



DEC staff play crucial role in Gorgon Gas Development

DEC staff will provide a permanent presence on Barrow Island as the Gorgon Gas Development project kicks off. DEC Gorgon Project Coordinator Fran Stanley said DEC staff would manage the project's impact on island and marine conservation.

"This will include an independent quarantine audit on both Barrow Island and the mainland," Fran said.

"It will also involve management, monitoring and research to ensure the protection of island and marine environments and the development of an ecological knowledge base."

In addition to having a management presence on Barrow Island, DEC will undertake flatback turtle conservation and fauna translocation programs and audit and monitor Gorgon dredging and marine construction activities. These offset programs are funded by Chevron Australia, the project operator, but run by DEC.

Barrow Island is an A Class Nature Reserve of very high conservation significance. The

smaller surrounding islands are also nature reserves. All are vested in the Conservation Commission of Western Australia and managed by DEC.

Barrow Island Nature Reserve is home to 23 threatened and four priority species.

Adjacent to the island are Barrow Island Marine Park and Barrow Island Marine Management Area, which support a range of marine habitats and species including coral reefs, mangroves, algal and seagrass habitats and dugong, whales and other cetaceans, marine turtles, fish and invertebrates.

The Gorgon Gas Development is the largest petroleum development ever approved in Western Australia. Construction is now beginning and will continue for the next three to five years. The project is anticipated to process natural gas for the next 60 years.

Fran said DEC's Pilbara region recently advertised seven positions to provide the management presence on Barrow Island Nature Reserve. The positions were advertised in *The West Australian*, on the WA Jobs Board and on other environmental jobs websites.

"It will also involve management, monitoring and research to ensure the protection of island and marine environments and the development of an ecological knowledge base."



DEC Gorgon Project Coordinator Fran Stanley (insert) said one aspect of the department's presence on Barrow Island would be the management of flatback turtle conservation.

"The team includes a Level 7 officer to manage the group and Level 6 and Level 4 or 5 positions to undertake the on-island management duties," she said.

"All except the Level 7 will operate on a fly in-fly out roster for two weeks on the island and two weeks off, based out of Perth, with a

commensurate package of conditions.

"This is the first resource project for which DEC will have a permanent presence and the first time staff have had the opportunity to take up fly in-fly out positions, making this an exciting new phase for the department."



Celebrating and protecting biodiversity

DEC will join organisations, government agencies and individuals around the globe this year in marking the International Year of Biodiversity.

The United Nations has declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. It is a celebration of the diversity of life and a chance to increase our understanding of the vital role that biodiversity plays in sustaining life on Earth.

Celebrations around the world aim to increase awareness of biodiversity and its importance to current and future human wellbeing, and to engage more people in biodiversity conservation.

Manager Corporate Communications Madeleine Clews said there were many areas of endeavour within DEC which supported the identification, description, understanding and protection of biodiversity.

"Various events happening throughout DEC during the year will help celebrate these programs and achievements," she said.

"One significant event will be the opening of the department's new Biodiversity Conservation Science building in Kensington, housing the WA Herbarium collection.



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

"Another will be the proclamation of Camden Sound Marine Park."

There will also be EcoEducation events and activities and numerous other launches and programs.

Conserving the State's considerable biodiversity has been and continues to be of prime importance among DEC's functions and DEC staff across the State contribute to this significant task on a daily basis.

For more information about the International Year of Biodiversity visit the website (www.cbd.int/2010/welcome) or become a fan on facebook (www.facebook.com/iyb2010).

WA is a signatory to the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity and so has adopted their definition. This defines biodiversity as the variety of all life forms—the different plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems of which they form a part.

In this definition, biological diversity is considered at three levels:

- Genetic diversity is the variety of genetic information contained in all of the individual plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms that inhabit the Earth. Genetic diversity occurs within and between the populations of organisms that comprise individual species, as well as among species.
- Species diversity refers to the variety of species on the Earth.
- Ecosystem diversity is the variety of habitats, biological communities and ecological processes.

Dangerous goods storage regulations to improve

REGULATIONS concerning the storage and handling of dangerous goods and environmentally hazardous material are set to be simplified under a new framework between DEC and the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP).

DMP and DEC administer legislation for the storage, handling and transport of dangerous goods under the *Dangerous Goods Safety Act 2004* and the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

The framework will apply to most of the 900 premises currently licensed by

DEC, which store or handle substances such as fuels, industrial chemicals, pesticides and other environmentally hazardous material.

DEC Environmental Regulation Division Director Alan Sands said the framework had been agreed on by both departments to simplify the process for Government and industry.

