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Clean Water is Biggest River Issue

Clean water, including pollution, rubbish and algal blooms, is the number one concern that Perth people have about the Swan and Canning rivers, according to a recent survey commissioned by the Swan River Trust.

The February 1999 survey canvassed the views of residents, recreation groups and river users. Sixty-seven per cent of the 400 respondents listed "water cleanliness in the river is maintained" as the main issue that the Swan River Trust should be working on. Other concerns are rubbish along the shore, and maintaining vegetation and wildlife.

These views support the priority the Swan River Trust is placing on cleaning up water quality and reducing algal blooms. The Swan-Canning Cleanup Program was launched in May 1994 in response to community concerns about algal blooms in the Swan River and toxic blue-green blooms in the Canning River. A large number of projects were funded including river and catchment monitoring,

algae and nutrient research, computer modelling of estuary processes, stormwater design and development of catchment management plans. The five-year program improved understanding of the problem and generated an Action Plan to reduce algal blooms.

The draft Action Plan was released for public comment in July 1998. The response showed considerable community interest in the future of the river. Fifty-three submissions, incorporating 350 comments, were received. The overall thrust of submissions was overwhelmingly supportive of the general direction of the Action Plan. All comments were carefully considered. Several submissions offered information or suggestions that resulted in amendments to the draft Action Plan.

The revised Action Plan will be released later in 1999. A special edition of Riverview will keep you informed about the proposals for a cleaner future for the river.

Clean up at Blackadder Creek

A group of 25 volunteers spent a fruitful few hours on Clean Up Australia Day in March removing a substantial amount of rubbish from Blackadder Creek, Midland and the adjacent reserve. The haul included the usual assortment of cans, bottles and plastic bags, car tyres and rims, a sign post and 12 shopping trolleys that had to be dug out from the mud. The group also removed more than a tonne of bamboo and castor oil plants from the creek bank. This initial clean-up and weeding effort was so positive that four local residents involved have committed to forming a Local Action Group to get together every fortnight to continue removing the huge stands of bamboo smothering the creek.

If you would like to help the Blackadder Woodbridge Creek Catchment Group, please contact Liz Western from the Swan Mundaring Community Catchment Project on 9290 6675.



Swan River Trust and Swan Catchment Centre staff (pictured) joined Catchment Group members and local residents to tackle weeds and rubbish at Blackadder Creek.

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A small number of commercial houseboats may soon be part of the landscape on the Swan River upstream of the Causeway. The Trust's new policy on commercial houseboats allows for a trial operation of up to five houseboats over five years.

There has been significant interest over the past two years in operation of commercial houseboats on the river. The Trust believes that properly managed operations may be able to overcome potential environmental problems.

The Commercial Houseboat policy was prepared after consultation with the community, local government and the Department of Transport.

The policy contains strict controls to ensure that commercial houseboats do not impact on the river environment.

The five-year trial will be supervised by the Trust and a final decision will be made on whether commercial houseboats will become a permanent feature of our rivers.

The Trust has given interested parties until 14 June 1999 to submit a proposal to operate the trial, and will invite the proponent of the most appropriate proposal to submit a formal application.

The policy does not apply to private houseboats or use of other vessels for living accommodation. It remains illegal to live on any vessel on the Swan and Canning rivers for more than six consecutive days or for more than 10 days in any 30-day period unless moored in an area approved by the Trust. The Trust has not approved any areas for this purpose because of a lack of facilities, and issues relating to residential zoning on the rivers.

Copies of the new policy can be obtained from the Swan River Trust on 9278 0400, or by visiting the Trust's web site at www.wrc.wa.gov.au/srt

Alcoa supporting urban landcare

Twenty-two urban landcare projects will soon receive about \$185 000 from Alcoa of Australia in the first round of the Swan Catchment Urban Landcare Program (SCULP).

The program is a partnership between the Swan Avon Integrated Catchment Management Program, the Swan River Trust and Alcoa. Alcoa will provide \$1.25 million over five years to support community groups undertaking landcare projects.

Guidelines for eligible projects were developed with input from community groups at a public forum in August 1998. Thirty-nine community groups applied for funding in this first round of the program, requesting more than \$500 000 in total. Twenty-two projects were selected by the SCULP Steering Committee to be the first beneficiaries of the Alcoa funding. The Committee is chaired by Pat Hart, a community volunteer who is heavily involved in integrated catchment management and a tireless supporter of landcare.

Alcoa's Public Relations Manager Brian Doy was particularly impressed by the huge interest shown in landcare by urban community groups.

"The SCULP process has reinforced my opinion that it is the general community that is really driving landcare in urban areas," Mr Doy said.

"An enormous amount of effort is being put in by catchment groups, 'Friends' groups, land conservation district committees and the wider public, to care for Perth's bushland and waterways. It's important to note that most of these groups and individuals are caring for public land too – bushland, wetlands, streams and rivers that are owned by state or local governments.

"These groups selflessly give of their time and energy to look after these environmental assets which the whole community benefits from. Alcoa is extremely pleased to be able to support their efforts by providing easily accessible funding through SCULP and I look forward to watching more incredibly worthwhile projects come to life over the next five years."

Expressions of interest for funding from the 2000 round of the SCULP will be called for in about June 1999. Enquiries can be made to Peter Nash at the Swan Catchment Centre, 9221 3840.

