



DEC bushfire expert wins national award

DEC's Principal Research Scientist Lachie McCaw has been awarded the top prize in the inaugural Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) Awards for Excellence.

Lachie was the fire behaviour leader on the Bushfire CRC's Research Response Taskforce to the 2009 Victorian bushfires and he has also played a key role in incident management during fires around WA and in the United States.

The awards, announced at the annual Bushfire CRC conference on the Gold Coast, recognise individual excellence in enhancing the contribution that science and technology make to an economically and socially sustainable Australia.

Environment Minister Donna Faragher said Lachie had been selected for the prestigious award by his peers for his work since the inception of the Bushfire CRC in 2003.

"Dr McCaw's work in the State's south-west has vastly improved our understanding of fire behaviour in forests and shrublands in the region," Mrs Faragher said.

"His research into the ecological impact of fire on the landscape has had positive implications for the way bushfires are managed by DEC and across Australia.

"Not only is he an asset to WA, he has also taken on a national role in evidence-based decision making in prescribed burning and land management and is a mentor to emerging researchers in this field.

"Dr McCaw is a role model for current and future fire behaviour researchers and this is a fantastic and well deserved achievement."

Lachie said the Bushfire CRC had been effective in building partnerships between scientists and fire managers that had led to improved management of bushfires throughout Australia.

"The nature and scale of bushfires is changing and it is essential that innovative research

continues into managing bushfires for the protection of the community and the benefit of the environment," he said.

"I feel privileged to have been involved with the Bushfire CRC over the past six years and I am really

pleased to receive this accolade."

CRCs bring together researchers from universities, the CSIRO and other government organisations, as well as private industry, in long-term collaborative arrangements.

For more information visit www.dec.wa.gov.au or www.bushfirecrc.com.

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(Insert) Bushfire CRC chairman Len Foster presents Lachie McCaw with inaugural Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) Award for Excellence.

Institute of Foresters honours DEC forester of the year

THE Institute of Foresters has named DEC Revegetation Systems Unit Manager John Bartle 'WA Forester of the Year'.

The award recognises three decades of work in developing rehabilitation projects using tree species.

John launched this part of his career in the mid 1970s by taking on a post with the then Forests Department in Dwellingup to rehabilitate mine sites and protect surface water.

In these early days of land rehabilitation, John and his colleagues often faced reluctance rather than acceptance of the need to rehabilitate.

But, according to former General Manager of the Department of Conservation and Land Management and Institute of Foresters member Roger Underwood, John faced the challenges head on.

"He revolutionised both the thinking and the approach. He designed a whole new rehabilitation system, introducing many of the measures taken for granted today, including deep ripping, topsoil replacement, direct seeding of understorey species, and the use of jarrah," Roger said.

"There were some hiccups of course, but these just allowed John to demonstrate the notable personality traits with which we all later became familiar: 'supreme optimism', and 'always regard a setback as an opportunity'."

John went on to become instrumental in the development of blue gum and mallee planting and farming, as a way of protecting groundwater and fighting salinity.

"When it came to salinity, John quickly realised the real threat was not in the forest at all, especially in areas where regeneration followed logging, or in the lower rainfall zones where saline groundwater was too deep to be affected, but out in the agricultural districts where the bush had been permanently cleared," Roger said

"John clearly saw that an effective, and potentially economical way to tackle this issue, was through tree planting. This was not a new idea; what was new was John's conviction that the trees could be commercial trees, thus adding to the economics of farming, as well as fixing the hydrological problem."

Armed with this belief, John launched ongoing efforts to make blue gum farming and, later, mallee farming a viable enterprise for farmers.

The many hectares of mallee plantations across the Wheatbelt today are testimony to John and his team's efforts.

But John says there's still work to be done.

"It's not only about growing mallee trees but harvesting them and converting them into products for sale," he said.

"We're not there yet but now there's real promise, with serious investigations into big-scale mallee processing."

John marks working on the start of the mallee industry as a career highlight.

"Having the opportunity to run with such a novel development as mallee has been a real highlight, and working with so many committed people over the past few decades," he said.

"This award was a real honour but none of these things can be happen from just one person – there has always been a whole team of people committed to making trees work on farms."



WA Waste Authority Chairman Barry Carbon and Environment Minister Donna Faragher in front of a pile of recyclable glass at the City of Canning's waste management facility.

New glass recycling facility

THE WA Waste Authority is helping fund a new glass recycling facility in Perth.

Environment Minister Donna Faragher announced a \$1.95 million commitment to the facility, to be co-funded by the WA Waste Authority and industry through the National Packaging Covenant.