"The framework focuses on areas of mutual interest to both DMP and DEC, including the storage, processing and handling of chemicals of environmental concern," Alan said.

"It is designed to remove regulatory duplication and in so doing create a more efficient and streamlined approvals process, while also simplifying and clarifying the regulation of dangerous goods and environmentally hazardous material so they are easier for the industry to understand and manage.

"This will be achieved by the adoption of a common code of practice for industry."

Under the new arrangements, the regulation of storage and handling of

dangerous goods and environmentally hazardous material (storage or process vessels) will be dependent on the volume and type of material.

Management will be further simplified by adoption of a single standard for dangerous goods and environmentally hazardous material.

"This new framework will assist the industry in moving forward by ensuring the efficient and consistent administration of dangerous goods safety and environmental legislation in Western Australia," Alan said.



Eco Pirates a young marine-lover's delight

SMILES wide with enthusiasm, excited four, five and six-year-olds watch as Captain Sam Sharksword describes how 'Cunning Sea Cucumber Cate' and 'Nervous Nudi-Branch Nelly' need the coral and the seaweed to live happily in our oceans.

Over the next two hours these children will learn about the importance of putting rubbish in the bin so it doesn't become the 'scourge of the sea', watch with delight as a sea urchin moves, practice map reading skills, sing songs about the importance of letting others enjoy the natural wonders of the ocean, build a pirate ship and much more as part of the *Nearer to Nature* activity 'Eco Pirates'.

Once again, DEC's *Nearer to Nature* program has been almost fully booked this summer. The Eco Pirates activity, held at Woodman Point within the City of Cockburn and also at Mullaloo and Trigg beaches, has been one of the most popular.

In the activity, Captain Sharksword and his assistant Manta-Ray Mary are joined by children between four and seven years old in a quest to help their magical marine friends find some of the lost treasures of the sea. The children follow the clues on a pirate trail of discovery to uncover the hidden jewels of the marine world.

Brought to life by pirate costumes, a buried treasure map, treasure chests and the chance to 'walk the plank', it's no wonder the children love the experience.

Nearer to Nature Program Coordinator Jill Francis said the marine concept for the activity was inspired by the popular theme of pirates.

"From this impetus, we aim to engage young children in being 'good' pirates – 'Eco Pirates' who care about the marine environments which give them so much enjoyment," she said.

"The children love the touch pool experience, where they gently hold sea cucumbers and sea stars," she said.

"They also find out about the marine parks nearby which exist for the protection of these creatures and many more.

"Captain Sharksword and Manta-Ray Mary sing songs, dance and delight the children and their parents, imparting conservation messages as they do so.

"It's all about the enjoyment of discovering the creatures in our ocean and the importance of protecting them for future generations."

A range of activities aimed at children of all ages are run through DEC's *Nearer to Nature* program, including 'Wild about whales', 'N2N Spy Kids' and 'Going batty in the bush'. There's even one for adults – 'Darlings of the Range' – which is a Valentines Day special. Activities such as animal encounters and guided walks can be tailored to suit adult groups as part of conferences or meetings.

For more information collect a brochure from your



*Manta-Ray Mary shows six-year-old twins Kate and Chloe Fuller how to carefully hold sea creatures as part of DEC's *Nearer to Nature* Eco Pirates activity held at Woodman Point on Friday 15 January.*

local library, visit www.dec.wa.gov.au/n2n or call 9295 2244. Activities begin at \$12 per person and bookings are essential.

Improved access for Yanchep volunteers

DEC volunteers at Yanchep National Park are set to benefit from improved access to the park's volunteer centre, thanks to DEC Disability Access and Inclusion Committee (DAIC) funding.

The committee awards funds to DEC staff looking to improve access to work centres for existing, new employees and volunteers who have a disability.

DAIC Executive Officer Chantal Laval said the funding could be requested for improvements like automated doors, ramps, office equipment or other facilities.

"It's about improving access for all staff and volunteers," Chantal said.

"We really do rely on volunteers for a lot of our work so it's

important our workplaces are accessible to them."

Yanchep National Park Volunteer Coordinator Julia Coggins said the funding would pay for the construction of a new handrail along ramps into the volunteer centre and ramps into the nursery attached to the back of the volunteer centre.

Julia expects the work to be completed within a month.

"The handrail will be really useful for volunteers who are a bit unsteady on their feet," Julia said.

"We have a big volunteer team, including a group called Explore Leisure, who volunteer on Thursdays as part of a day placement program through the Disability Services Commission. They are among the many volunteers who will benefit from the improved access."

