



New recruits make first advances in joint management

A TEAM of nine staff have joined DEC in Broome to start action on the ground as part of a historic joint agreement for management of conservation land in the area.

The group includes six Yawuru people, Broome's traditional owners who recently signed a number of Indigenous Land Use Agreements with the state government.

DEC West Kimberley District Manager Alan Byrne said the agreements came into effect on 25 August and resolved native title and heritage issues in and around Broome.

"Both parties have contributed to a benefits package for joint management of the conservation estate, to be coordinated by DEC, which is a positive step towards the coexistence and cooperation of traditional and contemporary land management practices," he said.

"There are three areas of conservation estate including in-town reserves such as Minyirr Park, out-of-town reserves such as Crab Creek and the coastal strip to the south of Willie Creek, which includes the proposed Roebuck Bay Marine Park.

"Joint management of the new estate is being steered by the Yawuru Park Council, which has three representatives each from Yawuru, DEC and the Shire of Broome.

"In-town reserves will be jointly managed by DEC on behalf of Yawuru and the Broome Shire,

while out-of-town reserves and the Roebuck Bay Marine Park will be jointly managed by Yawuru and DEC."

The new staff will carry out the on-ground works in all three conservation areas.

"So far, four trainee conservation officers, a trainee supervisor, a community education officer, an operations officer, a coastal parks coordinator and a program leader have been successfully recruited," Alan said.

"The four trainees have been employed through DEC's Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme and have already hit the ground running, learning environmental and cultural ranger duties.

"This includes vegetation surveys, weed control, supporting research activities, interpretation, sign development and installation, trail maintenance and community awareness.

"These competency based skills, in conjunction with external studies, will see the trainees progress through certificates II, III and IV in Conservation and Land Management.

"The staffing structure provides opportunities for Yawuru people to develop and progress through the positions, with the ultimate aim being Yawuru people working on, and managing, the conservation estate on Yawuru land."

For more information contact the DEC Broome office on 9195 5500.



Yawuru Joint Management staff (front row, left to right) Jason Fong, Taro Bin Amat, Corey Thorne, Curtis Robinson, (back row, left to right) Darren Stevens, Alan Byrne, Querida Hutchinson, Sharon Ferguson, Anthony Richardson and Luke Puertollano.



Minister visits Lake Clifton fire

ENVIRONMENT Minister Bill Marmion visited the fire which burnt through 1,600 hectares between Forrest Highway and Lake Clifton last week.

DEC was heavily involved in the fire which was managed initially by the Shire of Waroona before the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) invoked new legislation giving them overall control.

The fire, which stemmed from seven deliberate lightings along Forrest Highway, started just before noon on Monday but was not contained until Tuesday.

DEC's Wellington District dispatched 10 trucks from Collie and Harvey. They were later joined by DEC crews from Swan and Warren regions and Blackwood District.

FESA requested DEC's communications vehicle—Priscilla—along with portable offices, generators, marquees, mobile kitchen and other facilities which joined DEC's pre-formed gold team to run the night shift.

The cache was mobilised and set up in a rest area just off Forrest Highway within four hours. Gold team members began a

13-hour shift starting at around 9pm.

In all, DEC's staff commitment was 110 on Monday and Tuesday with 56 involved on Tuesday night and 66 on Wednesday. About 20 DEC fire trucks and three heavy earth moving machines also were involved.

DEC Fire Management Services Manager Murray Carter drove Mr Marmion to the fire on Wednesday where they were met by Fire Resources Operation Coordinator Greg Napier.

Greg gave the Minister a tour of the facilities. Norm van Boeyen from Information and Communications and Glen Bradbury from the Radio Communications Section briefed the Minister on the communications van and the spatial support system DEC uses during incidents.

The Minister also took the opportunity to meet DEC employees, including machine operators working on the ground.

FESA Incident Controller and former DEC South West Fire Coordinator John Tillman gave the Minister an overview of the fire situation.



John Tillman, Environment Minister Bill Marmion, Greg Napier and Murray Carter.

Murray said it was a great opportunity to show the Minister DEC's capacity to respond to major incidents, particularly in the context of a multi-agency response at a large scale.

"The feedback we've received is that DEC's contribution was certainly appreciated," he said.

"Many firefighters who worked on Monday returned on Tuesday and were

surprised to find a complete control centre set up.

"The fact that it took just four hours to get everything together is an outstanding effort and a tribute to the professionalism of Greg's team."

The Lake Clifton fire came just a week after DEC fire crews throughout the south-west had been battling almost 40 fires over the Christmas and New Year period.



Busy holiday season for DEC fire crews

DEC fire crews attended nearly 40 bushfires across the state over the Christmas and New Year period, including a 60-strong pre-formed incident management team which at times worked around the clock to ensure south-west communities were kept safe.

A smoke alert remains in place for areas south of Busselton as crews continue work to strengthen the southern and northern boundaries of a bushfire burning in D'Entrecasteaux National Park since 28 December.

