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From the Office ...

resources forum

The past couple of days have brought the Gippsland region something that it hasn't seen much of in recent months - rain. Although this recent rain alone doesn't ease the pressures of the drought, it is a refreshing site for us all - one that we all hope to see much more of.

Another thing that we will all be seeing much more of very soon is the **2007 Natural Resources Report Card**. As with previous years, it will be launched on World Environment Day (June 5) and will provide a snapshot of the condition of our regions natural assets. The scientific advisory panel met late last week to finalise this years ratings and the final version will be sent to the printers within the next 7 days.

All GINRF members and their organisations/groups will be invited to the launch, with invites being sent out later this week. The launch of this years Report Card is also being held in conjunction with **the Creative Environments Project** - a joint venture between GINRF and the West Gippsland CMA. The Creative Environments Project has the aim of involving the Gippsland community in an art exhibition about the region and its environment. 3 established artists were paired up with 3 local emerging artists, who have worked together to create the exhibition, based on Gippsland's natural assets (more info on this is available on the GINRF website). In addition, Cheryl Batagol, chair of Melbourne Water will be presenting, so this years launch is proving to be an un-missable event for all Gippslander's.



Cheryl Batagol

Until next month, enjoy the read.

Adam Miller

Coming Up...

May - Innovation Gippsland - various events - see page 3

May 8 & 9 - Aboriginal Heritage Legislation - see page 2

May 1 - Community Water Grant Info Sessions - see page 3

June 5 - Report Card/Creative Environments Launch

June 7 & 8 - Victorian Dairy Conference

October 9 - 12 - Flood Management Conference



Upcoming & Recent Events

2007 Natural Resources Report Card

World Environment Day is fast approaching, which means that the final touches are being completed on the 2007 Report Card. This year, the official launch of the Report Card will again be held on World Environment Day - Tuesday June 5. The final details for the launch are still being worked out, but in the mean time, keep June 5th free in your diary.

TUESDAY JUNE 5th - OFFICIAL REPORT CARD LAUNCH

More details soon...

The New Aboriginal Heritage Legislation

This is a great opportunity to meet staff from the new Aboriginal Affairs Victoria Office for Gippsland and as well as cross paths with NRM colleagues.

The new act:

- increases the penalties for damage to Aboriginal Places, objects and human remains
- introduces mandatory reporting of places and objects (what are the implications for our field staff?)
- changes the arrangements for cultural heritage monitoring
- creates a new cadre of inspectors (based in Bairnsdale to service the Gippsland area)
- introduces Cultural Heritage Management Plans for sensitive areas (e.g. within 200 metres of a waterway).

The briefing sessions will provide information regarding the Aboriginal Heritage Act Regulations that will establish when a cultural heritage management plan is needed and set minimum standards for plans.

Speakers will include:

- Joy Elly – Heritage Unit, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV)
- Rickey Mullett - Chairperson, Aboriginal Heritage Council
- Joanne Freslow - Heritage Project Officer, AAV (Bairnsdale Office)

There will be two sessions held at:

- Traralgon: LaTrobe Convention Centre, **8th May 2007**, 1pm to 3pm
- Bairnsdale: DSE Office, Room 1, **9th May 2007**, 1pm to 3pm

For more information or RSVP please contact: Marjorie Thorpe, DSE Indigenous Facilitator, Gippsland Region Ph: (03) 5152 0401 Email: marjorie.thorpe@dse.vic.gov.au



Upcoming & Recent Events

Community Water Grant Info Session

The Australian Government's Community Water Grants is holding a free information session to assist community organisations applying for a grant.

Applications will open soon for on-the-ground projects that deliver real water savings or water quality improvements. Grants of up to \$50,000 are available to agricultural, conservation and other community groups, Indigenous organisations, sporting clubs, schools, local government and the private sector.

Under special eligibility criteria, grants of between \$100,000 and \$250,000 will also be available.

West Gippsland Information Session

Tuesday 1 May, 2007. 3.00pm . 4.30pm

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority - 16 Hotham St, Traralgon 3844

Please RSVP by 30 April 2007 to donaldc@wgcm.vic.gov.au. For information about the upcoming funding round and examples of funded projects, visit www.australia.gov.au/communitywatergrants

Innovation Gippsland

As part of the Australian Innovation Festival, many events are being held across the Gippsland region including:

Wednesday 2 May: Australian Sustainable Industry Research Centre Open Day

On show will be real life examples of how the analytical laboratory at ASIRC works to solve waste problems and develop solutions for industry.

Venue: Australian Sustainable Industry Research Centre (ASIRC) Monash Uni

Free Event from 1pm – 3pm. Contact: Jenny Jelbart 03 5122 7167 E: jenny.jelbart@asirc.org.au

Saturday 5 & Sunday 6 May: "Old Town, New Lights" Walhalla - the Low Energy Globe Town

Walhalla, the last town in Victoria to be supplied with electricity, will be the first in Australia to give up incandescent light globes. Visitors receive free/discount LE globes.

Contact: Michael Leaney at Walhalla's Star Hotel on 03 5165 6262 E: info@starhotel.com.au

Thursday 10 May: Innovation in Regional Communication - A workshop on best practice in Crisis Communications

The Gippsland Public Affairs and Marketing Network and Gippsland Tourism will host a panel of three leading regional marketing and communication experts on managing communications relating to the recent Great Divide Fires.

Venue: Esso BHP Billiton Wellington Entertainment Centre Meeting Room 100 Foster Street Sale from 12noon to 2pm. **Contact:** Mikaela Power on 0417 159 733 E: goto@otog.net

More info on Innovation Gippsland can be found at www.innovationgippsland.com



Easter Activities with Coast Care a Hit

A steady stream of caravans and boats heading into east Gippsland indicated many people were keen to return to the region following the summer bushfires and re-acquaint themselves with their favourite holiday destination.