Published by the Department of Environment and Conservation's Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs Division, Cygnet Hall, (cnr) Mounts Bay Road and Hackett Drive, CRAWLEY, Western Australia, 6009

Managing Editor: Madeleine Clews

Editor: Rhianna King

Contributing Editors: Joanna Moore and Samille Mitchell

Design and Production: Peter Nicholas

Telephone: (08) 9389 8644

Email: ecn@dec.wa.gov.au



Big crowds at the Tree Top Walk

BUMPER crowds visited the Tree Top Walk in the Frankland District this festive season.

Business Manager Julie Ross said about 18,500 people visited the site during the December period with 8,600 in six days between Boxing Day and New Year's Eve.

"This is a great result for us given the downturn in tourism trends," Julie said.

"During 2009, we had several milestones which included welcoming the 2.5 millionth visitor in July and our 13th birthday celebrations in August.

"In addition, the Discovery Centre was opened earlier in the year and features an extensive mural depicting the Walpole Wilderness as well as plants, animals and people from different times and events, along with giant-sized invertebrates from the area."

There was also a change in visitor orientation in 2009, with new markets emerging from India and China.

"In addition, Tourism Australia's 'holiday at home' marketing campaign has seen more Australians visiting the site, particularly during the winter months," Julie said.

Products from local suppliers now make up almost half of the products in the gift shop, creating a showcase of local arts and crafts.

"We have made it a priority to raise the amount of local products sold in the gift shop as a commitment to support local artisans and this has financial flow-on effects for the local community," Julie said.

"The success of 2009 is the result of a great team effort from staff and suppliers and one which is paying economic dividends for the tourism industry across the south-west.

"We are looking forward to continuing to maintain the Tree Top Walk's marketing presence and appeal during 2010."



DEC officers Lisa McKenney and Terri Ebbett with Sharon, Cormack and Warren Pratt from Melbourne at the Discovery Centre.

Funding available for waste projects

THE first round of grants for the Strategic Waste Initiatives Scheme (SWIS) for 2010 is now open.

The grants, established to help WA achieve the vision of *Towards Zero Waste* is open to industry, local government, community groups and individuals.

Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery (WARR) Account Section Manager Tony Beeson said funding would be provided to projects that fit in with the Waste Authority's 'Priority Areas for Funding'.

"Priority areas include work in organics and source-separated greenwaste; construction and demolition waste recovery and recycling; plastics; used tyres; hazardous waste from households; and research and development," he said.

"Provided the projects fit in with these priorities, there is no maximum amount specified for each grant. In the past, about \$750,000 has been awarded in each funding round, but this figure changes depending on the calibre of applicants.

"In most cases, the projects supported will be ones undertaken and completed within a period of 12 to 24 months with achievable and measurable outcomes.

"In addition, successful projects will those considered not to be 'core business' for the applicants, but which go above and beyond to reduce waste.

Tony said a second round of funding would be offered about July 2010.

"If applicants aren't quite ready to apply for this round they have a few months up their sleeves to prepare a submission for the next round."

Applications for SWIS grants close on Friday 3 March. Applications will be assessed by a WARR assessment panel, made up DEC staff and members of the Waste Authority, which makes recommendations to be considered by the Waste Authority. It is anticipated the grant winners will be announced by the Environment Minister before July.

For more information visit www.zerowastewa.com.au or contact WARR Grants Officer Bianca King on 6467 5318 or email bianca.king@dec.wa.gov.au.

Munda Biddi makes international top 10 list

NATIONAL Geographic has named WA's premier off-road cycling trail, the Munda Biddi, as one of the world's top 10 cycling tracks in its new publication *Journeys of a lifetime*.

When completed, the trail will guide riders through a range of landscapes on its way from Mundaring to Albany. It currently stretches from Mundaring to Nannup with work to complete the third

stage, from Nannup to Albany, under way, bolstered by a \$3 million funding from the State Government's Royalties for Regions program.

DEC Recreation Activities Coordinator Stuart Harrison said the *National Geographic* publication contained 500 of the world's greatest trips and featured top 10 lists in a range of categories.

"*National Geographic* is a reputable travel

authority and it's great for the profile of the Munda Biddi Trail to be named one of the world's top 10 cycling trails," he said.

"This will further elevate its international reputation especially when it's put in the same league as the La Route Verte which travels from east to west across Quebec, the trail from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City and the route from Luchon to Bayonne in France."

Stuart said about nine per cent of trail users were overseas visitors.

"We most commonly see international visitors from New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, Singapore and France," he said.

"About 66 per cent of users are Perth-based, 15 are from country WA and 10 per cent are from interstate."

For more information visit <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com>

