



## LEED Fund helps combat climate change

**THE Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has opened a second round of funding applications for projects that will help tackle the challenges of climate change.**

Up to \$13.4 million will be available under the \$36.5 million Low Emissions Energy Development (LEED) Fund to support the development of low emissions technologies.

In principle agreement has already been reached to provide \$6 million to two companies to develop innovative technology to help reduce Western Australia's greenhouse gas emissions and provide greater energy security.

Office of Climate Change LEED Fund Manager Charles Crouch said the funding would support the construction of a solar power station in Kalgoorlie and the development of an oil mallee harvesting machine.

He said the new round of funding would support more innovative technology.

"The Premier's Climate Change Action Statement released in May 2007 commits Western Australia to meet the challenge of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions," Charles said.

"A key tool in meeting this challenge will be the introduction to WA of new, low emissions energy technologies that reduce the State's carbon footprint.

"As such, we'll be looking at technologies like geothermal electricity generation, as well as renewable energy generation such as wind, bio-energy and solar power, in our LEED Fund grants."

Applications will be required to demonstrate the development and introduction of new, low emissions energy technology in WA, the potential of the project to reduce emissions in WA and the economic and strategic advantages of the project to the State.

They will be assessed by an independent expert advisory group.



Nature conservation leaders (back row, left to right) Karl Brennan, Dave Coates, Hayley Valentine, Kevin Thiele, Kim Williams, Don Boothey, Norm McKenzie, Mick Davis, Keith Claymore, Troy Sinclair, Stephen van Leeuwin, (front row, left to right) Adrian Pinder, David Mitchell, Brad Barton, Anthony Desmond and Alan Danks. Photo - DEC

## Nature conservation leaders visit the Pilbara

By Joanna Moore

**EIGHTEEN nature conservation leaders from Regional Services, Science and Nature Conservation travelled north to the Pilbara recently.**

Acting Assistant Director of Nature Conservation Keith Claymore said it was important that senior officers had the opportunity to appreciate the scale and breadth of WA's biodiversity and related conservation issues in the field.

"The Pilbara was chosen due to the magnitude and complexity of issues facing the department in this region," he said.

"These issues include new marine parks and reserves, fire management, cultural heritage and the impact of resource development on biodiversity, as well as collaboration and partnerships with the mining industry and pastoralists."

The eight-day trip included visits to Millstream-Chichester and Karijini national parks as well as the Burrup

Peninsula, where the group looked at issues associated with tenure, industrial development, rock art and cultural heritage management, public access and recreation in the context of nature conservation.

The group also visited Hamersley Range Plateau, Fortescue River and a new mine near Robe River where they were briefed by a representative from Rio Tinto Iron Ore and DEC staff on the project and assessment process.

The group explored issues surrounding weed control of mesquite and buffel grass and also discussed rangeland management with Pilbara pastoralists.

"It is important that nature conservation leaders *in situ* examine complex problems," Keith said.

"This enables a better perspective

on providing solutions, which staff can then take back to their work environments and provide input to State-wide policy development.

"Additionally, crosscutting topics - such as improving leadership and communication, and delivery of nature conservation or island conservation - were selected for discussion and for participants to report on."

As well as team building and improving leadership, Keith said the trip offered managers and leaders a unique educational experience to build their own knowledge while contributing to others.

Keith thanked all participants and particularly Science Division's Biogeography Program Leader and Partnerships Manager Stephen van Leeuwin and regional staff. The help of DEC Dwellingup Work Centre Storeman Steve Thomas, who provided catering, was also greatly appreciated.

## Aboriginal names for Darling Range Parks

**SEVEN conservation areas in the Darling Range now have Aboriginal names.**

The names for the four regional and three national parks created through the Protecting our Old Growth Forests Policy and the Forest Management Plan 2004-2013 were launched in August. Collectively, they are known as the 'Parks of the Darling Range'.

Chidlow Regional Park has become Wooroloo Regional Park, Kalamunda Regional Park has become Mundy Regional Park, Kelmscott-Martin Regional Park has become Banyowla Regional Park and Wungong Regional Park has retained that name.

