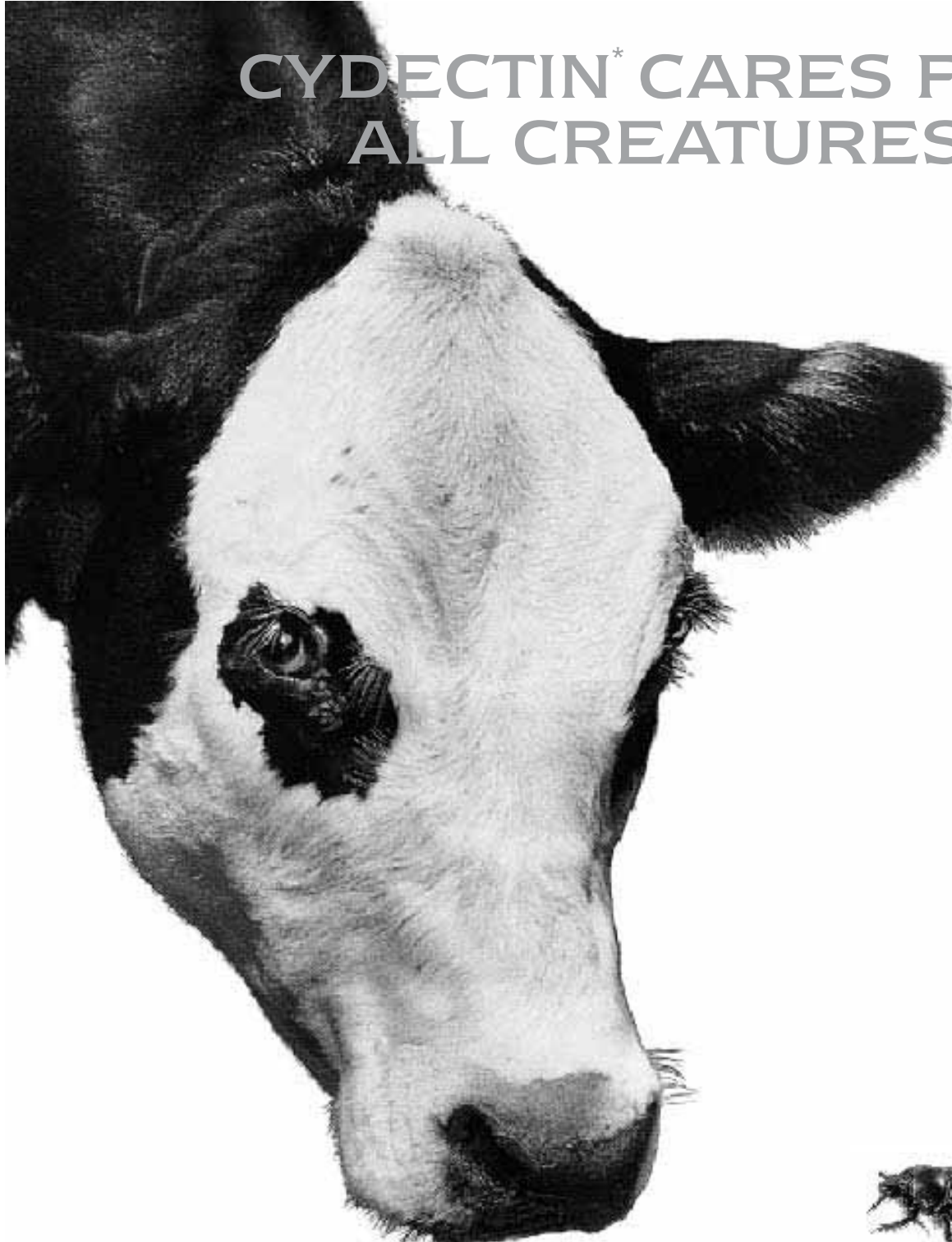
Greg Smith running an EMS workshop with the West Gippsland CMA at Traralgon.

The workshop process produced a vast array of very useful information, including the following recommendations.

- Ensure that there is a clear, simple process for getting started with EMS.
- Ensure that there is easily accessible, competent support and assistance.
- Promote and facilitate EMS training in conjunction with FarmBis.
- Promote and encourage EMS as a new direction for Landcare.
- Integrate EMS with existing activities and programs.
- Develop clear, co-ordinated, effective communication in relation to EMS.
- Establish rewards and recognition for EMS, including a tiered auditing arrangement.
- Effectively integrate Federal EMS initiatives (national framework, incentive program, pilot projects and training package) and other relevant incentive programs for improved environmental management.
- Address all of the perceived fears. For example, fear of change, failure, legal implications or production losses.
- Establish a VFF-government partnership to lead EMS implementation in Victoria.
- Ensure that industry, the CMAs and government set realistic environmental management objectives.
- Effectively engage agribusiness and environmental groups.
- Capitalise on the opportunity for EMS to produce significant whole-of-community benefits and rationalise the expectations regarding environmental management on private versus public land.

For further information about EMS contact DSE on 136 186 or the VFF on 9207 5555.

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Farm forestry makes

Located on the fringe of the Bendigo Creek floodplain, the low-lying areas of the farm are dominated by Red Gum regeneration that followed flooding in 1974. Prior to selection in 1874 the land was open grassland with scattered Red Gums.

Ian and Leanne Rankin are participants in the West Regional Forestry Agreement's Sawlog Farming Project. They are already managing some existing trees for sawlogs and will plant new trees this spring.

