



New parks to protect the Kimberley

PREMIER Colin Barnett and Environment Minister Donna Faragher have announced plans to establish four new marine parks in the Kimberley, to create the largest interconnected system of marine and terrestrial parks in Western Australia.

This interconnected system will be known as the Kimberley Wilderness Parks, a key initiative under the government's Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy.

The Premier described the announcement as one of the most significant environmental initiatives in the state's history.

"The Kimberley Wilderness Parks will cover an area of land and sea which is more than half the size of Tasmania," the Premier said.

"The creation of the Kimberley Wilderness Parks will almost treble the area of marine parks and reserves in WA, from 1.5 million hectares to 4.1 million hectares.

"The north-west Kimberley is one of the most pristine areas remaining in the world and the government is committed to protecting the natural character of the Kimberley wilderness for future generations.

"Last year we gave a commitment to establish a marine park at Camden Sound; added to this will be three new parks in the north Kimberley, at Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach.

"I am proud to say that the Kimberley Wilderness Parks will contain more than half of the known terrestrial bird and animal species found throughout the Kimberley and will

protect many unique animals including six species of rare and endangered turtles, Australian snubfin dolphins, humpback and minke whales, dugongs and sawfish."

Minister Faragher said the four new marine parks would be the first along the Kimberley coast.

"The Liberal-National Government has recognised that the Kimberley marine environment is worthy of increased protection and is making the largest single increase to marine parks in WA's history," the Minister said.

As part of the announcement, Minister Faragher released the indicative management plan for the proposed Camden Sound Marine Park and invited public comment on how the park should be managed.

"The areas selected for reservation as marine parks were identified through last year's public consultation process for the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy.

"I announced the intent to establish a marine park in Camden Sound with the Premier last October, following strong community support for increased protection of the area.

"The current proposal for Camden Sound Marine Park is almost twice the size of the proposal originally envisaged by government, and the total area of sanctuary zones in the park is the largest of any marine park in WA.

"People can make submissions until 1 February 2011 on how Camden Sound should be managed, while indicative **continued on page 2...**



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management plans for the other three marine parks will be prepared in consultation with traditional owners and other interested parties and made available for public comment next year."

Other initiatives outlined in the recent announcement were:

- creating a conservation reserve corridor linking the existing reserves at Prince Regent and Drysdale River through voluntary partnerships
- protecting Prince Regent Nature Reserve as a class A national park
- adopting a 'landscape' approach to conservation that will reach beyond park borders to protect the region's biodiversity against threats, particularly bushfire, feral animals and weeds

- investing \$10 million over four years for partnerships with traditional owners, pastoralists, conservation groups and other land managers to implement the new landscape approach
- investing a further \$2.7 million to improve visitor facilities in Kimberley parks.

The Premier said the government would release further initiatives under the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy over the coming months, following further discussions with traditional owners, landholders and the community.

More information about the Kimberley Wilderness Parks and the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy is available at www.dec.wa.gov.au/kimberleywildernessparks.



Sarah's excellence in nature conservation recognised

DEC South Coast Regional Ecologist Sarah Comer was recently announced as runner-up in the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) Medal for Excellence in Natural Resource Management (NRM).

The achievement recognises Sarah's outstanding service to nature conservation over many years.

Sarah was nominated by former department ranger Nathan McQuoid, now a landscape ecologist in Bremer Bay, and Alan Danks, ecologist, photographer and former DEC South Coast Regional Leader of Nature Conservation.

Nathan and Alan described Sarah as a nature conservation manager, ecology researcher and natural history communicator of the highest calibre.

"In her role as regional ecologist, Sarah plays a pivotal role in improving the understanding and protection of some of the most diverse ecosystems on Earth," Alan said.

"These include such extraordinary places as Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, and Stirling Range and Fitzgerald River national parks."

Over many years Sarah has coordinated, helped design and actively participated in wildlife recovery programs across the South Coast Region, making a major contribution to the conservation of many iconic South Coast species, such as the noisy scrub-bird and western ground parrot.

She also plays a significant role in a number of recovery teams, including currently being chair of the multi-species South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team and Gilbert's Potoroo Recovery Team. She is well known for her ability to encourage support and effective collaboration between a range of organisations and also mentors many young scientists.

Nathan said Sarah's work specifically included driving the progress of new ecological knowledge, promoting greater

understanding of natural systems with the community and protecting and recovering the unique and endemic plants and animals of the South Coast.

"Sarah brings broad knowledge, dedication and an infectious enthusiasm to her work and is an inspiration to all who come in contact with her," Nathan said.

Sarah said the surprising thing for her was being singled out as an individual, when she felt that really her achievements occurred when working as part of a group of highly motivated people.

"That's the great thing about DEC – it provides opportunities to be part of a team that is passionate about conservation," Sarah said.

"Really everyone deserves a medal."