The national parks are now Beelu, previously Mundaring, Korung, previously Pickering Brook, and Midgegoroo, formerly known as Canning.

The Manager of the Community and Regional Parks Branch Jayson Puls said DEC had undertaken extensive consultation regarding the new Aboriginal names for the parks since March 2005.

"This included liaison with the Darling Range Community Advisory Committee, Aboriginal language specialists, the cities of Swan, Mundaring, Kalamunda, Gosnells, Armadale and Serpentine-Jarrahdale and Aboriginal groups and individuals," Jayson said.

"Between March and July 2007, meetings took place with representatives of the Combined Swan River and Swan Coastal Plain Native Title Claimants and Traditional Owners and other individuals who expressed an interest in providing input into the naming process."

The Aboriginal elders consulted wanted the park names to recognise Nyoongar people who were present at the time of European settlement. For example Mundy (or Munday) was a leader of the Beelu (or Beeloo) people, who occupied a district that was generally bound by the Helena, Swan and Canning rivers.

Midgegoroo was a Nyoongar elder of the Beeliar people at the time of European settlement in 1829. He played a key role in resisting European settlement in Perth and was executed by settlers in 1833. Banyowla Regional Park is named after a Nyoongar elder who headed a group whose territory was marked by a line from Mangle's Bay to the Darling Range.

## Another new home for potoroo population

**THERE will soon be a second mainland population of the world's most endangered marsupial, the Gilbert's potoroo, following the construction of a fence in a national park near Albany.**

DEC Principal Research Scientist Tony Friend said the new population, to be established in the predator-free reserve, would increase the security of the species and help ensure its survival.

It follows the establishment of a new colony of Gilbert's potoroos on Bald Island, east of Albany, where 10 founder animals were brought to the island from the tiny mainland population at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve between 2005 and 2007.

A DEC survey at Bald Island in July 2008 trapped 20 potoroos, 11 of which had been born on the island. Five of those had not been caught previously.

Tony said nine of the original founder animals were captured in the survey and the other one had been captured in 2007.

"It is likely the missing founder is still alive and there are more young potoroos

that haven't been discovered," he said.

"The original aim was to reach a population of 20 on Bald Island before any were removed for other translocation projects and this figure has now been achieved."

Creating a second mainland population is a high priority because there is a potential risk that either of the two current populations could be wiped out by disasters such as uncontrollable wildfire.

"Prior to the successful establishment of a colony on Bald Island, Gilbert's potoroo has only escaped extinction in one population of less than 40 animals at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve," Tony said.

"DEC has had great success establishing the species at Bald Island and the new fenced reserve will further boost Gilbert's potoroo numbers.

"It is a very exciting time for all of us who have been working over the past few years to bring the species back from the brink of extinction."

The new fenced reserve has been built in a remote part of Waychinicup National Park in long-unburnt vegetation including

some dense heathland almost identical to the potoroo habitat at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve.

About 380 hectares of bushland is fenced by an eight-kilometre, two-metre-high fence that will help protect the potoroos from foxes and cats.

Between six and 10 potoroos will be introduced into the secure area this spring from Two Peoples Bay and Bald Island. In the long-term, release outside the fence will enable colonisation of other suitable areas.

The enclosure will also provide protection for other threatened species - such as the western ringtail possum and quokka. It may also be used in the recovery of the dibbler and western ground parrot.

The Gilbert's potoroo recovery program has been funded by DEC as part of the department's goal to see the long-term survival of the Gilbert's potoroo and is also supported by the Federal Government's Natural Heritage Trust through South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc.

# Working Together

As I write this column on the eve of a two-week trip to the USA, it has just been announced that our new Minister for the Environment will be Hon Donna Faragher MLC who is a Member for East Metropolitan Region. We welcome our new Minister to the portfolio and look forward to working with her.

Our outgoing Minister, Hon David Templeman MLA, has already sent a letter to all DEC staff to thank them for their work and dedication. We have appreciated his support for DEC's staff and work.

There would be many staff in the Department who haven't worked in a government agency through an election that has resulted in a change of Government. A number of staff have asked me what happens now with various initiatives that were incomplete at the time the election was called.