From picture frames to plantations

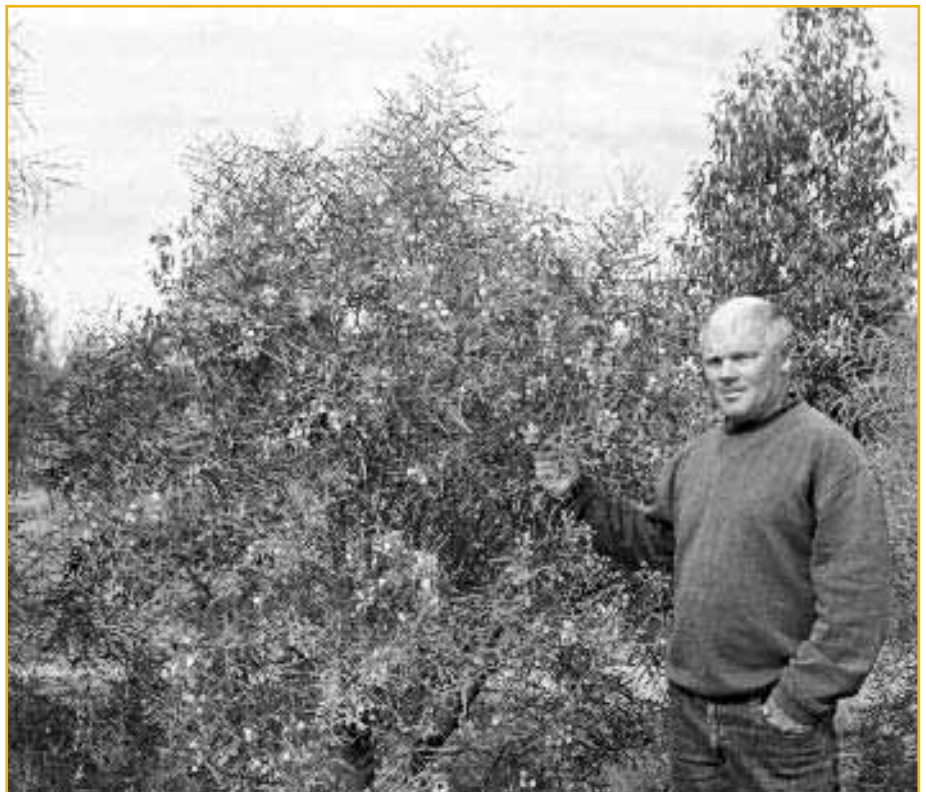
The Rankins planted their first farm forestry trees in 1998 and now have 20 hectares under trees. The trees will supply craftwood, firewood, furniture timber and generate additional income.

They also provide ecological and biodiversity benefits, assist with salinity control and improve the aesthetics of the farm.

Ian's interest in farm forestry began at a 1997 Landcare timber field day, where he saw a picture frame made from Sugar Gum.

In 1998 Ian helped form the Northern United Forestry Group, and he is currently president of the group. The group's 19 members have a range of expertise including seed collecting, planting and milling. The group's objectives include co-ordinating the development of a critical mass of commercial plantations, investigating and developing market opportunities, providing leadership and promoting commercial tree growing on farms.

Acacia salicina is showing good growth rates and can be harvested for seed and craftwood after only five years.



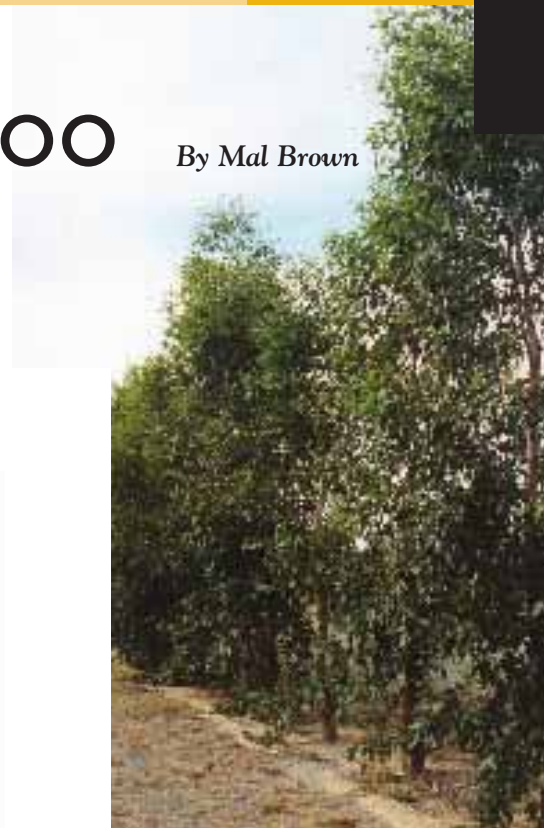
When Ian and Leanne Rankin have a meal with their family they sit at an imposing timber table made from a Sugar Gum planted by Ian's grandfather. The tree was 75 years old when it was harvested. It was milled on the farm, air-dried and stored in a controlled atmosphere before being crafted. Ian says it will become a true family heirloom – handed down from generation to generation.

Out on the farm another family heirloom is also looking healthy. The stump from the harvested Sugar Gum has coppiced and another Sugar Gum is growing strongly in its place.

The Rankin's farm an 800-hectare dryland property at Milloo, 65 kilometres north of Bendigo.

for fine dining at Milloo

By Mal Brown



Lasting Links

The group is involved in a Natural Heritage Trust pilot project entitled Lasting Links, which involves identifying businesses, landholders and local governments and inviting them to participate in a dryland private forestry project.

The Rankins have already had success in establishing Sugar Gum, Spotted Gum and Red Ironbark.

“Our soils are largely black floodplain clays and red clays which, because of their historic management, tend to be a little acidic,” Ian says.

Planting takes place in September and the trees are usually watered twice – at the time of planting and 7-10 days later. The trees are planted at 2.5 metre spacings, with four metres between rows. 1000 trees are planted per hectare.

These will be thinned, initially to 600 trees and eventually to even less.

Quick returns from salicina

Ian says that they have enjoyed excellent success rates by planting the right trees in the right soil type.

He has had good success with *Acacia salicina*, which grows very well in the area and shows quick returns. *Salicina* can provide seed for Landcare and agroforestry and the timber is good for furniture and craftwood. Timber-wise thinnings for craftwood can begin at around five years and seed harvesting at two to three years.

According to Ian, farmers are increasingly recognising the multiple benefits offered by farm forestry.

“There is additional income from harvesting long-term and in the short-term prunings can be sold for firewood. The trees provide shelter for stock, help to control salinity, erosion and weeds and also improve the aesthetics of the farm.”

Ian Rankin with the table made from a Sugar Gum planted by his grandfather.

Draining saline land

John Carr inspecting his salt-tolerant pastures.

John and Marlene Carr are starting to see some positive results from their years of tackling salinity on their Rokewood property, south of Ballarat.

For John a low lying wet, salty paddock called 'South Halls' was a liability.

"Only a few salt-tolerant plants grew on the area and when we grazed it stock camped on the saline areas leaving the soil exposed to wind erosion and the accumulation of salt," John said.

According to John, historically the area had always been a bit swampy. The lack of vegetation caused by the ponding of surface water, stock grazing and changes to the drainage on a nearby road seemed to compound the problem.