Colmax Glass, the company approved to construct and operate the plant, will contribute the balance to the \$5.4 million project.

Mrs Faragher said the facility would process about 20,000 tonnes of waste glass a year, building up to 40,000 tonnes as demand increased.

"The waste glass would be collected from recycling facilities throughout the metropolitan area," she said.

"This will be the first plant of its kind in Western Australia that can crush and clean waste glass before distributing it for a range of practical uses including bottle manufacture, insulation batts, surface coatings for road markings and swimming pools, blasting abrasives, filtration and cement additives.

"There are export markets available both interstate and overseas for the sand-like material produced through the recycling process."

Construction of the facility will start towards the end of the year with the first recycled production beginning in the first half of 2010.

"This is a positive step to managing waste and increasing recycling rates," the Minister said.

"Approximately 80,000 tonnes of glass packaging is distributed throughout WA each year as packaging for food and beverage products.

"About 15,000 tonnes per year of used glass collected in WA is recycled, with the majority of it being sent to South Australia for the production of bottles, but due to the contamination of waste this can be a costly process for local government and private companies in charge of collecting waste glass."

Mrs Faragher said some sorting facilities in WA had stopped recycling glass due to the problems with rejected shipments of waste glass, which was increasing the amount of the material going into landfill.

"As the new plant can accept contaminated glass, the sorting facilities will be able to send their used glass there instead of into landfill," she said.

LANDSCOPE catalogue searchable online

DEC has launched a new online search facility to locate LANDSCOPE articles.

Accessible from DEC's website homepage, the electronic database enables users to enter keywords to search LANDSCOPE stories by subject.

Users can then go directly to the relevant story from their existing LANDSCOPE magazine collections or order back copies from DEC's books distribution centre in Kensington.

Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs Division Director Ron Kawalilak said the search facility was a vital and extremely helpful tool.

"As a scientific magazine, it's really important that LANDSCOPE magazine articles are accessible to people doing research on particular topics," Ron said.

"The new web-based search facility will prove invaluable for DEC staff looking up particular plants, animals or reserves, as well as the general public researching such topics."

The search facility includes all LANDSCOPE magazine feature articles since the magazine's inception in 1985.

Ron commended DEC's Electronic Communications Officer Nitin Solanki for his efforts in developing the search facility.

To access the LANDSCOPE online database, click on the LANDSCOPE icon at the bottom, left-hand side of the DEC homepage (www.dec.wa.gov.au).

When the catalogue opens, key in the relevant subject in the keyword box at the top of the screen.

You'll then be presented with a list of relevant articles, including their title, magazine volume number, author and a short subject description.

Winning climate change posters

POSTERS on how to reduce our carbon footprint and how volunteers can help save local rivers have won three Vasse Primary School students the State award in this year's Ribbons of Blue competition.

Ribbons of Blue Program Manager Richard Olive said students from around the State, including Christmas Island, had taken on the challenge of creating a community service announcement on how climate change will impact on waterways.

"Entrants were free to express their ideas in any format and entries covered a wide range of media, including video, performance, posters and slide shows," he said.

"The innovative approach taken by many students made

judging for the Ribbons of Blue team a difficult, but entertaining, job."

Abigail Gifford, Beth Hoppe and Hannah Meagher, Year 6 students from Vasse Primary School, received the overall State award for two excellent posters about how we can reduce our carbon footprint and how volunteering can help save our local rivers and their catchments.

Junior Primary (Kindergarten to year 3) winners were Bakers Hill Primary School Kindergarten Class, while Alison Dawson and Georgina McCabe from St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls, Mosman Park, won the Primary (Years 4 to 7) category.

The winning entries and other examples of the students' work can be viewed at www.ribbonsofblue.wa.gov.au.

Teachers recognised in Ribbons of Blue 20th anniversary

NINE Western Australian teachers received special awards from Ribbons of Blue in recognition of the outstanding work they have done with the environmental education program.

Five teachers from the south-west received their awards at the Australian Sustainable Schools end-of-year event in Bunbury which also marked the 20th anniversary of Ribbons of Blue.

Four teachers from Perth, Kwinana, Northam and Geraldton received their awards at an event in Perth.

Since 1989, Ribbons of Blue has involved 160,000 students across the State in water quality investigations and other activities promoting the health of local creeks, rivers, wetlands and catchments.

"Long-term partners such as the departments of Education and Training and Water, Swan River Trust, the South West Catchments Council and WA Plantation Resources have enabled the program to develop," Richard said.