It is one of the fundamental principles of our system of government that policy is determined by the elected Government of the day. The role of agencies such as DEC is to provide the best advice we can to the Minister, and deliver our statutory responsibilities and programs in line with the Government's policies and priorities.

The new Government has made a number of important policy commitments in areas such as adaptation to climate change, protecting the Kimberley, better managing the Great Western Woodlands, establishing a new Environmental Community Grants Program, better environmental laws and approvals processes, and strengthening monitoring and compliance programs. These will be an important focus of our efforts in the immediate future.

**Keiran McNamara,**  
Director General



# Protecting WA's wildlife

**DEC and Main Roads WA have developed a set of roadside wildlife signs to be placed near lakes around Perth where ducks, swans and turtles commonly try to cross busy roads.**

The signs, which were launched in August, feature the 24-hour WILDCARE helpline telephone number, 9474 9055.

DEC Deputy Director General of Parks and Conservation Jim Sharp said the new signs would encourage people to call the WILDCARE helpline if they encountered injured or sick animals around areas such as Lake Monger, Bibra Lake and Herdsman Lake.

"Volunteers operate the helpline on behalf of DEC and refer callers to the nearest registered wildlife rehabilitator who can help them," Jim said.

He thanked the 340 registered volunteer wildlife rehabilitators for their significant dedication and time.

The protection of injured and orphaned native animals also received a boost with a new set of rehabilitation guidelines.

DEC Community Involvement Coordinator Marg Buckland said the Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation in Western Australia was the product of many years work.

"This document meets international standards for wildlife care and sets a benchmark for wildlife rehabilitation," she said.

"It reflects the insights of veterinarians

and volunteer wildlife rehabilitators and it is the first of its kind in Australia.

"It will be a great tool for WA's wildlife rehabilitators."

The document was instigated by DEC's Community Involvement Unit and Michelle Rouffignac, an experienced veterinary nurse on secondment from Perth Zoo, was responsible for preparing and compiling the document. The Wildlife Rehabilitators Consultation Group also assisted.

The minimum standards will be distributed to registered wildlife rehabilitators and DEC wildlife officers and will also be available online at [www.dec.wa.gov.au](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au).



DEC Community Involvement Coordinator Marg Buckland and WILDCARE volunteer Julie Sheridan. Photo - DEC

# Salinity program successes at Buntine-Marchagee

**MORE than \$500,000 will be spent during the 2007-08 and 2008-09 financial years on an integrated water management initiative addressing salinity and water management issues in the Buntine-Marchagee Natural Diversity Recovery Catchment, one of DEC's salinity projects.**

The initiative began in 2004 with an 870-hectare demonstration site and combines strategically placed revegetation with surface water engineering. The works play a fundamental role in protecting important biological communities threatened by altered hydrology in the recovery catchment.

To date, more than 300,000 seedlings have been planted as part of this integrated approach to water management.

DEC Project Manager Gavan Mullan said improved soil preparation and weed control,

timing of planting and high seedling quality had been the main factors in the revegetation achieving a 95 per cent survival rate. This was despite 2006 and 2007 being two of the driest years on record in the northern agricultural region.

"The success of the project is helping other natural resource management projects achieve results well beyond their previous capacity, especially in the northern agricultural region," he said.

While revegetation is used to manage groundwater, surface water flows are controlled using engineered earthworks in the form of grade banks and waterway levies.

DEC Project Coordinator Rowan Dawson said this aspect of the project was designed to manage the erosion, sedimentation and waterlogging associated with high intensity rainfall events.

"By managing water flow and retaining topsoil and nutrients in the upper and middle parts of the landscape, we not only protect biodiversity values in the valley floor, but also boost farm productivity," he said.

Like the revegetation aspect of the project, the engineering components have also recently been tested by extreme weather.

"In December 2007 the demonstration site received a one-in-45-year high intensity, short duration rainfall event, during which the surface water engineering structures proved highly effective in reducing erosion, sedimentation, waterlogging and inundation," Rowan said.

The success of the site has validated the decision to expand the project to a further 10,000 hectares by 2009.