The GSDC Medal for Excellence in Natural Resource Management has been running for nine years. The medal was won by Dr Geoff Woodall and was presented by the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Terry Redman.



South Coast Regional Ecologist Sarah Comer.





DEC Senior Environmental Officer Paul Newell decants methylamphetamine and hypophosphorous acid reaction mixture at a clan lab in Kenthurst, NSW, in 2008.

in a dwelling, residues containing both the drug itself as well as hazardous by-products could be spread throughout, coating surfaces and contaminating soft furnishings such as carpet and curtains.

"These residues can remain on surfaces for years and represent a very real risk to human health, particularly to young children who may live in these contaminated dwellings in future," he said.

EHOs who suspect that wastes or chemicals from clan labs have entered the environment (for example, if waste has been poured out onto soil), should contact DEC's Pollution Response Unit for advice. They may need to submit a Form 1 (report of a known or suspected contaminated site) to DEC's Contaminated Sites Branch.

Paul said signs of dumped clan lab waste included white or caustic residues or oil-type staining on the ground, areas of disturbed earth or pits with evidence of deposited waste, areas of dead grass or vegetation, disused gas cylinders and discarded chemical containers or batteries.

"One of the most important things for us, as regulators, is to ensure that houses and properties used for the manufacture of illicit drugs are dealt with appropriately to reduce the risk of harm to human health and the environment."

The guidance documents should be ready for release later this year. In the meantime, some basic information can be found in the draft guidance note *Local government possible responses to police notification of a clandestine drug laboratory discovery*, available online at www.public.health.wa.gov.au.



Highly purified crystal methylamphetamine, known as ice.

Reducing risk from drug labs

CONTAMINATED Sites Branch's Paul Newell has been a key part of an interagency team looking at how to deal with the chemical contamination associated with clandestine drug laboratories—or 'clan labs'—in WA.

The senior environmental officer has been working with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders to provide some practical assistance for local government environmental health officers (EHOs) who are called in by police to deal with the clean up of suspected clan labs.

Paul, who was recently involved in developing draft national guidelines for managing health and environmental hazards associated with clan labs, said it was an increasing problem throughout Australia.

"In WA alone, the number of clan labs discovered rose from 17 in 2000 to more than 125 in 2009," he said.

"If the current trend continues, more than 135 suspected clan labs are expected to be discovered in 2010."

He said the locations being used for the illicit manufacture of drugs in WA were almost exclusively residential dwellings,

including rental premises and even hotel rooms.

"This trend of small-scale laboratories being operated in residential dwellings poses a potential risk of harm to public health and the environment which must now be addressed by public health and environmental agencies," Paul said.

The most common drug being manufactured in these small, addiction-based laboratories in WA is methylamphetamine. The manufacture method ('Birch Reduction' or 'Nazi Method') involves using anhydrous ammonia and lithium metal to reduce pseudoephedrine, which is extracted from cold and flu tablets, to methylamphetamine.

"This drug manufacturing process is waste intensive," Paul said, "For every kilogram of methylamphetamine produced, up to 12 kilograms of waste is generated.

"Waste generated by illegal drug manufacturers, or 'cooks,' is often dumped or stored on site, posing both a public and environmental health risk."

In addition, Paul said that when drugs were manufactured



Actions to combat dieback on South Coast continue



Dr Bill Dunstan, from Murdoch University's Centre for Phytophthora Science and Management, cleaning an auger after assessing the soil profile.

A DEC coordinated fight against *Phytophthora* dieback threatening the iconic Fitzgerald River National Park has been boosted in a world first for large-scale dieback management.

The \$1.6 million containment and eradication project is funded through the state government's Natural Resource Management (NRM) program and is on the cutting edge for dieback management in natural ecosystems in Western Australia.

DEC senior research scientist Chris Dunne said the park had only three *Phytophthora* dieback-diseased areas.

"Techniques for containment and eradication include removal of host plants, control of water drainage, installation of silt membranes to contain dieback spores and infected material, targeted chemical application to kill the pathogen, fencing to reduce spread by animals, and regular application with the fungicide phosphite," Chris said.

"Containment and eradication is a new approach, with recent trials at Cape Riche conducted by scientists from Murdoch University showing a lot of promise, however this is the first time a management-scale eradication

of *Phytophthora* dieback has ever been attempted worldwide."

DEC South Coast Region manager Bruce Bone said vigilance to ensure further areas were not infected remained a key priority and testing new techniques to eradicate existing infestations was critical.

"The current dieback risk assessment and planning activities occurring across the park will culminate in a complete dieback management plan being developed and implemented. DEC is also working in partnership with South Coast NRM, local governments and other community groups to ensure dieback is effectively managed in areas surrounding the park," Bruce said.

"The management of *Phytophthora* dieback is a whole of community challenge and it is important everyone plays their part."

