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Gippsland Natural Connection Newsletter of Gippsland

integrated natural
resources forum

From the Office...

The GINRF Natural Resources Report Card was published for the 6th time in 2008. In order to ensure the card remains a relevant, accurate and useful tool for Gippsland, we will be conducting a review of the entire Report Card process on the 5th December. Details are below outlining how you can be involved in this important review.

In other news, this month saw the launch of Water Swap - a unique voluntary pilot program in the Macalister Irrigation Area that is seeking tender bids for funding to improve on farm water-use efficiency in exchange for a component of each participating landholder's water entitlement. More information on this innovative program is available on page 3.

Finally, the next GINRF Executive Meeting is being held on the 27th November, so the minutes from this meeting will be on the GINRF website shortly after this date.

Latest GINRF
Executive
Minutes

Report Card Review Workshop

After 6 years of annual production, the time has come to conduct a review of the structure and the process of producing the Report Card.

The workshop is open to all member organisations and invited non member organisations. We ask that a maximum of two representatives of each organisation attend. Additional information (the agenda, background information for consideration) will be forwarded to the registered attendees before to the workshop.

Venue: Comfort Inn Princeton, 25 – 41 Princes Highway, Sale (Ph 5155 6599)

Date: Friday 5th December 2008

Time: 9.30am for 10.00am start until 3.00pm

RSVP: Bridget Mainland on bridget@ethosnrm.com.au and mainlandenvironment@yahoo.com.au by 19 November 2008 (please send your RSVP to both email addresses)

Further information can be found on the GINRF website:

www.ginrf.org.au. This is a fantastic opportunity for your organisation to have a part in shaping the future direction of this important regional publication – don't miss out!

The entire back catalogue of Report Cards, Companion Documents and Asset Cards are available in the 'Report Card' section of the [GINRF website](http://www.ginrf.org.au).

Catchment health, Gippsland's wealth

www.ginrf.org.au



Gippsland Integrated
natural resources
forum

PAGE 2

Wetland Plants
identification and Seed
Collection

Deadly in Gippsland
Conference

PAGE 3

Water Swap

Gippsland to Host 2009
Agribusiness Conference

PAGE 4

Wastewater
Infrastructure
Improvements for Orbost

Community Advisory
Group Vacancies

PAGE 5

Discover Your Eco-
Footprint

When a Negative Result
is a Positive Result

PAGE 6

Bush Guardians Grants

Public Comment Sought
on Climate Change Study



Upcoming & Recent Events

Wetland Plants Identification & Seed Collection

This field session with wetland ecologist Damien Cook will focus on the identification of wetland plant species. The collection of seed and propagation material from these plants will also be discussed. This training session is targeted at people who have an active interest in the protection and restoration of wetland habitats throughout Gippsland.

Guest Speaker: Damien Cook - Wetland Ecologist from Australian Ecosystems

When: Tuesday December 2, 2008

Where: The eastern end of the boardwalk at Sale Common, Stephenson Street, Sale

BYO: Lunch, drinks, boots, hats, sunscreen and an inquisitive mind

RSVP: By Friday November 28 to Matt Bowler on 1300 094 262, 0427 381 289 or mattb@wgcm.vic.gov.au

[More information available here](#)

Deadly in Gippsland Conference

The conference will provide an opportunity to promote the Indigenous talent and Indigenous initiatives from the Gippsland region.

The conference will coincide with the first anniversary of the Federal Government Apology with Archie Roach singing at a formal breakfast to be held to acknowledge this anniversary.

The title of the conference 'Deadly in Gippsland' reflects the local use of the term 'deadly' meaning 'good' or 'great'.

The conference will cover six key themes, including:

- Employment Opportunities
- Health and Well Being
- Promote Indigenous Culture
- Small Business Success Stories
- Strengthening Indigenous Communities
- Deadly Dreaming (Looking to the Future)

The cost to attend this conference will be \$570 per person which includes all meals, accommodation and tourism experiences on Phillip Island.

When: 12 - 13 February 2009

Where: Silverwater Conference Centre, San Remo

More info: please visit www.basscoast.vic.gov.au to register or for further information.