"By June 2009, this project will have

installed 77 kilometres of grade banks, 52 kilometres of waterway levies, 70 kilometres of fencing and 490,000 seedlings. The integration of surface water engineering and plant-based solutions to salinity management comprise a significant restructuring of the landscape and often require equally significant changes by landholders to farm layouts and management practices," Rowan said.

The success of the on-ground water management works in the demonstration catchment is a result of the combined efforts of five farming families, the Shire of Coorow, the Coorow Land Conservation District Committee and team members of DEC's Recovery Catchment Group. In addition, the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council and the Department of Agriculture and Food contributed administrative and technical support.

# DEC hosts geotourism experts

By Joanna Moore

**DEC made the most of international experts visiting Perth for the inaugural Global Geotourism Conference by hosting a forum featuring some of its keynote speakers on 14 August.**

Featured were USA National Park Service superintendents Steve Martin and Cyd Martin and engineer and the director of one of South Africa's largest building contractors Rob King. As Superintendent of the Grand Canyon

National Park, Steve discussed managing a site which receives 4.5 million visits each year and is one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

As well as being a superintendent of three conservation areas, Cyd is Chief of Indian Affairs and American Culture for the Intermountain Region and National Program Coordinator for the Native American Graves' Protection and Repatriation Act program. She explored management issues associated with Indigenous programs, protected areas and tourism.

The constructed environment was the focus of Rob's presentation, which provided an insight into the building of the Interpretation Centre Complex for the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site.

As well as sharing their knowledge about managing geological tourism, the international speakers visited some of Western Australia's impressive natural tourism sites.

DEC Assistant Director of Policy and Planning Col Ingram took the USA visitors, including Deputy Superintendent at Grand Canyon National Park Palma Wilson, on a tour of popular tourism sites managed by DEC.

Officers from the department's Aboriginal Heritage Unit provided an introduction to Aboriginal culture at Walyunga National Park, before the group visited DEC's Perth Hills National Parks Centre. They also visited Yanchep National Park and headed up the coast



(From left) Director Stocks Building Africa Rob King, DEC Deputy Director General of Parks and Conservation Jim Sharp, DEC Assistant Director Policy and Planning Col Ingram, National Park Service Superintendent Cyd Martin, Superintendent of the Grand Canyon National Park Steve Martin, Deputy Superintendent of the Grand Canyon Palma Wilson and Acting Director Parks and Visitor Services Peter Sharp. Photo - Joanna Moore

to the Pinnacles at Nambung National Park.

Following DEC's forum and tour, the guests were well settled into the WA environment and ready to join many other national and international speakers at the Global Geotourism Conference from 17 to 20 August. The conference, which was held in Fremantle, was hosted by the Forum Advocating Cultural and Ecotourism and supported by a number of agencies including DEC.

It was attended by representatives from agencies including the Department of Industry and Resources, Tourism WA, Office of Native Title, an alliance of Indigenous artists and art centres called Western Desert Mob, Curtin University of Technology, private consulting companies, Hospitality Inns, the National Trust and the Conservation Commission of WA. A range of metropolitan and regional-based DEC staff also attended.

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## DEC wins landscape architecture award

By Samille Mitchell

DEC has won a landscape architecture award for its work on developing interpretation facilities at Swarbrick, in the Walpole Wilderness.

The Swarbrick interpretation site was awarded the 2008 Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Western Australia Excellence Award for Public Art in Landscape Architecture.

The judges also provided a special citation recognising the "innovative nature of the design and the individual artworks as well as how responsive the project is to its location". They said: "Although bold and contemporary in design, the project demonstrates a high level of sensitivity to cultural and natural context".

Swarbrick is one of three sites which make up the Walpole Wilderness Discovery Centre. It features a 500-metre interpretive



DEC-commissioned artist Lorena Grant, DEC Recreation and Landscape Unit Architectural Draftsperson Steve Csaba and Public Art Award sponsor Wayne Blakeney at the awards ceremony. Photo - AILA

walk with five public artworks and a 'Wilderness Wall of Perception'.

DEC Recreation and Landscape Unit Coordinator Tracy Churchill said the Swarbrick project differed from traditional interpretation projects.

