



Korrelocking burn-off



Above: Kevan Davis in front of the burn-off at Korrelocking

Nyungar Elder Kevan Davis has carried out his local project to care for the country through a burn-off at the Korrelocking nature reserve north of Wyalkatchem.

The Korrelocking reserve has been a special place to Kevan and his family for many years, a place where they would often come to relax and bring their grandchildren to play. Its gradual degradation had been observed by Kevan so he decided to do something to assist its restoration and re-vegetation.

'We've been coming out here since 1969 picking flowers such as orchids and everlastings, but they have all since disappeared. Where there used to be birds, animals and lizards they have now become very scarce' said Kevan.

The Korrelocking burn was funded through Wheatbelt NRM's small grants program in 2009. The burn is hoped to bring back native vegetation once prominent in the area.

'We think that if we could burn the country hopefully

it will allow healing and encourage new growth after a period of time. We want to see vegetation and birds come back.'

Kevan and Rose Davis along with their grandson Judd took part in the burn-off with Department of Environment and Conservation employees Graeme Keals, Allan Wolfenden, Nerys Wilkins and Nyungar Budjar carer Michael Hayden.

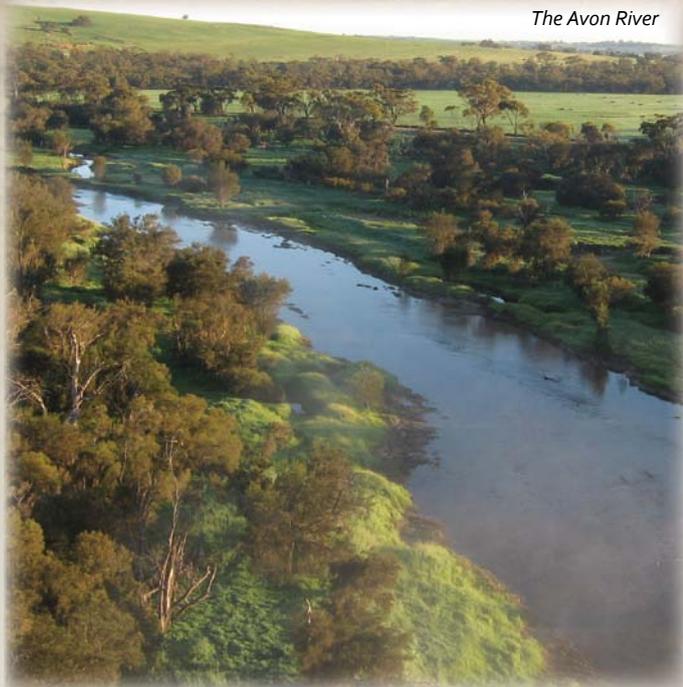
The site has been photo monitored by Wheatbelt NRM staff and follow-up monitoring will take place to record the effect of the burn-off.

'We will come back in about 12 months time to see what impact it has had and I think we will see that certain plants will come through' said Kevan.

'We are very interested and excited to see what will happen, I have people in town asking about it so hopefully this will play a part in restoring the area.'

The importance of water management planning for Avon Arc towns

The Avon River



A new State government funded initiative to develop water management plans for three Avon River towns will lead to better management of town water issues.

Over the next twelve months, the Shire of York, Toodyay and Northam will work in partnership with Wheatbelt NRM to develop water management planning strategies that will reduce contaminants in stormwater discharging from urban areas and manage environmental flows for the river.

This is important for the future protection of the ecological values of the Avon River, but also for the town itself. The growing populations of these towns and the need to review existing water infrastructure, such as stormwater drainage, puts pressure on Local governments to improve town water management systems.

The WA Departments of Water and Planning will be providing support and advice for this Wheatbelt NRM initiative and this initial work will assist in the development of a district water management strategy.

For more information please contact Liz Kington at Wheatbelt NRM by emailing: ekington@wheatbeltnrm.org.au or phone (08) 9690 2250.

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Wheatbelt NRM winter update

Welcome to another Wheatbelt NRM Newsletter with many new announcements and updates.

Our chairperson Glenice Batchelor recently attended the National Landcare awards in which Wheatbelt NRM was a finalist for the NRM region category. Unfortunately we did not win but we congratulate fellow WA region South Coast NRM who took out the Leighton Holdings Indigenous Award and Baldivis Primary who won the Westpac Education Award.

It was also great to see Linda Vernon recognized as a finalist for both the Young Landcare Leader Award and the Australian Government Local Landcare Facilitator award. Linda is a dedicated NRM professional and a huge asset to the Central Wheatbelt. Although she didn't win this time, these two nominations are testament to her outstanding achievements.

