

BRIAN'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the first edition of Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group (Rangelands WA) newsletter. This newsletter aims to provide some brief snapshots of key projects, events and other activities undertaken by Rangelands WA.

Through the year Rangelands WA has completed a series of workshops to review where we are at and where we want to be. These workshops were extremely successful in highlighting priorities for the team and already we have implemented several major changes including the establishment of two regional offices in Kununurra and Carnarvon and a refresh of our branding. All of the strategies we are implementing will provide more support to our staff and rangelands users and provide us with the tools to ensure a sound NRM investment framework as we move into the new Caring for Our Country program (CfoC).

The CfoC Business Plan has now been released by the Australian Government. It has very specific targets and highlighted areas for project funding opportunities over the next four years. The Rangelands WA team is now in the process of reviewing each sub-regional groups strategic plans and preparing for the next round of funding proposals. Over the coming months we will be working closely with each sub-regional group as we explore the relevance of previous priorities within the new CfoC program. For further information about CfoC Business Plan please visit the Caring for our Country website <http://www.nrm.gov.au/business-plan/index.html> or contact either me, John Silver (Carnarvon) or Liz Brown (Kimberley).

We have also launched phase one of our new website which can be viewed at www.rangelandswa.com.au This website is still in its infancy, there is still plenty more to come to

help us communicate the NRM outcomes for each region in the rangelands.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Chairman Elaine Gardiner, the new Indigenous representative on the Board Paul Barron, the new DEC representative Daryl Moncrieff and new team members Luke Wilkinson (Carnarvon) and Beth Hales (Kununurra).

Happy holidays
Brian

FEATURE PROJECTS

Our Country – Our Future (Adopt-A-School project)

Rangelands WA adopted the Burringurrah community school to increase awareness relating to NRM and Indigenous engagement. Based on a student incentive program the project offers students from years 8-12 the opportunity to explore potential career opportunities and Indigenous culture.

In late November, 20 students travelled from Carnarvon to Perth visiting a number of key tourism, environmental, education, hospitality and arts focused locations. The students are now in the process of reporting their experiences and their career interests.

SUB-REGIONAL INFORMATION

Pilbara Sub-Region

The next Pilbara Sub-Regional Meeting will be held on 29 January.

We will be aiming to try and hold all sub-regional group meetings in January 2009 as a lead in to the new Caring for Our Country funding proposals.

Environs Kimberley Community WEED Project and Saltwater Country Project

The Environs Kimberley Community WEED project and Saltwater Country Project recently collaborated with the Balanggarra Traditional Owners to construct a pathway through to a lookout at Koolama Bay, initiate weed works at Bertram cove and collect weed, ant and marine debris samples for the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS).

After the most recent field trip project workers cleared two beaches of *Calatropis procera* (Rubber Bush) by cutting and painting.

In October, the Environs Kimberley Community WEED project was short-listed as a finalist in the Community Achievement Category at the Western Australian State Environment awards.

EcoFire

In an effort to reduce the devastation of northern and central Kimberley fires Rangelands WA contracted the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) at Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary to manage a new initiative – EcoFire.

Since the commencement of the project EcoFire has decreased the size and incidence of late season fires and provided greater protection of endangered species and cultural and environmental significance.

In October EcoFire won the overall Western Australia Environment Award 2008 and the Award for Community Achievement at the Western Australia Environment Awards.

For more information about EcoFire please visit the Rangelands WA website www.rangelandswa.com.au.

WA Camels Project

The WA Camel project provides greater understanding of the camel population and the impacts their presence has on natural resource assets and pastoral communities. The key areas of study include systematic aerial survey of density and distribution, camel population genetics, landscape movements at the pastoral-desert interface and identification of assets at risk.

The information generated from this project will allow for the development and implementation of cost-effective monitoring and control measures. This project will have significant benefits to biodiversity conservation and asset protection in the semi-arid and arid regions of Australia.

ESRM (Ecologically Sustainable Rangelands Management)

The ESRM project encourages pastoralists and other rangelands users to develop a more thorough understanding of the factors which drive landscape functions and relate this knowledge to pastoral planning and techniques.

Since the commencement of the project thirteen project action plans have been completed. Project officers have also developed partnership with the minerals industry to develop a model of 'best practice pastoral management' in the Pilbara. The project is coordinating land rehabilitation fieldtrip to look at ways to improve water infiltration across the landscape.