"The Wilderness Wall of Perception details the historical, natural and social context of the site. It interacts personally with the visitors through its

evocative reflections which encourage you to contemplate your own perception of wilderness," Tracy said.

"The artwork and text expresses different people's personal connections to nature and examines evolving community perceptions of this landscape."

The site is now eligible for the AILA National Awards.

## Landscape architecture fellow

DEC staff member Tracy Churchill has been recognised for her commitment to landscape architecture.

Tracy, who is DEC's Recreation and Landscape Unit Coordinator, was awarded a fellowship in recognition of her contribution to the AILA in Western Australia and for her roles on the AILA WA Executive, on the accreditation panel for The University of Western Australia and on the AILA National Council.

Tracy's fellowship also recognises her efforts to improve and support students and graduates in the workplace while also acknowledging her achievements as a landscape architect with DEC.

The citation supporting Tracy's nomination said she had used her role with DEC to contribute to the

protection of the environment by promoting landscape strategies that ensure a balance between conservation and visitor interaction.

It also noted Tracy's high standard of professional practice evident in her participation in award-winning projects such as the Valley of the Giants.

Tracy said she was honoured to receive the fellowship.

"I value the role the AILA plays and am honoured to receive the recognition from them," she said.

"I think landscape architecture plays a really important role in protecting the environment while at the same time ensuring people enjoy their visits to our natural areas in places that are well designed and appropriate to the landscape."

## Busy time for new recruit

IT'S been a baptism of fire, chemical spills and gas leaks for the Pollution Response Unit's (PRU's) recruit Paul Fanetti.

Since starting as an environmental officer with the unit in early May, Paul has attended a staggering number of emergency calls.

"In combination with training courses and inductions, it's been an intense start to the new career," he said.

Paul was previously with the Swan River Trust and, before that, DEC's Air Quality Branch.

"Both these positions have given me experience I can bring to this job," he said.

"Through working in PRU, there is a very real chance of dealing with potentially serious threats to the environment and to public health."

Manager of Environmental Hazards Ken Raine said some of the incidents Paul had helped with included a chemical spill on Kewdale Road where a 1,000-litre container of pesticide fell off a truck, half its contents spilling onto the road and into nearby stormwater drains; a chlorine

gas leak at a laboratory at The University of Western Australia and a call out to a Rockingham landfill site where two employees had been overcome by gas fumes.

In the past few months, staff from the PRU also attended a fuel tanker truck crash on Old Coast Road at Myalup and a garden product business in Jandakot where mixed fertilisers were emitting clouds of yellow smoke. They were also involved in the investigation of seagull deaths near Woodman Point.

PRU Manager Jimmy Seow flew to Varanus Island following the gas explosion at Apache Energy's plant to assess the environmental impact of the explosion and issue a scope of works for clean up and further environmental monitoring.

Ken said many of the incidents were at night or in heavy rain, making operations difficult and the science complex.

"We never quite know what will pop up next, so we specialise in expecting the unexpected," he said.

"Paul now feels like an experienced trooper, ready for the next challenge."



Environmental Officer Paul Fanetti investigating illegal dumping of drums at Bayswater. Photo - Dale Stanton

## Threatened plants conserved in international storage



The Royal Botanic Gardens' Press and Public Relations Manager Anna Quenby (third from left) during a visit to DEC with Australian Millennium Seed Bank Coordinator Tom North (left), who is based at the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, Anne Cochrane and Dave Coates. Photo - DEC

DEC's twenty-fourth shipment of seeds of threatened plant species has been sent from Western Australia to England.

The seeds - collected from across the south-west of WA by DEC Threatened Flora Seed Centre staff - were sent from Perth to the Millennium Seed Bank Project headquarters at Kew's Royal Botanic Gardens' Wakehurst Place storage facility.

Partners in the seed bank project - DEC, the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA) and Greening Australia - have sent 45 consignments of seeds.

Western Australia was one of the first places in the world and the first in Australia to join the 10-year project in 2001. It has already sent duplicate collections of seeds for safe keeping

from more than 1,800 threatened, endemic and keystone plant species to the international conservation project.