The recipients of the awards were:

- Peter Robinson from Parkfield Primary School, Australind, who has involved more than 1,500 students in the past three years in planting trees on the Brunswick River and making kits of water quality equipment for loan to other schools.
- Cathy Fraser from Bridgetown District High School who has comprehensively integrated Ribbons of Blue across her whole curriculum during the past five years as a way of connecting the children to country.
- Ken Hill of Geographe Primary School who has shown great initiative and commitment to both environmental education and the health of the wetland adjacent to the school, which is now a thriving ecosystem that the students use as an outdoor classroom to learn about Aboriginal culture, biodiversity, water quality, waste and community partnerships.
- Andrew Hill from Manjimup Primary School who has shown a long-term commitment to Ribbons of Blue involving students in a range of projects

at the Manjimup constructed wetlands and undertaken long-term monitoring of the Upper Warren catchment.

• Alan Dornan from Cowaramup Primary School who has integrated all aspects of Ribbons of Blue across his curriculum. His classes have contributed to many community projects such as the Cowaramup Creek Action Plan.

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Tidy Towns' Regional Winners Announced

DEC has now announced all regional winners for the 2009 Tidy Towns – Sustainable Communities Award.

This year, awards went to Dandaragan for the Midwest–Gascoyne, Esperance for the South Coast, Collie for the South West, Gnowangerup for the Great Southern, Lombadina for the Kimberley, Hedland (Port and South Hedland) for the Pilbara, Westonia for the Central Wheatbelt and Menzies for the Goldfields.

The Tidy Towns entrants will be in the running for the title of 2009 State winner, to be announced on 20 November. State Category Achievement award winners will also be announced in recognition of their efforts in natural heritage conservation, recycling and waste management, enhancing cultural identity, community action, water conservation and general appearance.

The 2009 overall State winner will be visited by a national judge from Keep Australia Beautiful in December and go on to represent Western Australia at the national Tidy Towns awards early in 2010.

Keep Australia Beautiful WA Tidy Towns' State Program Manager Gail Dodd applauded all winning communities on their achievements. She said the judges were particularly impressed with the huge range of projects occurring in regional areas.

"Projects were really diverse,



Tidy Towns – Sustainable Communities State Program Manager Gail Dodd (left) with Collie community members Nola Green, Wendy Mabey and Andrea Martin, who worked to ensure Collie's Tidy Town award success.

ranging from Gnowangerup's success in damming and capturing street storm water and Lombadina constructing a new community centre to Hedland conserving flatback turtles and Westonia erecting attractive entry statements including corrugated tin facades depicting scenes of bygone days," Gail said.

"The towns participating in the 2009 program once again demonstrated what community is all about. The genuine desire to enrich and improve their space was overwhelmingly evident, and the community spirit was indeed alive and well.

"The defining characteristics of this year's entrants were both same and different. The sameness was in the drive and pride of the place in which they live, the same appreciation of what is right

for their community, and the same understanding that a clean and well-cared for community translates into a great community.

"The difference rested with the size of the towns involved in this year's program, ranging from more than 20,000 people in Busselton in the south-west, to just 20 in Bellary Springs Aboriginal Community in the Pilbara.

"Other differences were with the types of resources available to communities. Where some projects were achieved through partnerships with business and mining sectors, other projects were achieved with the most basic of community resources, physical effort and community will.

"Whatever the resources, the result is that every community entered in this year's awards has achieved something special."

Training for cane toad detector dog

DEC takes staff training seriously – even its cane toad detector dog Nifty will be upskilling this summer.

Nifty, Australia's first cane toad detector dog, will spend three months at Moreton Island off the Queensland coast, to hone her cane toad detecting talents.

The five-year old Belgian malinois has been working closely with DEC State Cane Toad Initiative technical officer Sandy Fleisher for the past three years.

Sandy, who will accompany Nifty on the trip, said they would meet with the owner of Queensland dog training company Multi-National K9 Gary Jackson.

"Gary is an experienced dog trainer who will provide guidance and training to further develop Nifty's skills as a detector dog," Sandy said.

"The company initially trained Nifty to detect cane toads on the move as well as the presence of cane toad hideouts, days after the toads had moved on.

"Nifty will also be checking freight coming to Moreton Island as there are currently no cane toads present on the island.

"This training is essential to develop Nifty's proficiency and to give her an opportunity to

gain experience in different terrain."

Sandy said the training would take place well ahead of the next dry season in Kununurra, when Nifty would be assessing high-risk freight consignments entering the Kimberley Region.

"However, while we are away during the wet season, the Kununurra-based Regional Cane Toad Team will continue with surveillance work to monitor and map cane toad populations at the frontline," she said.

"We will also work with community groups to develop and implement action plans for priority areas and continue with cane toad education awareness in local communities."