Aquatic weed threat to Canning River

The Swan River Trust has sprayed an infestation of the declared weed *Sagittaria* identified by Agriculture Western Australia in a drain leading to the Canning River.

Two large patches of *Sagittaria platyphylla*, containing hundreds of individual plants, were discovered in a drain near Nicholson Road Bridge.

The noxious weed can block drains and irrigation channels and could pose an



environmental threat if it becomes established in the Canning River.

The source of the invasion is not known, but many aquatic weeds enter our waterways when people empty plants from fish tanks into drains or streams.

The Trust has asked members of the public to report any sightings of suspect plants, and to avoid emptying fish or pond plants into our waterways.

Illustration reproduced with permission from Geoff Sainty and Surrey Jacobs.

Swan River Trust at work around the river

Instrument shelter for Walyunga



A 'load measuring unit' was installed at Walyunga National Park. This equipment accurately measures the load of nutrients and suspended sediments in the river. The load measuring unit triggers a water sample to be collected at certain water levels. This enables a far better estimate of loads to be calculated than was previously possible, and provides useful information for managing water quality in the Avon and Swan rivers.

Bassendean erosion control



The Town of Bassendean and Swan River Trust carried out erosion control works to protect river banks and trees along a 35 metre section of foreshore at the end of Anstey Road in Bassendean, extending along the foreshore behind houses in Daylesford Avenue. Access to the site was difficult so materials were deposited on the South Guildford side of the river and transported across to Bassendean by the Seagull barge.

Beating bamboo in Claremont



An infestation of Giant Reeds (bamboo) was removed along 160 metres of foreshore from the Claremont Yacht Club to Methodist Ladies College. An excavator was used to break the bamboo off at ground level for removal. Small stands of bamboo were removed by hand and remnants were sprayed to prevent regrowth.

The Town of Claremont and Christchurch Grammar School have agreed to follow up the initial removal by cutting and spraying the regrowth with herbicide. The bamboo had become a problem as it restricted public access and usage of the beach and foreshore. It had also become a haven for rats and was displacing native plants.

This was a pilot program to work out the best way to remove bamboo from the foreshore. The trial revealed some potential problems in stabilising the foreshore after the bamboo was removed and the Swan River Trust is now investigating the best way to manage this problem. The Trust plans to continue this weed removal program working in partnership with the Friends of the Foreshore group at Methodist Ladies College, Claremont Council and young people supervised by WESTREK International.



IRRIGATION RECYCLING PROJECT

WIN-WIN FOR NURSERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A new project to recycle nursery irrigation water and nutrients is being tested at the Gladalan Nursery in Gray Road, Armadale.

The Minister for Water Resources, Dr Kim Hames, launched the demonstration site on 18 February 1999.

The western third of Gladalan Nursery normally drains into Wungong Brook, which eventually finds its way into the Swan River. Drainage water from about one third of the nursery is collected in a sump and pumped to a storage tank where it is filtered, analysed, treated and mixed back into the bore water distribution lines.

"Recycling allows nurseries to save money through more efficient use of fertiliser and water," Dr Hames said.



Pat Hart, Chair of the Canning Catchment Coordinating Group with Ron Weaver from the Irrigation Association of WA at the project launch.

"The environment benefits because less groundwater is drawn and less nutrients drain to nearby streams and rivers where they can cause phytoplankton blooms that may be toxic to fauna and humans."

"This is an innovative win-win idea for nurseries and the environment," he said.

The pilot project was initiated by the Upper Canning/Southern Wungong Catchment Team and is supported by the Canning Catchment Coordinating Group. It is jointly funded by the Swan River Trust, as part of the Swan-Canning

Cleanup Program, Agriculture WA and the Natural Heritage Trust. The Irrigation Association of Australia, Nursery Industry Association of WA, Baileys Fertilisers, Scotts, Richgro Garden Products and local catchment groups have contributed materials and expertise to the collaborative exercise.

Living stream project



BICM Coordinator Rosemary Glass with Chisholm Catholic College students Adam Warchosa (left) and Adam Manual.

Students of Chisholm Catholic College are working with the Bayswater Integrated Catchment Management Group (BICM) and the Water Corporation to contour, landscape and plant an open drain adjacent to the college in Beaufort Street, Bedford.

The aim is to reduce nutrients in the water, restore indigenous vegetation and habitat and create a natural environment for future biological studies.

Landscape design will be carried out by students in maths classes, and science students will conduct 'before and after' monitoring of macroinvertebrates, water quality and frogs through Ribbons of Blue and Frogwatch. The college art classes will design signs and mosaic inserts for pathways, and several other classes will be involved in planting and site maintenance. BICM is providing technical expertise, class instruction and project management as well as supervising the landscape design and earthworks.

North Swan LCDC news

The North Swan Land Conservation District Committee is establishing a demonstration site for the local community at their project site on Defence Department land on the corner of West Road and Gallagher Road, Bullsbrook. The site links two bushland areas along Bulls Brook. Land along the brook will be revegetated to provide a bush corridor for native animals. About 35 people, including the First Bullsbrook Air Scout Group, attended a recent clean-up day to pull down old fences and prepare the area for revegetation.

The Defence Department is working on a catchment management plan that will include maps of soil types, streams and remnant vegetation. Plans to rectify degradation problems include fencing the stream and installing cattle crossovers and watering points.

Funding for the bush corridor has been provided by the Natural Heritage Trust, Greening WA and Alcoa of Australia with support from the Defence Department.



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