Australia is now one of 50 countries that have joined forces to collect seeds of 10 per cent of the world's dryland flora by 2010.

Australia's goals for the seed conservation project will contribute towards one of the targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, which is to conserve 60 per cent of threatened flora in seed banks and to use 10 per cent of these in recovery programs.

Under the watchful eye of DEC scientist Anne Cochrane, manager of DEC's Threatened Flora Seed Centre, and in collaboration with her BGPA colleagues, WA is sending more than 30 per cent of Australia's targeted flora.

"WA will send almost 2,500 seed samples," she said. "DEC's contribution to this target is 1,100 plant taxa, mostly threatened ones. These taxa will come from across WA from a range of ecosystems such as woodlands, forests, heath systems and deserts.

"In total, Australia will send 8,000 seed samples from threatened and endemic flora by 2010.

"Throughout Australia, each State has a different conservation strategy and a different agreement with the Millennium Seed Bank. It is as if there are seven different Australian 'countries' in the partnership. Together, the Australian organisations form the Australian Seed Conservation and Research network.

"We have an incredible range of flora in Australia due to the great variation in climate and landscape. Unfortunately, as much as 20 per cent of this flora is under threat from climate change, land degradation, disease or development."

The project's Australian coordinator, Tom North, said the key to reaching targets for conserving seeds of dryland flora was to involve a range of partners, including natural resource managers.

"The drylands in Australia are under much more pressure than the tropics because of past agricultural and urban development," he said.

He said that when the project began, it was estimated that there were almost 250,000 flowering plant species in the world. Now it is estimated there are about 350,000 due to increased activity in taxonomy and flora survey.

The Millennium Seed Bank will have invested \$10 million in Australia by the end of 2009 when the first phase of the international program ends. Funding for the post-2009 phase has not yet been secured, but if money can be raised, the project will target a further 15 per cent of world flora by 2020.

## Seed collection

SENIOR Research Scientist Anne Cochrane spends much of her time in the field collecting seeds from threatened flora. Her activities are part of a wider effort to conserve WA's unique plants.

As the manager of DEC's Threatened Flora Seed Centre Anne's aim is to collect enough seeds of these threatened plants to enable recovery of a species, if required, and also to send duplicate collections to the Millennium Seed Bank in England for additional safekeeping.

The UK seed bank, which supports Anne and her team's seed conservation project, aims to preserve 10 per cent of the world's dryland flora by 2010 as part of the global targets to conserve plant species worldwide.

Anne and technical officer Andrew Crawford have collected hundreds of thousands of seeds from threatened plants over the past six years since the start of the Millennium Seed Bank partnership in WA.

The seeds are processed, dried and stored at the Threatened Flora Seed Centre in Kensington where investigations into seed germination are also carried out.

Last year Anne spent 10 weeks at the Millennium Seed Bank developing temperature profiles for some of the threatened species found in the Stirling Ranges, in order to better understand the effect of climate warming on their recruitment ability.

# Bibbulmun end-to-end walk creates community interest

DEC Great Southern District Conservation Employee Martin Clark, and Pingelly electrician Doug Goldsmith recently took on the challenge of an end-to-end walk of the Bibbulmun Track.

Another friend, plumber Kevin Hazlewood, joined them for a short time at the start of their north-to-south walk. Martin, Doug and Kevin all live in Pingelly where their effort created considerable interest in the local community.

The *Pingelly Times* followed their 58-day trek with interest, keeping the community up to date on their progress and when the local plumber and electrician were going to be back on the job.

DEC's Great Southern District Narrogin staff and conservation employee crew also followed their progress enthusiastically, but

By Steve Gorton

suggested they could find a lot better pursuits to use up two months of long service leave. In the end though, all were proud of Martin's achievement.

The team's preparation included walking six kilometres each day after work and a 15-kilometre overnight walk a month before.

They dehydrated all their foodstuffs and arranged food drops. While their packs started off weighing 25 kilograms, by the finish they were 18 kilograms and the group had realised they had initially prepared in excess.

Martin said the track facilities were excellent and the interesting people they met on the way

made the testing walk a pleasurable task.