Since our last Newsletter Wheatbelt NRM was also excited to hear that four projects were successful as part of the state governments \$4.9million allocated to help local communities protect and improve their renewable natural resources. From this funding 7 projects will be located in the Wheatbelt including 4 of which Wheatbelt NRM will be proponent. These are: Riparian improvement of priority Avon River Pools Gwambygine, Red card for red fox and rabbit, Establishment of Wheatbelt Regional Biosecurity Group and Water management planning for Avon Arc towns. We also congratulate the Shire of Mt Marshall, Shire of Narembeen, Birds Australia WA and the Camm River Paleo-Valley Rehabilitation Committee for the success in their respective projects in the Wheatbelt.

We have also been busy managing several current projects and here are some quick updates:

Round three of the Soil Incentives program opens in July with \$5 000 - \$50 000 available for implementing recommended farm management practices that protect the soil resource from wind erosion.

The Recognising Woman Farmers initiative was well received with over 30 applications applying to visit Birchip Cropping Group in Victoria to talk about how they have managed with 10 years of drought. The calibre of all applications were impressive and we have pleasure in announcing the successful candidates as: Jane Mauritz (Hyden), Shauna Stone (Quairading), Ern Turner (East Pingelly), Sarah Miller (Beverley), Joanne Fulwood (Cunderdin) and Suzanne Sprig (Mukinbudin).

On a national level the Australian Government is

supporting the Landcare community to develop an Australian Framework to guide Landcare over the next 20 years. The development of this Australian Framework is your opportunity to have a say about the way forward for Landcare. We encourage you to get on the Landcare website and comment on the draft Framework by 30 July 2010.

Finally there have been some recent staff movements and we would like to acknowledge the great work of staff moving on.

Firstly Di Lovell our Aboriginal NRM Officer has recently left to work for Northam Senior High School. We would like to thank Di for all her hard work and accomplishments over the past 3 years, she will be missed by all staff. This position will be filled in the next couple of months.

Also Carla Swift our part-time communications officer will be taking up a position with WWF and we thank her for her great work in the past 6 months and wish her all the best in her new role.

We are looking forward to the rest of the year working with an active Avon River Basin Community in managing our natural resources

Kind regards,

Wheatbelt NRM

Nyungar Seasons

Djeran
April - May

Becoming cooler with winds from south-west from April to May

Makuru
June - July

Cold and wet with westerly gales from June to July



Wind Erosion funding hits the ground



Above: Ron, Jean and Ryan Lego

The Lego family at Cadoux, were just one of the twenty five successful applicants to receive funding through Wheatbelt NRM's two recent funding rounds.

Through their 'Kokardine Tank Project', the Legos will receive funding to plant 14,000 oil mallees and 26,000 sheoaks along creeklines and in blocks to stabilise soils across their farm. These will be supplemented by plantings of other eucalypts and saltbushes. The project aims to demonstrate to local farming families how integrating perennials into a farm system can achieve multiple environmental and social benefits.

Part of the Lego family commitment for receiving the funding is to hold extension activities. These will include a tree planting and educational activity about flora and fauna with local school children and a bus tour with other landholders to discuss design and establishment of perennials to achieve environmental benefits.

'We are thrilled to have been granted this significant funding and look forward to working with Wheatbelt NRM over the next few years to let others know of our successes and our challenges with this project.' said the Lego's.

Wheatbelt NRM (WNRN) received fifty-six applications over the two rounds totalling requests for over \$1.6

million. Overall twenty five applications were successful with project funding totalling close to \$750,000 for the three year projects. Recipients of the funding are obliged to share what they learn with their community and to match funding at least dollar for dollar.

Funding was available for tree cropping, grazing and cropping projects that address wind erosion issues in the Avon River Basin. Overall 280,000 oil mallees, 170,000 Sandalwood hosts, 105,000 Brushwood, 84,000 Swamp Sheoak and 120,000 saltbush seedlings were made available through WNRN funding.

Wheatbelt NRM has partnered with regionally based Natural Resource Management Officers, the Forest Products Commission, AVONGRO Wheatbelt Tree Cropping, the Oil Mallee Association, WANTFA and the Department of Agriculture and Food WA to deliver the projects.

Wheatbelt NRM's Soil Conservation Incentives Program is part of their base level Caring for our Country funding from the Australian Government. Further rounds will be available through Wheatbelt NRM for the 2011 and 2012 planting seasons. To register your interest in future funding rounds contact: Dan Ferguson at Wheatbelt NRM on 9690 2259.

Register your Interest for Round 3 of Soil Conservation Incentives Program



Kulin farmer and successful applicant of Round 2 SCIP funding Brendon Savage inspects soil moisture near his project site with Dave McFall from the Oil Mallee Association

Round 3 of the Soil Conservation Incentives Program will open to farmer groups or individuals in the Avon River Basin during July.

\$5 000 - \$50 000 is available for implementing recommended farm management practices that protect the soil resource from wind erosion.

Three main categories of project are available from which single or multiple management strategies can be selected:

- Integrating tree crops into farm systems
- Trial or demonstration of recommended grazing management practices
- Trial or demonstration of recommended cropping management practices

Applications will be assessed on the suitability of proposed works and the applicant's commitment to sharing skills and knowledge about the project with their local community. Projects will be supported up until the end of 2012 to maximize learning about the costs and benefits of incorporating the practice into a farm enterprise.