"The extent of salting varies across the paddock from being marginally saline to extensively salt affected," he said.

John started monitoring watertable levels in June 1997. The watertable under the paddock was found to be within about 2m of the soil surface.

In April 2000 John created 25m beds using a laser guided rotary drainer and had the area sown in the spring of 2000 to a mixture of salt-tolerant pasture species.

"The rotary drainer made short work of the drainage lines and, as the material was thrown some distance, they are unlikely to fill in."

John explained that the procedure he used for sowing was to firstly surface apply 2.5 t/ha of gypsum to help open the soil structure and lift the pH, and to spray the area with herbicide at 1.5l/ha to kill any remaining vegetation.

at Rokewood

By Paul Crock

“We achieved an excellent result with the spray, which allowed us to direct drill the new pasture mix suitable for the conditions.”

His mix included Dovey Tall Fescue, Dundas Tall Wheat Grass and Palestine Strawberry Clover at a rate of 11 kg/ha. John said he sowed the seed with single superphosphate at a rate of 225 kg/ha.

“During 2002, we topdressed the paddock with 190 kg/ha of single superphosphate.” he said.

Soil test results from before sowing (September 1999) and three years after the drains were installed are provided (table 1).

Since John installed the drains, the results have been very encouraging. Even the salt level in the base of the drains has reduced to below pre-drainage concentrations. (They are currently at between 0.32 and 0.36 dS/m (EC)).

John explained that the depth of the watertable since the beds have been

Table 1: Changes in key soil parameters at drain installation and three years later.

Analysis	September 1999		August 2002	
	Marginally saline	Extensively saline	Marginally saline	Extensively saline
Salt (EC)	0.23	0.51	0.11	0.28
Soil texture	Loam	Clay loam	Loam	Clay loam
Phosphorus (Olsen)	10.2	11.0	18.2	13.3
Potassium (Colwell)	156	249	226	298
Sulphur (KCL40)	22.0	34.7	17.9	51.3
pH (CaCl ₂)	4.7	4.8	5.5	5.1

installed has remained fairly constant at about 3m, despite the 2001 rainfall being above the annual average.

“We thought we would see a marked increase in the watertable but it appears the drains have prevented surface water from soaking in and compounding the groundwater problem,” he said.

Importantly for John and Marlene, the drainage created by the 25m beds has

allowed the salt to leach from the surface soil and the pasture species to establish successfully. The paddock is now making a contribution to the productivity of the farm and there is a reduction in the build up of surface salts and likelihood of soil erosion.

For more information about the Woody Yaloak Salinity Program contact Cam Nicholson on (03) 5258 3860

Rotary drainer in action.



The site before the drains were installed.





The rabbit tale

Concongella Landcare Group founding member and president for 10 years, George Holden, believes the Wimmera needs rabbit vigilante groups.

George Holden is a fourth-generation farmer at Overdale near Stawell. He admits he hasn't seen many rabbits on his place since the introduction of calicivirus disease four years ago but he doesn't want to rest on his laurels.

George can remember when he was a small child cutting up apples for a strychnine mix then walking around the property with a full bucket, spreading the deadly poison. In those days it wasn't unusual for one night's poison to kill 3000 rabbits.

He also recalls four or five men standing around a General Motor Company truck filled to the brim with rabbits. They were skinning the pelts for the money.

Then there was the time when the Stawell Football Club came to Overdale for a fundraising rabbit-drive. The strapping lads walked in a line herding the rabbits into a trap, some stopping at hollow logs and pulling out two or three at a time. They killed and sold the rabbits to raise money for the club coffers.

These were desperate times and the economic, environmental and social impacts of the rabbit were widely felt.

Rabbits have a negative effect on soil health, water quality, biodiversity and agricultural production. A 1998 study estimated that before calicivirus the potential loss to the Wimmera's agricultural production through rabbits was \$17 million a year.

George Holden says now is the time to ensure rabbits can never take hold again.

"We've got virtually no rabbits now because of calicivirus but those that are left must be building up an immunity.

"There should be local vigilante groups out there making sure the rabbits don't come back. We can't relax about rabbits and removal of rabbit harbour should still be a priority."

George and his daughter Sue now run the 7500-acre Overdale property which carries 10,000 superfine merino sheep.

George's father Allan has just retired to Stawell after a lifetime on the property but he's still a regular around the place.

Rabbit, erosion and weed control, salinity and reversing the bare earth policy of past eras have been priorities for Allan and now George.

The family was caring for the land long before Landcare came into being in Victoria in 1986.

Allan was instrumental in the early 1950s in fertiliser trials that discovered a molybdenum deficiency in the area.

George Holden with Jason the dog.

of Overdale

By Melissa Pouliot



He also had a passion for recording improvements on the property, often following George around with a Super-8 video camera.

“He was a real pain,” George laughs. “But he produced a video called *Waiting for the Wool to Grow* which is a great record of history. He used to love showing it to people who visited.”

George continues his father’s passion for running a sustainable property. He has remained in the chairman’s seat for Concongella Landcare Group since he helped to get it started about 10 years ago, and his property is the focus of many major projects including flood retention sites, rabbit and weed buster programs,

concrete structures in gullies, fertiliser trials and erosion control.

According to George administration and information flow is the most difficult aspect of running the group, which meets around four times a year.

“We employ Sean Molloy part-time as a weed and rabbit facilitator to look after this side of things so while our members are flat out shearing and cropping he can keep the wheels in motion.

“The red tape is about the same level as it’s always been but the paperwork in grant applications and reports has grown enormously. This will always be a major challenge for volunteer groups such as Landcare into the future.”



Sue, George and Cath Holden sit under an olive tree planted more than 100 years ago in the vineyard paddock.

Major facelift for eroded vineyard block



Before



After. These photographs were taken 12 months apart. The ute is parked in roughly the same spot in both photographs.

An historic vineyard paddock on George Holden’s property is the site of one of the most ambitious soil conservation projects in western Victoria.

The vineyard paddock has a long and fascinating history as the site for a major winery project in the late 1800s.

In 1884 Stawell Vineyard Company bought 560 acres and in 1890 it planted 230 acres to grapes and fruit trees. The ambitious planting of 74,000 vines and 1650 fruit trees plus making 100,000 bricks for cellars and other buildings on the site sent the company broke.