DSE's Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator, Glen Forster said that as well as a much-welcomed boost to the local economy, visitors can also bring added pressure for our coastal environment.

"Fishing, boating, bushwalking and camping all impact on the natural environment, but there are some simple things all visitors to the coast can do to ensure their favourite spot is preserved for future years," Mr Forster said.

"In recognition of this Coast Action/Coastcare have been running free holiday activity programs for over 10 years, aiming to inform and educate holiday makers and residents about local environmental issues."

This year Coast Action/Coastcare ran its first ever Easter Activities program, with activities held over the two weeks of the school holidays in Lakes Entrance, Lake Tyers, Cape Conran and Mallacoota.

"Providing fun and educational activities is a proven way to change attitudes and behaviour towards the environment," Mr Forster said.

This years holiday program kicked off with the first of five open days at East Gippsland TAFE's SEAMEC campus in Lakes Entrance.

Activities there included fish dissection, seagrass sampling and coastal arts and crafts with a focus on family participation.

For information on becoming involved with Coast Action/Coastcare visit www.dse.vic.gov.au



Rock Wallaby Monitoring

Remote cameras and trapping are being used as part of an autumn monitoring program of Victoria's critically endangered Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies.

Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) Flora and Fauna Officer Lucy Clausen said DSE and contractors spent a week each trying to trap the elusive animals in the Snowy River National Park at 'West Gully' and 'The Farm' monitoring sites. "We had a frustrating time at West Gully where there were signs of a Rock-wallaby near the traps but it just didn't go in," Ms Clausen said.

The second monitoring technique using remote digital sensor cameras has provided outstanding results over the past couple of months.

"Photographs at this third site have shown some social behaviours, where mothers and joeys have been feeding together," Ms Clausen said



Port Franklin River Wall - S3 Completed



Angie G & Alf on Port Franklin Wall

The ever-active Committee of Management at Port Franklin has achieved another big milestone: it has just overseen construction of 203 metres of wall, completing Stage 3 of the river wall project.

Stage 3 of the project was funded to the tune of \$263,000 through grants from the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Coastal Risk and Public Risk on Public Land programs.

Alf Willder, President of the Committee said that the 203 metres of wall included concrete panels, capping, handrail and footpath.

"There will be further landscaping including an increase in foreshore vegetation and designated areas for parking," Mr Willder said.

Angie Gutowski, Coastal Planner for DSE, said that Alf's role has been important for the success of the project.

"Alf's experience in other projects and his knowledge of the area have been really valuable in getting a good result," Ms Gutowski said.

Burning Progresses in West Gippsland

The Department of Sustainability and Environment, assisted by Parks Victoria, have completed a number of burns in the West Gippsland area since the start of autumn.

VicForests staff have also been working hard on regeneration burns across the region.

Almost 350 hectares of regeneration burns and 600 hectares of fuel reduction burn have been undertaken – a total of 26 burning operations so far in the Noojee and Erica fire districts.

Fire Management Officer for Noojee, David Vaskess said that autumn is traditionally the best time of year for burning and this season has been particularly favourable in the Gippsland region.

"Good early autumn rains, followed by the current stable weather conditions are allowing a lot of work to be done in our region. Fuel reduction burning is vital in protecting communities and it is critical we take advantage of these conditions now, as they may not last very long," Mr Vaskess said.

"The choice we face is either burn now under milder conditions or face a greater risk, and greater impact on the community, with a higher risk of bushfires in the summer."



Heart Morass Launch

Work has begun on a landmark project for the region that will result in the restoration of 1,930 acres of Gippsland's Heart Morass. Located at the mouth of the Latrobe River, the Heart Morass is part of a wetland complex, of international significance, that forms the western portion of the Gippsland Lakes.

Launched on 16th March by the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change John Thwaites, the Heart Morass Restoration Project is the culmination of a great deal of hard work and planning by a unique group of partners and a generous amount of community and landholder support.

As outlined by Rod Drew, CEO of Field and Game Australia, the rehabilitation of the morass is the joint initiative by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA), Watermark Inc. and Field and Game Australia's Wetland Environmental Taskforce Public Fund.

The \$1.1 million purchase and rehabilitation will ultimately restore the wetland to a place of international significance for waterbirds and other wetland dependant flora and fauna.

Watermark Chair Duncan Malcolm says that the Heart Morass acquisition is a long held dream of many Watermark members and they are looking forward to partnering with Field and Game Australia and the WGCMA in the rehabilitation initiative.

Management decisions associated with the project will be made within the context of contributing towards improving the health of the broader Gippsland Lakes wetland system and the achievement of icon status for the Heart Morass.

"The unique opportunity to rehabilitate a wetland from a site degraded by the impacts of grazing, drainage, land clearing and salinity to an iconic wetland is both exciting and challenging for the partnership," adds Liz Clay, Chair of the WGCMA.



L-R: Russell Bate (Field and Game Australia), Liz Clay (WGCMA), Minister Thwaites, Duncan Malcolm (Watermark) and Denis Tricks (Williamson Foundation).

Website Feature

www.connectedwater.gov.au

The Connected Water website has been developed to progress a coordinated approach to managing surface and groundwater resources in Australia. It is intended to provide an up-to-date resource for water managers, policy makers and catchment management groups. The website is coordinated by the Bureau of Rural Sciences and developed and funded through the National Groundwater Committee,

Australian, State and Territory Government agencies and the NHT. The website can be accessed at

www.connectedwater.gov.au.