In the early stages they met an experienced walker – a retired nurse who suggested some minor changes to their pack position which considerably improved their walking comfort. Kevin had his blisters treated with care.

They also met one of the FOF's ('Feral Ol Farts') in her fifties who had previously walked from Kalamunda to Kalamunda via Albany, this time only doing a section of the track with her grandchildren.

In another encounter, they met a man suffering an arthritic condition whose comment explained it all: "this beats pounding the passage ways of hospital".

Another group admired was a cub leader mum with her eight and 10-year-old sons completing an end-to-end.

Martin's highlight was the section along the south coast.

"Trekking poles are a necessity," he said. "And whoever said 'special hiking boots are waterproof', when they have a hole in the top that your foot goes into, was talking rubbish!"

Having shed 13 kilograms, Martin said it proved to be a good fitness and weight loss exercise. He recommends the walk to everyone.

Great experiences on the Bibbulmun Track abound with 10 hikers recently completing an official end-to-end to celebrate the track's tenth anniversary.

Following community events at each of the towns through which the track passes during their eight-week walk, they finished their 963-kilometre trek on Saturday 13 September at the track's northern terminus in Kalamunda.

## Turtle tracking

THE future of loggerhead turtles is looking brighter thanks to a project that uses a satellite tracking device to shed light on the endangered species.

DEC Exmouth staff and volunteers from the Ningaloo Turtle Program have tagged nine female turtles in Ningaloo Marine Park which have recently been tracked migrating to feeding grounds in Shark Bay, the Timor Sea and as far away as the Torres Strait.

Exmouth District Manager Roland Mau said tracking the turtles would shed light on the turtles' migratory paths, behaviour and destination foraging grounds.

"We know that they come to nest on our beaches in large numbers every summer, but we don't know where they go once that part of their life cycle is complete," he said.

"However, the satellite tracking device is providing us with some of these answers, which in turn will contribute to their conservation."

The satellite transmitters, which cost \$2,500 each and were attached to the turtles' shells with non-toxic glue, enable DEC to determine the location of each turtle to within a radius of 100 metres.

"Five of the turtles headed north after being tagged and they all followed the same route to Barrow Island. All of them have now settled into their foraging areas and we will continue to monitor them until transmissions cease," Roland said.

"The good news is that information is already being used for regional marine planning at both State and Commonwealth levels allowing us to implement management strategies that protect migratory routes and critical foraging habitats."

The near-real time tracking data can be viewed at [www.ningalooturtles.org.au](http://www.ningalooturtles.org.au). The project was supported with funding from the Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

## Teamwork helps pollution investigation

By Joanna Moore

GREAT teamwork between DEC's Goldfields Region and the Environmental Enforcement Unit (EEU) resulted in a good outcome in a recently completed investigation into a big spill of tailings slurry in late 2006.

The 4.5-million-litre spill of slurry, which consisted of saline water, rock and chemicals including cyanide, occurred in the eastern Goldfields Region near Kalgoorlie-Boulder at mining company Barrick Gold's Kanowna mining operations.

Goldfields Regional Leader for Industry Regulation Wayne Astill said the spill impacted on about four-and-a-half hectares of vegetation and was deemed to have caused material environmental harm.

"After Barrick had completed a range of actions to remediate the site and put in measures to prevent a recurrence, the department decided to issue a modified penalty rather than take the matter to court," Wayne said.

"The fine was for \$25,000 and Barrick paid the fine rather than take the matter to court to appeal the decision."

Wayne said a partnership approach between staff in the Goldfields Region and EEU was central to the success of DEC's investigation.

"The initial investigation involved inspections of the affected area by



(From left) Goldfields Regional Leader for Industry Regulation Wayne Astill, Senior Environmental Officer Fiona Westcott, Senior Environmental Officer Karen Wheeler, Senior Environmental Officer Julie Mahony, Environmental Officer Bronwen Smith, Regional Investigations Leader Alison Avery and Environmental Officer Maxine Birkin.

Photo – Tracey Du-Pont

Goldfields Region staff who then prepared statements, followed by technical advice and review by the EEU," he said.