Now all that remains is three large olive trees and a severely eroded landscape.

Upper Wimmera catchment Landcare facilitator, Clem Sturfels, said the vineyard paddock had some of the most intense gully erosion in this part of the catchment.

“The project has presented a huge challenge both in terms of design, construction and management.

George is the only landholder I have worked with who has the ability, drive and motivation to undertake this type of work. His land management skills are second to none in this area.”

Clem Sturfels said that he believed George purchased the severely degraded block of land because the challenge was too big for him to ignore.

The project included a series of gully plug dams, diversion banks and a very large flood retention dam. “The final cost of the project was around \$100,000, not including the significant time put in by George, his family and NRE staff,” Clem Sturfels said.

“George’s wife Cath and his children also played a significant role in this project.” Clem said the tangible benefits for the Holdens in completing the project were few but the environmental benefits of stabilising this degraded area are significant in terms of water quality, sedimentation and controlling downstream soil erosion.

Plantations for Greenhouse

By Graeme Anderson

Plantations for Greenhouse gives Victorian landholders and farm foresters the opportunity to develop co-operative timber/carbon plantation investments. The project provides financial assistance for the establishment of long rotation, high-quality, sawlog plantations. The plantations will act as greenhouse sinks to help fight climate change, provide environmental and catchment health benefits as well as building a longer-term timber resource.

According to Rod Anderson from the State Government Greenhouse Unit the plantations are expected to sequester (store for safekeeping) over 800,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere over the next 30 years.

"The project will stimulate co-operative partnerships between landholders, investors and the State Government which will reduce the effects of greenhouse gases."

Plantations for Greenhouse provides a cost share of \$500 to \$700 per hectare of new sawlog plantation (plantations typically cost \$1200-\$2000/ha to establish). The level of public cost share is determined by the broader public benefit provided by the plantation. Plantations which sequester greenhouse gases at higher rates will be rewarded by receiving a higher cost share.

Boost to rural incomes

DSE Private Forestry Manager, John Houlihan, says Plantations for Greenhouse complements other innovative farm forestry development programs such as the successful West Regional Forest Agreement Sawlog Farming Project.

"Plantations for Greenhouse will boost rural incomes by \$15 million (today's equivalent) come harvest time. When we add this figure to the benefits the West RFA and other private forestry ventures are accumulating it will really have an impact on rural economies."



Well-located forestry plantations can improve water quality, reduce salinity and create valuable wildlife habitat.

Plantations for Greenhouse which address regional environmental priorities will also be rewarded. Extra incentives will flow to plantations that provide public benefits such as salinity mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, buffering priority waterways and weed suppression.

David Buntine, CEO of the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, says the environmental issues used in the cost share determination are decided locally by the relevant CMA.

"We are using the priorities outlined in our strategic regional plans to determine exactly where farm forestry will provide multiple benefits for the environment and the broader community.

"This concept of including environmental services within the cost share calculation for forestry establishment is exciting and is already being used with success in the Port Phillip and Westernport region."

Protecting the investment

The public cost share is provided in return for the wider community benefits the new plantations will deliver.



Taxpayers may ask if the plantations will be maintained and managed to protect the public's longer-term investment? Or, what if the trees are not managed, or if they are cut down prematurely?"

These issues will be addressed by the use of a joint agreement that stays with the plantation even if the land is sold. The joint agreement will make sure the new owners understand that the plantation requires certain management to ensure it delivers what the public investment originally intended.

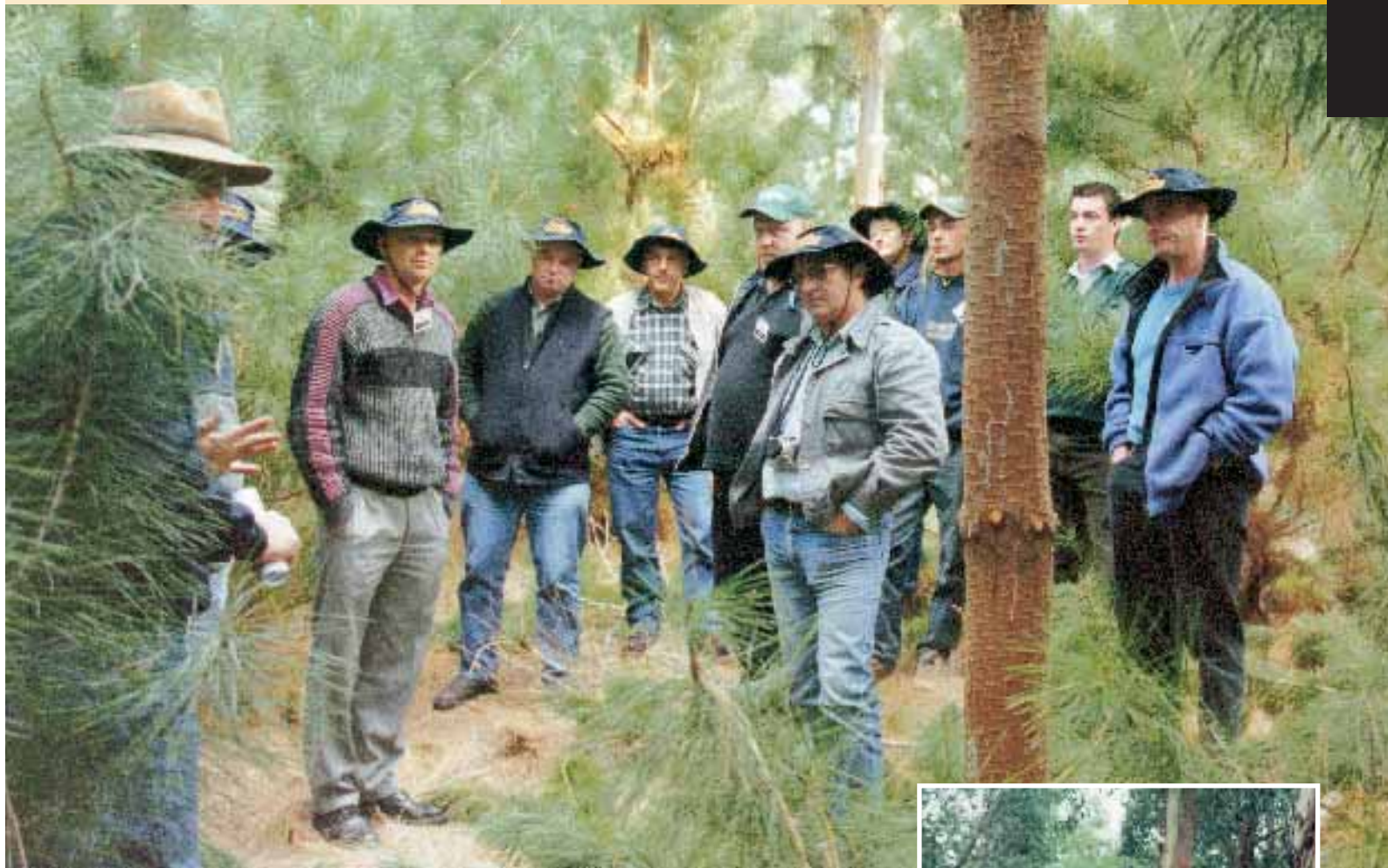
Lessons from past forestry schemes have shown that planting trees is only the first in a number of steps to a successful plantation venture. Many older pine woodlots were planted with the best of intentions, but were never managed properly and are now almost worthless. A joint agreement is a critical step in protecting the public investment.