Visitors to the park can help reduce the spread of *Phytophthora* dieback by ensuring vehicles and footwear are clean from soil and plant material when travelling through areas of native bush, and staying away from areas with wet soil or pooling water.

Tree Top Walk an unpredictable experience

VISITORS to the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk have seen and heard much more than the magnificent shapes, movement and sounds of the tingle tree forest recently.

The Tree Top Walk welcomed Better Homes and Gardens host, DIY expert and Dancing with the Stars champion Rob Palmer for the filming of the 'best of Australia's natural landscapes' edition which aired on 22 October.

Tree Top Walk Business Manager Julie Ross said the months of preparation were well worth it for the interest, media exposure and frivolity that Rob and his production team generated on the day.

"It was a great experience for the staff and an added bonus for the many visitors who met Rob during their visit," Julie said.

"There were quite a lot of enthusiastic fans keen to get their photograph taken or have a chat to Rob—making their visit to the Tree Top Walk an even more memorable experience.

During filming Rob created a 'living bench' made from ecologically-sourced jarrah, demonstrating what the home handyman can create for Australian gardens and backyards.

"The four-minute segment created much interest and national exposure for the Tree Top Walk and the region, which is fantastic for us all," Julie said.

Julie said the Tree Top Walk will gift the jarrah bench to the Denmark Hospital for patients and visitors to enjoy.

Visitors were similarly thrilled with a Tree Top Walk performance by the Bunbury Young Voice Group.

Fifty-three students aged 10 to 16 represented schools across the Bunbury district as they took the opportunity to entertain tourists from the lofty heights of the Tree Top Walk on their south-west tour.

Julie said the excitement the young choir showed at singing on the walk was a reminder of how special the

Tree Top Walk and the Walpole Wilderness really are.

"The students received an informative briefing on the Tree Top Walk and the tingle forest by Tree Top Walk Guide Helen Nash, who also explained about the local flora and fauna of the area," Julie said.

"The students were confident performers, having staged productions in Albany, Esperance, Busselton and their home town of Bunbury. They performed songs from the Sound of Music, Walt Disney and Australiana.

"The variety of visitors that come through the Tree Top Walk means every day is different here. We just don't know who is going to turn up next!"

For more information about visiting the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk, contact Julie on 9840 8200. The Better Homes and Gardens Tree Top Walk segment can be viewed by visiting <http://au.lifestyle.yahoo.com/better-homes-gardens/tv/-/watch/22573437/living-bench/>.



A random breath test for your vehicle

DEC's Air Quality Management Branch has commenced random vehicle emissions testing at various locations throughout Perth to determine the emission performance of vehicles on the city's roads.

Media interest in the CleanRun program has been encouraging, including television news and radio interviews promoting the CleanRun message to reduce vehicle emissions.

CleanRun Program Manager Karl Carrabotta was recently interviewed on Eoin Cameron's ABC 720 breakfast program and explained the objectives of the testing program and how the remote sensor device (RSD) equipment worked, during a live broadcast from a Midland testing site.

"As a vehicle is driven through the RSD, a number of sensors are triggered to record a vehicle's speed and acceleration," Karl said.

"Exhaust emissions are measured as a vehicle drives through the infrared and ultra-violet light beam being produced

by the RSD main unit. The light beam is absorbed by pollutants in the exhaust plume.

"From the light beam measurement, we are able to measure the levels of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides and smoke being emitted by the vehicle. The RSD measures 50 samples in just half second. However, only samples with more than 10 per cent valid readings are included in the calculations.

"The driver receives instant feedback from a variable message sign located placed further down, giving the driver information on whether their vehicle was a 'good', 'fair' or 'poor' performer. At the same time the RSD camera takes a photo of the rear license plate.

"In a few months we will we receive information about the vehicles tested and their specifications from the Department of Transport (DOT). The vehicle emissions data collected will then be analysed against the DOT data including vehicle age, fuel type and engine size.



CleanRun Program Manager Karl Carrabotta with remote sensor device computer, which stores vehicle emissions data that is collected at the testing site.

"By understanding the emission performance of a range of vehicles in our fleet we can develop programs aimed at reducing vehicle emissions. We are also trying to inform the community about vehicle emission performance and what can be done to help reduce their vehicle emissions."

The CleanRun program purchased the RSD in 2008 and while it has been widely used in the USA, Western Australia is the only Australian jurisdiction to have purchased the equipment for use on our roads.

The CleanRun program, funded in part by the Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, is the key initiative for the National Environment Protection (Diesel Vehicle Emissions) Measure (Diesel NEPM) implementation in WA.

For more information on CleanRun and upcoming RSD testing locations, please contact Karl in the Air Quality Management Branch on 9333 7439.

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A vehicle travelling on Clayton Street, Midland has just registered 'POOR' on the smart sign, which means their vehicle is producing excessive air pollution and is running inefficiently.