Water Swap

This month saw a call for tenders from irrigators for the new and innovative Water Swap Pilot Program being run in the Macalister Irrigation District (MID). To be implemented over the next two years local farmers have the opportunity to access part of \$2 million in state funding to complete on-farm water efficiency improvements which will actively improve the health of Gippsland's rivers and lakes. Participation in the pilot is voluntary and interested farmers in the MID have five weeks to submit a tender bid for funding to be used on irrigation equipment upgrades that will improve on-farm water-use efficiency in exchange for a component of their water entitlement.



The Water Swap Pilot Program has been developed by DSE in partnership with the West Gippsland CMA, DPI and Southern Rural Water. Funded by the Victorian State Government, it provides an opportunity for irrigators to finance capital works to improve water efficiency. Importantly, it has been created to help modernise on-farm irrigation technology, allowing farmers to access a share of \$2 million in funds for improvement works identified by landholders. While the Water Swap pilot is a separate initiative from other important farming programs, it has been designed to complement and value-add to existing programs by improving health of Gippsland's lakes and river system.

To be eligible to participate, farmers must hold good title to, and a licence to use, water share in the MID, as an irrigator who either uses the channel system or diverts from the Macalister or Thomson Rivers. Water Swap tender bids will close on the 18th December 2008. For further details on the Water Swap Pilot Program contact Bryce Morden at the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority on 1300 094 262 during business hours or via email on WaterSwap@wgcma.vic.gov.au.

[Full story available here...](#)

Gippsland to Host 2009 Agribusiness Conference

Victorian Agribusiness Council's 2009 Agribusiness Summit will be held in South Gippsland following a successful pitch by Agribusiness Gippsland Inc. About 300 delegates from across Victoria are expected to attend the conference on Phillip Island in mid-2009.

Pre and post-summit field trips will also be organised to visit key agribusiness operations on the mainland.

The overall theme of the conference will be farming for profit amid a changing climate. Some of the thoughts raised by the organising committee are: Should we change what we are growing? Should we be growing/fertilising/harvesting differently? Should we alter our processing/marketing approaches?

Environmentally sustainable operations and energy alternatives will be a focus of the field trips. Early sponsorship deals are available.



Contact Agribusiness Gippsland Inc chairman Alex Arbuthnot on
alex_arbuthnot@bigpond.com

Wastewater Infrastructure Improvements for Orbost

East Gippsland Water customers in Orbost stand to benefit from \$200,000 of infrastructure improvements designed to boost the efficiency of wastewater services.

The Corporation has given the go ahead for upgrade work on the main wastewater pump station in Orbost, with the project due to be completed early in the new year. The focus will be on replacing the present aging pumps with significantly more energy efficient 'soft-start' models. These will place less stress on the wastewater main, as well as offering improved pumping reliability.

A new irrigation pump is also being installed at the Orbost wastewater treatment site, again to improve energy efficiency.

Upgrading the rising main transporting the area's wastewater up to Newmerella wastewater treatment plant is also set to be carried out during this financial year. This will involve replacing old sections of the main and air valves with more modern materials.

There should be no interruption to wastewater services whilst either of these initiatives is underway.

Said East Gippsland Water's Managing Director Les Mathieson: "These projects are part of a mammoth five-year program of works totaling some \$67 million across the region and are being progressed under our commitment to ensure all the region's communities, regardless of size, have access to high quality water and wastewater services."

These latest projects follow a program of works conducted earlier in the year to clean and re-line sections of antiquated sewer mains in a total of 13 streets in Orbost, to boost the long term efficiency and reliability of the town's sewer network.

Community Advisory Group Vacancies

Gippslanders have the opportunity to act upon their commitment to sustainability, community and the environment through an invitation to apply for membership on the West Gippsland CMA's Catchment Ecosystem Advisory Groups.

The role of the renewed Catchment Ecosystem Advisory Groups (CEAGs) is to provide strategic advice to the WGCMA Board, management and staff about community perspectives on natural resource management within the region. Members support the CMA's role in awareness raising and community education and provide important links to the broader community through established community contacts and networks.

If you have an interest in natural resource management and a passion to see Gippsland prosper and its natural resources managed sustainably into the future, you are encouraged to apply for membership.