Carbon trading

Before carbon can be traded it must be owned. Recent State legislation allows for the separate ownership of land, trees and carbon sequestration rights. This can create a situation where a timber investor owns the trees and wood products (forestry rights), a carbon investor separately owns the carbon sequestration rights of the plantation (carbon rights) and the property owner owns the land.

Each person can separately sell and market their portion of the resource. This legislation is the first critical step required for future carbon trading, providing Victoria with the potential to attract new carbon sink investment for greenhouse, salinity and environmental benefits.

If you are landholder or an investor interested in plantings in 2004 contact Graeme Anderson at DSE on 5226 4821.



A group of farmers discuss plantation management at Bacchus Marsh.



Frank Hirst explains the benefits of growing high-quality sawlogs on his plantation in Gippsland.

Plantations for Greenhouse

- 1500 hectares of new carbon/sawlog plantations for Victoria.
- Up to \$700/ha public cost share offered to landholders/investors.
- All trees and wood products owned by landholders/investors.
- A portion of carbon rights retained by State Government.
- Rewards for plantations located in priority catchment zones.
- Removes over 800,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- Provides \$15 million income boost for growers on harvest.

Who can apply for Plantations for Greenhouse?

- Plantations must be for high-quality sawlog production.
- Minimum of 10 hectares.
- Land must meet Kyoto Requirement as being cleared land prior to January 1990.
- Sites requiring removal/damage to native vegetation or native grasslands not eligible.
- Sites must be suited to commercial tree production.
- Participants to establish and manage the plantations.
- Demonstrated experience/capability in farm forestry, or participation in the DSE Farmtree\$ Planning will be an advantage.

Whisperings of the



Louis Buvelot, born Switzerland 1814, arrived Australia 1865, died 1888. Waterpool near Coleraine, 1869. (Oil on canvas. Purchased 1870. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.)

“Often we have sat on those logs and fished, dabbling our feet in the river and talking in whispers just in case the fish might be listening.”

Nita Pedrina (from her camp log on the Wannon, 1943).

From its source in the Grampians until it joins the Glenelg, the Wannon River traverses a landscape steeped in Australian history. It is a river with a rich written, oral and pictorial record.

The Wannon River marks the edge of Tjapwurrung country giving way to their contiguous neighbours the Jardwadjali. It spans the early pastoral runs on which the Western District was built. It is the land described by Major Mitchell in 1836 as Australia Felix, or Australia beauty. Artist Eugene von Guerard painted the Wannon as a mystical landscape, inspiring and uplifting.

For the first time ever, the stories and pictures of the Wannon River have

been collected together and published in a moving tribute – a book called *Whisperings of the Wannon*.

Michael Murphy, Chairman of the Glenelg-Hopkins CMA Board, said the book grew out of a recognition by the CMA that catchment management and community education go hand-in-hand and that effective communication products can advance the cause of sustainable natural resource management.

“As a girl my most vivid memory of the Wannon is the river in flood. I can remember the winter floods and looking out on a sea of water. We used to travel to church on the back of a trailer pulled by a tractor and sail paper boats along the way.” Iris Field, farmer, 2001.

“I sort of consider myself part of the river, because I was born in Hamilton and I lived on Mokanger until I was 27 and went to the war. We had a big family of seven and the river was one of the main things in our lives.” Doug Gardner, retired farmer, 2001.

Wannon

Whisperings of the Wannon has also been compiled to recognise that oral histories are valid research tools that can improve our understanding of rivers and contribute to a better future for the ecological communities that they support.

Michael Murphy said memories are not often used in ecological research.

“We have been slow to appreciate more recent memories as sources of information. But this is changing, as is our appreciation of the need to interact and manage the Wannon River from a catchment perspective. We must be as inclusive of the headwaters as we are of the swamps, the river flats and the tributaries that feed the river on its journey downstream.

“The book also provides an important insight into the ecological history of the river – the changes to the river’s flora and fauna – particularly the decline in fish populations,” Michael Murphy said.

Well-known Australian singer, songwriter and poet, Neil Murray, returned home to write the foreword and launch the book.



Neil Murray said he has crossed the Wannon many times by foot, on horseback and by motorcar and that the Wannon, like all streams and rivers in Australia, has its own particular song.

“*Whisperings of the Wannon* records the memoirs of many people of differing backgrounds and occupations, all who have grown up, been influenced by or depended on the river.

It may be a farmer, a catchment management worker, a pioneering woodcutter,

Doug Gardner, Mollie Herrmann, Judy Botterill, Margaret Gardner and Hugh Sutherland were some of the many locals who shared their memories of growing up on the Wannon River.



conservationist, artist or Aboriginal elder. What excites me is the resonance that occurs between their different stories.