Senior Fire Planner Roger Armstrong said the fire was initially managed by Warren Region DEC personnel and a pre-formed team that came in during the second shift.

"Once the fire was detected, a risk assessment was undertaken by local fire management staff to determine the potential of the fire to impact lives—particularly those of holiday makers in the area as well as property, infrastructure and the environment," he said.

"The first priority in any fire suppression operation is the safety of the community. The decision was made to relocate all holiday makers in the vicinity of the fire. Those in huts on the mouth of the Donnelly River could not be safely relocated, as the only way in or out of the area was via the river which was in the direct path of the fire.

continued on page 3...



...continued from page 2

"It was decided that the safest option for these people was to stay by their huts with the support of local DEC personnel flown in to assist in undertaking protective burning around the huts."

Information was provided to the public via fire alerts broadcast over ABC radio and local community networks. This information was important to warn people intending to visit the area that many of the roads and facilities had been closed.

DEC personnel checked individual camp sites and recreational facilities and informed people of the developing situation.

"There are two basic strategies for fighting fire—the first and usually the safest is to directly attack the fire starting from a safe anchor point on its down-wind tail, working up the flanks to build a control line directly against the fire and mopping up that control line as soon as possible," Roger said.

"This is a safe option because fire crews are always adjacent to burnt ground creating a safety zone.

"The other strategy involves building a control line at some distance from the flames. In these situations control lines are established along existing roads and fire is introduced very carefully to establish burnt ground between the control line and the fire edge.

"Once this was complete and the Donnelly River checked for dangerous trees, it was possible to open the river to traffic to allow people to exit the Donnelly River huts."

Community bushfire information updates and information on DEC fire management can be found on the DEC website www.dec.wa.gov.au. Go to News > Media statements > Fire updates.

Pollution response protects wetland

QUICK action by DEC pollution response officers prevented about 4,000 litres of oil reaching a wetland adjoining the Swan River in Ascot in late December.

DEC Environmental Hazards Manager Ken Raine said the oil was released into a drain leading to the wetland as a result of a factory fire at Tyre Plus.

"The oil was in plastic containers in a premises next door to Tyre Plus. The containers were burnt and released the oil," he said.

"Two pollution response officers attending the incident found that the drain led to a nearby wetland on Hay Road and immediately constructed a coffer dam with sandbags to prevent the oil from reaching the wetland.

"The oil would have had a major impact on the wetland and possibly on the Swan River.

"The oil was then removed by sucker truck and the area cleaned up to minimise any adverse effects from the spill on the wetland."



Environmental Hazards Manager Ken Raine surveys contaminated run-off water that was dammed to prevent it getting into street drains.



Pollution Response Officer Grant Hymus builds a dam to stop oil getting into wetland.



Tree Top Walk breaks attendance records



Crowds at the Tree Top Walk.

VISITORS and locals alike have converged on the Tree Top Walk in record numbers this festive season.

Tree Top Walk Business Manager Julie Ross said daily attendance numbers peaked at 2,048—a record for the walk.

“It was fantastic to achieve this result and it certainly gave us a positive end to the year and something to celebrate,” Julie said.

“Almost 18,400 people visited the site during December,



Staff members Helen Webster and Laura Grieve display some of the Tree Top Walk merchandise.

with 9,617 recorded between Boxing Day and New Year’s Eve.

“This is a great result for us given the challenges faced in the tourism industry.

“Milestones reached at the Tree Top Walk during 2010 included hosting Better Homes and Gardens as well as visits from more than 100 media and travel industry representatives.

“In addition, we were thrilled to win the Tourism Council WA Bronze Medal for Specialised Tourism Services and for Tree Top Walk Guide Helen Nash’s second placing at the FACET Golden Guide Awards.

“We were also privileged to be part of Tourism WA’s domestic marketing campaign and it is hoped that the exposure will pay dividends for us and south-west communities in the future.

Julie said that the end of year success was the result of a great team effort from staff and suppliers.

“We are looking forward to continuing to maintain the Tree Top Walk’s marketing presence and appeal during 2011 and hope to coordinate a few innovative activities during the year,” she said.

Join DEC in celebrating forests for people in 2011

THE United Nations has declared 2011 the International Year of Forests. DEC plans to use this as an opportunity to highlight the work that we do to educate the community about the biodiversity, economic, social and cultural benefits from Western Australia’s forests and woodlands. A key theme to the year is ‘celebrating forests for people’.

DEC is planning events and publications during the year to recognise and celebrate the International Year of Forests including:

- a formal launch early in the year
- the launch of a new EcoEducation curriculum package on sustainable forestry at Wellington Discovery Forest, Bunbury
- special content in *LANDSCOPE*, DECmatters and Environment and Conservation News
- presentations from DEC staff and guest speakers on forest topics.

A web page is also currently in development to provide more information about activities for the International Year of Forests.

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