For further information regarding CEAG membership or to obtain an information pack and application form please visit www.wgcma.vic.gov.au or contact 1300 094 262. Applications open on Monday 3 November and close Friday 21 November 2008.



Discover Your Eco-Footprint

measure energy, water and greenhouse gas emissions.

The University of New South Wales has developed the new software tool to help choose options with the lowest environmental impacts.

Funded through Smart Water Fund grant, UNSW spent two years developing this package, known as the Environmental Sustainability Assessment Tool (ESAT).

ESAT allows infrastructure planners to complete a quick screening of alternative servicing options to help select the option that has the lowest environmental impact.

ESAT draws upon indicative life cycle assessment data which allows a planner to complete a quick analysis within a few hours, rather than the more in-depth work required for a complete life-cycle assessment.

Visit www.smartwater.com.au/latest_news.asp to find out more.

An online tool has been developed to meas-

When a Negative Result is a Positive Result

Local divers failed

to find any evidence of the introduced pest, the Northern Pacific Seastar (NPSS) during a recent organised search in Andersons Inlet.

The search was funded by Coast Action/Coastcare and organised by the Inverloch Residents and Ratepayers Association. Peter Newgreen, Capable Coastal Communities Officer with the West Gippsland CMA led the organising team.

DSE's Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, Bruce Atkin said the purpose of the survey was to check the area where NPSS was collected during the 2004 eradication campaign and to confirm that none were still surviving in the inlet.

Divemaster Rob Timmers organised the team of 12 Gippsland divers, all of whom had previously logged over 200 dives. "Safety was the paramount consideration and inflatable boats from the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club were stationed close to the divers, providing traffic control to ensure other boat operators remained clear of the operation."

Mr Atkin praised the local initiative, pointing out that this type of co-operation between government and volunteers invariably leads to positive results.

"The view among the divers is that the seastars have definitely been eliminated and there is no need to organise future searches of the area," Mr Atkin said.

"However everyone visiting our coastal areas should be vigilant and report sightings of any unusual marine plant or animal, as it may potentially be a threat to the local environment - this was how the seastars were first identified in 2004."



Bush Guardians Grants

Community groups managing important biodiversity on public land can now apply for weed and pest control funding through the Bush Guardians Program, a Department of Sustainability and Environment initiative.

Statewide Program Coordinator Brian Simpson said many committees and groups across the state contribute time and energy to biodiversity protection works on public reserves, and initiatives such as the Bush Guardians Program can provide much needed financial assistance.

“One of the big challenges in biodiversity management is reducing the impact of weeds and pests that threaten key native plants and animals,” he said.

“Last year through Bush Guardians grants, six community groups in Gippsland undertook works to protect grasslands, wildlife habitat and endangered plants from weeds or pest animals, he said.

“The Committee of Management for the Gippsland Plains Rail Trail received Bush Guardians funding for ongoing control of Blackberry, African Lovegrass and St John’s Wort. Sections of the rail trail contain the nationally endangered species Matted Flax Lily as well as state listed species, such as Yarra Gum and Lanky Button.”

“Bush Guardians also assisted the Great Southern Rail Trail Committee of Management to protect remnant rainforest in the Hoddle Ranges, removing pest plants and animals.”

Mr Simpson said the Bush Guardians Program, a four-year small-grants program now in its second year, aims for long term environmental benefit. [Full story available here...](#)

Public Comment Sought on Climate Change Study

The Brumby Government is calling for public comment on a draft climate change strategy for fisheries and aquaculture industries in Victoria.

Minister Responsible for Fisheries Joe Helper said the initiative was part of a commitment from the Brumby Government’s \$205 million Future Farming strategy to assess the impact of climate change on fisheries and help fisheries businesses and fisheries management adapt to the challenges ahead.

“We need to make sure our plans and policies that manage fisheries take into account the implications of a changing climate on fish populations and fishing businesses.

“Research investment will be targeted at understanding which fisheries are likely to be affected, by how much and the likely time frames in which change will occur.”

Mr Helper said the Victorian Climate Change Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2008-2018 would also seek to identify new opportunities for fisheries and aquaculture that will result from changes such as warmer waters.

Stakeholders are invited to comment on the draft strategy until 30 November 2008 and can access a copy from the DPI website at www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing