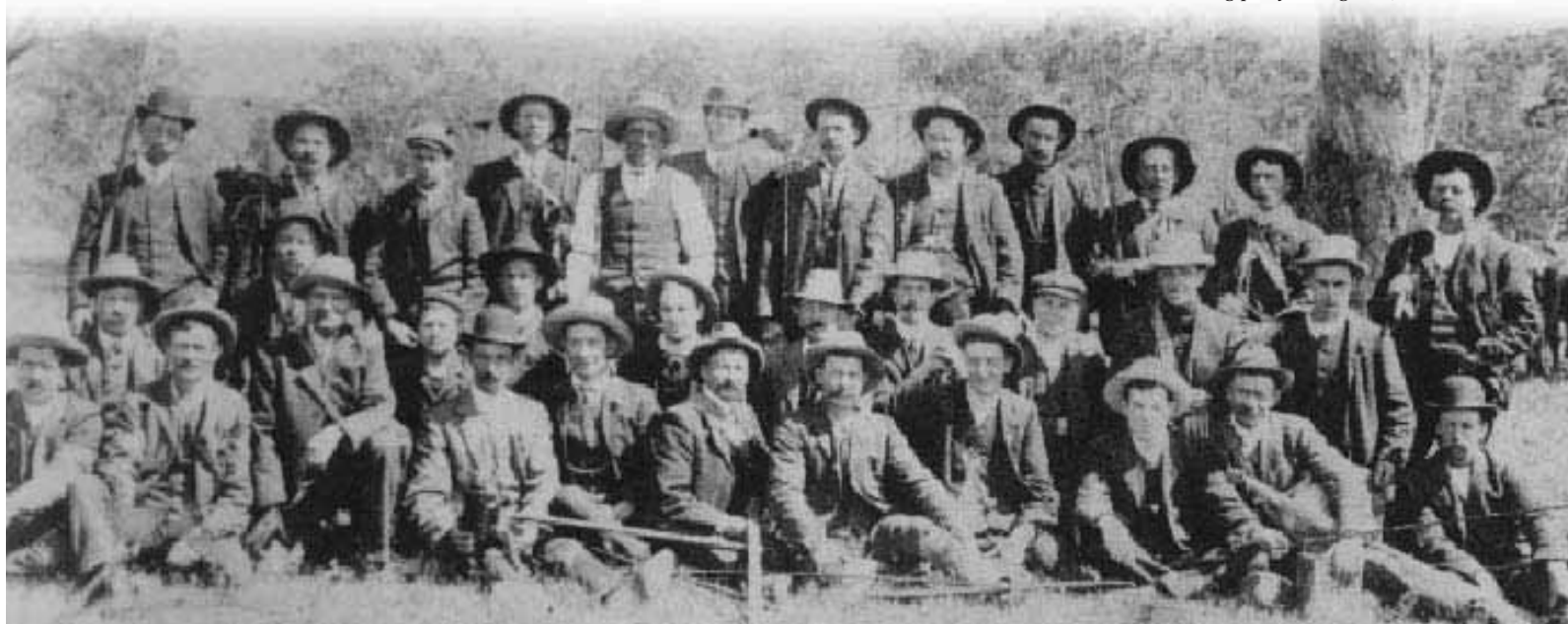
“There is an emerging undercurrent of agreement that gives rise to the hope that we are, as Australians, learning to tread more softly in this land, to respect its priceless flora and fauna and to take collective action to care for its waterways,” Neil said.

Whisperings of the Wannon was written by staff from Scarlet Consulting. Copies are available from the Glenelg-Hopkins CMA on 5571 2526 for \$30.

“I was greatly delighted with my new home at Muntham...there was a five acre garden full of beautiful fruit trees of every kind. The garden was catered by never-failing springs. Of two of these springs right beside each other one was quite salt, the other fresh. This magnificent property is situated at the junction of the Glenelg and Wannon Rivers.” Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, settler, 1856.

“We used to catch a lot of eels in the rivers. I would smoke the eels, my granny had a big fire, but I mainly roasted or fried them in the oven. They were beautiful. The eels would go away for spawning and then come back... We also had a fish called Tupong. It was a trout and we loved that one too.” Aunty Iris Lovett-Gardiner, Gournditch-jmara elder, 2001.

Fishing party at Nigretta, 1919.





Volunteers clean-up in Corangamite



*A Conservation Volunteers Australia
Better Earth team working for the
Heytesbury District Landcare Group.*

An innovative partnership between the Corangamite CMA and Conservation Volunteers Australia is helping landholders to complete important natural resource management projects on their properties.

Conservation Volunteers Australia (formally known as Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers) appointed a community involvement facilitator based at its Geelong regional office with the aim of completing on-ground works and involving the broader community in the regional priorities for natural resource management in the catchment.

Conservation Volunteers Australia recruited a whole host of volunteers, from school children to international travellers to more mature volunteers. Every week the facilitator delivered 1-3 days of volunteer activity in the catchment.

Projects were generally Geelong or Ballarat based although some teams travelled as far as Lismore or Camperdown. The project delivered outstanding results with over 5000 volunteer days delivered.

Project partners included committees of management, friends' groups, local government bodies, Barwon Water,

Central Highlands Water, Parks Victoria, NRE and Greening Australia Victoria. Eleven Landcare groups and networks were involved.

A workshop was held for Landcare co-ordinators and the CIP facilitator to propose and prioritise projects. The works varied according to the requirements of the different groups. Conservation Volunteers Australia worked with the Swan Bay Integrated Catchment Management Committee, sourcing a Green Corps team, two corporate-funded weeks and a fee-for-service week to assist collect indigenous seed and propagate and plant local indigenous plants.

The Heytesbury District Landcare Network was linked to a Better Earth team for ten weeks to plant 110,000 seedlings.

Many important lessons were learnt in 2002. One of the biggest challenges for the Corangamite CMA was providing guidance for Conservation Volunteers Australia about what works should be done, prioritising and sharing of resources. This is being addressed by the CMA's recently appointed Regional Landcare Co-ordinator who will provide guidance, structure and support for the program.

For Conservation Volunteers Australia the ongoing challenge is volunteer recruitment. By being able to plan partnerships they are able to implement longer-term strategies. The project is set for an even bigger and better year in 2003.

The results

- 25,023 square metres of weed removal.
- 23,964 seedlings pricked out.
- 308,333 trees planted.
- 56 hectares of survey work completed.
- 90 kilograms of seed collected.
- 160 metres of boardwalk and four fishing decks constructed.
- 30 hectares of direct seeding established.
- Six kilometres of fencing constructed.
- 10 kilometres of walking track maintained.

For more information contact Suzanne Woolford at Conservation Volunteers Australia on 5221 0300.

Dairy farmers work together on effluent

By Margrit Beemster

Since the State-wide Effective Dairy Effluent Project started almost two years ago, 193 dairy farmers have taken part in workshops to help them better manage their effluent on the farm.