"There is a very good relationship between these two areas of the department and it continues to be strengthened through leadership and mentoring from the EEU, coupled with the enthusiasm of staff in the region to learn and apply their skills in the local setting.

"It is a great example of the continually

improving investigative skills in DEC and the improvements we are making in enforcement."

Wayne said it was also pleasing to see the positive action Barrick took in response to the incident.

"The company was quick to acknowledge its error and spent considerable money on remediation and rehabilitation actions, in fact much greater amounts than the fine," he said.

## Understanding mulga

A RESEARCH project is under way to resolve taxonomic problems within the mulgas (*Acacia aneura*), arguably the most confusing and complex group of plants in Australia.

The Understanding Mulga project is being undertaken by DEC in collaboration with the CSIRO with funding from BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and the Fortescue Metals Group. Overall the project is worth more than \$1.5 million.

The partnership project is the biggest externally funded taxonomic project undertaken in Australia and is an excellent

example of cooperation between the public and private sectors to deliver significant biodiversity outcomes.

A workshop was held at Technology Park in Bentley in August to update the project partners. Presentation topics included seedling studies and genetic approaches to assist in the species' taxonomic evaluation.

Mulga is a long-living plant found throughout the rangelands of Australia and is a dominant species in many arid woodlands and shrublands.

## Naomi shares Windspirit Dreaming

A DEC Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES) trainee in the Frankland District, Naomi Dann, has enjoyed sharing her Yawuru cultural knowledge with students at Walpole Primary School.

Working with Naomi, students from Years 3 and 4 gained an understanding of the history of Aboriginal people living in the environment and an insight into different Indigenous people around Australia and their art styles, dress, hunting techniques and languages.

"During the lessons, the students learnt about ways Indigenous people used the elements for hunting and how they understood their environment," Naomi said.

"We also discussed traditional art images and symbols and explored how artists used their experiences and the environment to record events past and present."

After learning about the history and use of boomerangs and digging sticks, Naomi and DEC volunteer Josie Stone helped the students decorate their own traditional hunting and gathering tools.

"The students learnt about DEC's role in caring for the environment and working with the community and also some important ways to help the environment by taking only enough and not all that you see," Naomi said.

"The culmination of the project was Windspirit Dreaming, a beautiful re-enactment of a hunting story and corroboree performed for the teachers, parents and other children."

Naomi said she had enjoyed working with the students.

"Though mostly not Aboriginal, the students are very enthusiastic about learning the culture," she said.

"It's a way of keeping the culture and storytelling techniques alive and I gained a real sense of pride that the children were so keen to learn about my culture and wanted to perform and share the environmental messages with their families."

The activities were part of the UR Walpole project which has been running at the school for the past eight years. It is a joint community and school project which explores environmental and social aspects of the Walpole region.

## Seminar series success

DEC's Dwellingup Seminar Series continues to attract praise for its efforts to bring together DEC staff with other research institutions and the Dwellingup community.

One of its most recent seminars, 'Kangaroo Management in Australia – hit or miss?', attracted more than 40 people.

The seminar series began in 2006 as a way of increasing scientific and broader community awareness of the Dwellingup Research Centre's work.

The seminar series also enables a variety of speakers with a diverse range of interests to present their research.

Presenters are allocated 45 to 50 minutes, with 10 minutes (or more if required) for questions.

Each seminar is followed by a sausage sizzle and light refreshments.

DEC Dwellingup Research Centre manager Joe Kinal said the seminars were an excellent way of "demystifying the activities of the Research Centre to the community".

"The seminars have been well received and attract a broad cross-section of locals from Dwellingup and surrounding towns," Joe said.

"Judging from the number of subsequent contacts, both offering and seeking information, the seminars have also been successful in engaging the public in DEC activities."

The kangaroo seminar was presented by Associate Professor Tony English, who is president of the World Association of Wildlife Veterinarians and is renowned for his work on deer management and the use of dart systems for animal capture.

For more information on the seminars, contact Jessica Read-Brain at the Dwellingup Research Centre, on (08) 9538 0026 or [jessica.read-brain@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:jessica.read-brain@dec.wa.gov.au).