

In the getting of gravel - see new ways with disused pits

SEVERE gravel shortages in Busselton and Augusta-Margaret River shires have provided the stimulus to CALM Busselton embarking on a pilot project that could yield thousands of tonnes of extra gravel from disused pits.

Several other benefits are expected to result from the project should its methods be adopted by the two shires.

They include: a decrease in the need for new pits in both shires, a lessening of demand for new pits in State forest and a lessening of the occurrence of dieback.

Better quality gravel

The new method carried out in disused pits sees the deeper-seated rock be-

ing quarried to make a better quality gravel.

The earlier quarrying produced gravel containing a large proportion of the more inferior clay.

A disused pit, on Slee Road, Busselton, was the site of the test project conducted by CALM and Quarry Park, a Perth-based company.

A rock-breaking machine reduced large boulders to half-metre blocks.

A rock-crushing machine then further reduced the blocks and tipped the resulting superior-grade, road-making material onto a conveyor belt, carrying it out to a stockpile.

Margaret River district officer Brad Commins said

by Verna Costello

local gravel pits, thought to have been 'quarried out,' are now believed to contain many thousands of tonnes more gravel that could be extracted using the new methods.

"The Slee Road pit was thought to be exhausted but already it's yielded about 25 000 tonnes of gravel with a potential for another 150 000 tonnes from the remainder of the pit," Brad said.

"In addition, the methods render the area easier to revegetate.

"Busselton Shire had revegetated Slee Road pit after its first quarrying, but the stony soil was inhospitable and trees battled to grow in it."

Easier to replant

"We expect much better results when the pilot project is finished, as the

big rocks and rock base will have been quarried, so we'll be able to rip up the area more easily and resurface and replant it.

"The impact of dieback is also expected to lessen because the ground will be more permeable, so water can't collect and provide an environment in which dieback fungus can flourish."

Both shires have suitable pits and have expressed interest in using the pilot project methods should they prove economically viable.

"We're keeping a gimlet eye on costs and so far our projections look promising," said Brad.

The gravel from the Slee Road pit is being used for building access roads to the the Dunsborough Lakes housing and golf course development.



CALM Margaret River district officer Brad Commins and Quarry Park site manager George Bem inspect outcome of the new quarrying method. Photo by Gabrielle Adams, courtesy Busselton-Margaret Times



BRAD COMMINS
M.R. CALM OFFICER

& GEORGE BEM

FROM QUARRY PARK

PORTING GRAVEL AT

SLEE RD

Brad Commins M.R. Calm officer
and George Bem from Quarry Park
Gravel at Slee road.