The format of the workshops vary. For some it is a meeting of a relatively small group of farmers (8-10) every few weeks over a couple of months combined with on-farm visits and attendance at field days. For others, such as the one for dairy apprentices held at Poowong, it is an intensive couple of days with students designing an appropriate effluent system as their learning outcome.

The learning groups are different from a structured course or a field day as the discussion leader or coach is a non-technical person. The participants plan the sessions in advance and nominate the topics. Individual and group issues are solved in the process and farmers appreciate the opportunity to learn from each other.

Project officer for the Northern Irrigation/North-East regions, Scott McDonald, believes the biggest advantage of these groups is the way information is transferred to farmers in a practical learning environment. A lot of the learning is presented on-farm, looking at different systems and understanding the various management options.

Sam Dunbar, project officer for the south-western region, says learning groups are made up of small numbers of farmers who have a common desire – wanting to manage their effluent better.

Gippsland region project officer, Barrie Bradshaw, says farmers have found peer group assessment a useful learning tool. This involves farmers assessing each other's properties in terms of effective effluent management.

What the farmers say:

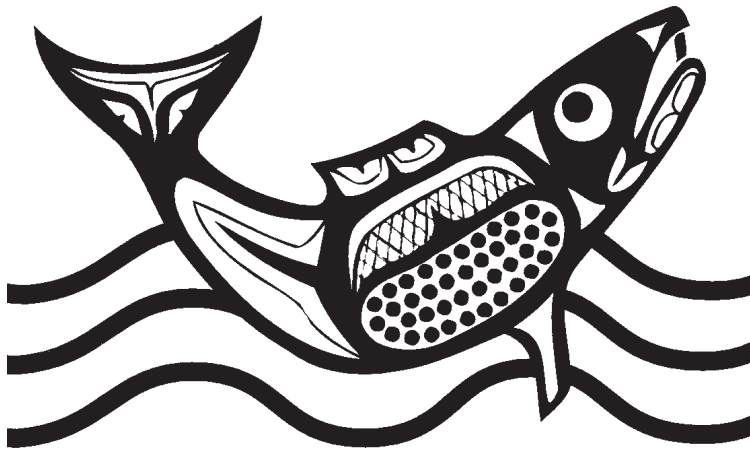
"I got a lot of information from a couple of nights with other farmers – it was good to hear what other farmers were doing and we had a first-class person speak on what pumps are needed to manage effluent and solids." Chris Watson, who milks 300 cows at Calivil.

"Being in an effluent planning workshop has reinforced the knowledge that what I'm already doing is the right thing. You've got to keep the EPA and the environment happy." Rocky Murdica, who milks 135 cows at Longwarry North.

"For me and the group, the question is how long do you want to take to spread the effluent out, six months or three weeks? And to work back from that. What may suit one individual or property may not suit or work on another. It all comes down to management." Peter Theodore, who milks 730 cows at Irrewillipe East.

Farmers discuss the most cost-effective option for pumping effluent from the storage pond to the paddock at Terang in south-west Victoria.





Waterwatch

A good news story for this beautiful natural harbour – which is also of spiritual significance to the Native Americans still living on its shores and fishing its waters. It is alarming though that it takes near extinction of species and seriously degraded water quality to occur before action is taken.

Fran Sorensen, the Regional Waterwatch Co-ordinator at the North East CMA, was recently awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study the different ways that volunteers can be involved in monitoring water quality in their communities.

An extensive and varied tour of the United States in August and September 2002 gave Fran a rare insight into the nature of adult volunteer systems in water quality monitoring.

Fran visited and documented the work of volunteers working with citizen-based projects in Washington State, Missouri, Alabama and Massachusetts. An added bonus was the knowledge gained in water quality education in densely populated urban areas and the New York experience of the Water Keepers Alliance – the neighbourhood watch of water quality in the US.

Fran saw that water quality is a daily concern for US citizens – particularly those living in highly urbanised

communities. The volunteer ethic was strong amongst the American people she met.

It was seen as a civic duty to give of one's time freely and for a worthwhile cause. Volunteerism in the US is a way of life and there is an expectation that everyone gives in some way back to the community in which they live.

The following is a summary of the project highlights and lessons learnt from Fran's tour.

People for Puget Sound

The positive changes in the Seattle/Puget Sound region are a result of the raised awareness and involvement of the community in strategies that have improved water quality flowing from densely populated watersheds into a busy commercial shipping and fishing port. The sound is home to many creatures – orca whales, otters, seals, salmon and crustaceans that have been declining in numbers over many years and are appearing noticeably once again.

Missouri Stream Team

The dedication and commitment of the Missouri Stream Team (20,000 volunteers and their paid co-ordinators) to taking ownership of their neighbourhood waterways is awesome. Observing people who were prepared to go that extra mile by expanding their activity base from monitoring water quality to actively and strategically improving water quality was inspiring.

The scale of this project is enormous. The implications for community education leading to behavioural change are clearly positive for the immediate and long-term periods. Capacity building at a grass roots level is critical to citizen involvement and maintaining a high level of motivation.

Alabama Water Watch

The high level of esteem in which volunteers are held heartened me. It was my observation that volunteerism in the United States is the norm rather than the exception. In Alabama the volunteers working at the McWane Centre are treated with the utmost respect.



in the USA

As members of staff, there is no differential in their treatment, apart from the fact that they are volunteers. These multi-age volunteers are, not surprisingly, highly motivated, giving generously of their time and diverse skills.

Where volunteers are considered to be part of the work force with the same rights and responsibilities as paid staff, the retention rate is high. Treated with respect, trained, supported and appropriately resourced, they take pride in their work and express job satisfaction despite no monetary reward.

In Birmingham, at the McWane Science Centre, the volunteers were matched to their life and professional skills – they chose the areas they wished to work in. It was impossible to tell which staff member was on the payroll. There is much to be learned from this model.

Major conclusions

The adult water quality monitoring systems in the United States are at an advanced stage compared to our systems in Victoria. The size of projects in the US and the infrastructure to support them is far beyond anything that I have seen or heard of here in Australia. It is timely for

us to begin the task of building community water quality groups as observed in the US – groups such as Stream Teams and Water Keepers Alliances

In the US partnerships between county councils, environment groups, water authorities and the Environment Protection Agency are common. Resources were used efficiently because of the well-structured way in which volunteers and projects were organised. I was impressed not only by the scale but by the dedication and attention to detail that went into planning events where adults came together to take charge of their local waterways.

There is a large selection of printed material available to inform communities of the local groups and how they can access further information on training and activities. All of the projects I visited had sophisticated websites that were frequently updated. Communication was diverse, active and up-to-date.

Media campaigns are common and community-clean-up-days occur on a regular basis – it was the norm to see large groups of people waterway planting or cleaning or clearing weeds.

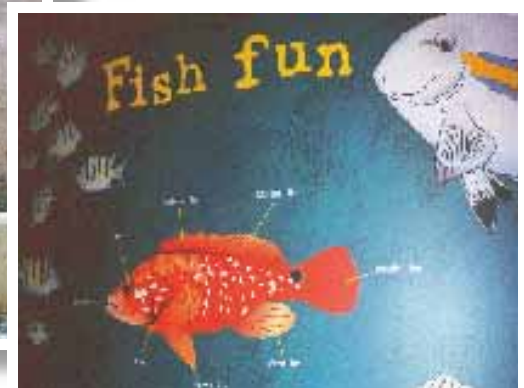
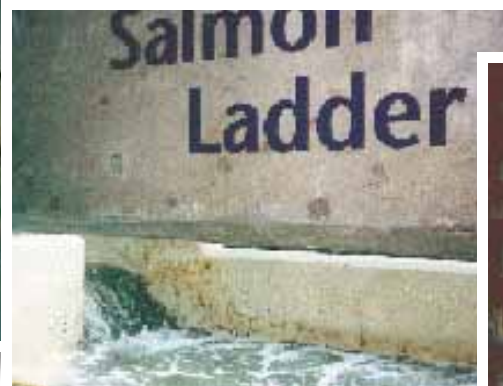
The bottom-up (community-based) approach to maintaining healthy waterways was alive and working well in the US. Communities were supported and motivated to take responsibility for watershed condition.

There is much we can learn from the US experience. Without ongoing support and training structures in place adult volunteer groups could not function or survive in the long term. Ad hoc systems give ad hoc results. Water quality monitoring and the data it produces are only useful as a constant and regular long-term program to serve any worthwhile purpose for water care and management.

For further information contact Fran Sorensen on 5721 8672.



Fran Sorensen on the Brooklyn Bridge over the Hudson River in New York.



Starting over – catchment management in East Timor

By David Ziebell

Since 2000 the former Department of NRE has hosted training visits for several East Timorese staff members from the East Timorese Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

In July of last year I visited East Timor as part of the Dr Sidney Plowman travel and study award and worked in the forestry section of MAFF for one very interesting and unforgettable month.

East Timor officially became an independent country in May 2002 and began the long process of rebuilding. Not only was the physical damage of the independence struggle extensive, but the core of experienced Indonesian government services were lost.

In the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries staff levels have gone from 6000 in Indonesian times to just 129 today. Of that number there are only two people working in catchment management.

In a country that is smaller than the West Gippsland CMA region, yet home to 750,000 people and has little arable land and few cash crops, this presents some formidable problems.

Before land management gets a look in, basic services such as health, education and governance take precedence. The streets are alive with children; the reason being that school hours in many districts are restricted to two hours due to the shortage of teachers and buildings.

Most of my time was spent dealing with the various aid agencies to work out how best to place MAFF funding bids. In a country with four languages being used concurrently a relatively simple task such as completing an application form becomes difficult.

Fencing materials are virtually non-existent in Timor and all sorts of ingenious solutions are found.



This is an area where Australians with experience in preparing grant applications can be of great assistance. East Timor is awash with well-funded aid agencies but they aren't getting any decent project proposals and can't see how the proposals they are getting will ever be implemented.

It struck me how similar to our own Natural Heritage Trust these aid agencies are, in that they want to be able to see something for their investment and are looking for good project management, accountability and monitoring.

The staff at MAFF are hoping that a long-term relationship will develop with the department. They are very keen to pick up many of the skills that are taken for granted within DSE and

have the optimism that most of their current problems can be overcome given time and commitment.

Areas such as GIS, forest management, catchment management and project management need developing. Also Melbourne, having the largest Timorese population outside East Timor, is a favoured place in which to gain some of these much-needed skills.

With the United Nations due to leave East Timor in 2005, long-term arrangements even with minimal resources would mean a lot in a society that is starting out all over again.

For further information contact David Ziebell on 5662 9920.

Wimmera snapshot

Almost 90 per cent of respondents in a survey of Wimmera landholders conducted late last year want to leave their properties in a better condition for the next generation.

The survey, conducted by Charles Sturt University on behalf of the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, aimed to discover the key social factors that affect landholders' decisions for improved natural resource management practices on their properties.

The survey results will form a basis for government and education programs that relate to managing natural resources in the future.

Tony Cuzner from the Wimmera CMA said the survey findings were of interest to a range of people including landholders and people who provided services to farmers.

"The findings are relevant to anyone with an interest in socio-economics and natural resource management in the Wimmera as well as people in planning roles such as local government.

"People can also have confidence that these survey results reflect the real views of landholders due to the large sample size and our extremely high response rate. We now have valuable social information to use in future planning of Landcare and other natural resource programs," Tony Cuzner said.

The results identified lack of employment opportunities for young people and government cutbacks as critical issues. In contrast, landholders were less concerned with erosion and salinity as issues that threatened the long-term future of their properties.

Other survey results included:

- 89 per cent of respondents felt a sense of accomplishment from knowing that the property will be passed on to others in a better condition than they found it.
- 63 per cent of respondents rated as important or very important the issue of cutbacks by government or large business that have reduced employment opportunities for younger people in this district.

- The decline of villages and small towns and difficulties accessing important health services also rated highly as important issues.
- Economic and environmental issues such as farming practices contributing to erosion and dryland salinity threatening the long-term productive capacity of their properties rated very low on the list of important issues.

Tony Cuzner said the survey data highlighted a limited knowledge about many aspects of natural resource management in the Wimmera.

"A lack of knowledge appears to be a major constraint to the adoption of various recommended practices. This has implications for expectations from natural resource managers for widespread adoption of recommended practices by landholders," he said.

For more information contact Tony Cuzner on 5382 1544.

Healthy wetlands, rivers and streams rated highly as important issues in the Wimmera Landholder Survey.