To register your interest and receive a copy of the guidelines and application contact:

Dan Ferguson on 9690 2259 or email: dferguson@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

Rochelle Horlin on 9690 2266 or email: rhorlin@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

KENNEDY BUSHLAND – A PRECIOUS RESERVE



Above: Australian Government Caring for our Country Facilitator Neil Riches with Rex and Wendy and Kennedy with WWF healthy Bushlands Officer Mike Griffiths

When Rex Kennedy returned to the family farm at south Cunderdin in 1954 after attending Ag School in Narrogin he could see the damage that was happening to the land especially erosion and salinity.

Rex's father was planning to clear bush that he had acquired in the 1930's as part of a farm abandoned during the Depression. Rex convinced his father not to clear a particular 33ha patch.

The bush was a mixture of soil types and vegetation, from weak sandy soils to rocky breakaways and gravel, Salmon gum woodlands, wandoo, tamma and heath. Rex could see salinity and soil erosion problems in neighbouring areas and realised that further clearing would just lead to more problems.

'I just thought it would be too hard to farm, it had poor soils and I thought it may increase the salt further down the hill. I thought it would be better just to leave it as it was' said Rex.

The farm was in his mother's name and when Rex married Wendy in the 1960's they purchased the farm by agreement with Rex's parents.

Over the years Rex and Wendy have come to realize just how special this bit of bush is.

As Rex recalls "Over the years different people have come to see the bush and found all sorts of interesting things there. The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) have found rare plants and it is unusual to have so many different plant types together in the one area. You can walk a short distance and it is completely different."

'I started thinking that it was pretty special and it should be protected so that in the future people can see what used to be here' said Rex.

In 2003 when Rex and Wendy retired from farming they decided that they really wanted to keep the bush and make sure it was looked after. They subdivided off the arable land and sold the farm but kept the bush for themselves. As part of that process they put a Department of Agriculture soil conservation covenant on the bush. However Rex wasn't convinced that this was enough.

Soon after, Wendy Kennedy was talking to Mike Griffiths from WWF at an event in Cunderdin and she talked about Rex's attachment to the bush and suggested that he should talk to Rex about his bush.

Over the years Mike has visited a couple of times,

KENNEDY BUSHLAND – A PRECIOUS RESERVE

wandering around this patch with Rex and Wendy and he too has come to appreciate how amazing it is.

Mike says: "The moment I first saw the bush I knew it was pretty special. I saw an incredible richness of plants and a lot of birds and wildlife, many of which are now hard to find in the district. It was obvious that a lot of these things were only hanging on here because of the bush, and if it was ever allowed to degrade would probably disappear. It's definitely worthy of first-class protection."

This year, with the commencement of the Healthy Bushland project, Mike thought it was time to revisit Rex and Wendy and talk about a conservation covenant that would fully protect the flora and fauna into the future.

Rex and Wendy were keen to proceed. Rex thought he owed it to his Mother, who right up until she died 18 months ago and aged 99, was still asking him if he had 'sorted out that bush yet.'

Mike is now arranging with the Kennedys to place a permanent DEC conservation covenant on the bush. This covenant will legally protect this important bushland oasis and its rich biodiversity for generations to come.

The Healthy Bushland team is planning some necessary management activities that will improve the condition of the bush. These may include some restoration to stop erosion caused by tracks and roadways, rehabilitation of an old gravel pit and rabbit control. It may have taken 60 years but these works and the conservation covenant will ensure the future protection of what is now known as the Kennedy Reserve.

Kennedy reserve, South Cunderdin



Long term satisfaction with discs



By Jade Dempster, WANTFA

Mike, Jeanette, Nathan, Aaron and Joanna Buegge

Location: Bruce Rock

Annual rainfall: 300mm (growing season 175mm)

Farm size: 3750 arable ha (2500 ha cropped)

Soil type: light-medium, sandplain and Sunday soils

Contact details: 9061 1298

Farming System

The Buegge's operate a 50/50 mixed farming enterprise, focusing on wheat, barley, lupins, volunteer pasture and a Dorper stud and Dorper x Damara commercial flock. They have been practicing no-till for 15 years and have recently noticed the return of native grasses which Mike attributes to minimal disturbance and no stubble burning. Mike's sons, Nathan and Aaron are now back on the farm and have a keen interest in cropping. Although the majority of growers in the area are using tynes, the Buegge's are happily 'bucking the trend' and having long term success with their Walker triple disc seeder (now Gessner specifications).

The decision behind moving to discs

The initial move to go to disc was based on the fact that Mike's father in law (John Walker) was the original designer of the Walker triple disc seeding machine. Apart from this however, they also recognised several other advantages of adopting a zero till system. Some of these were that running a disc seeder would be more economical to operate due to reduced fuel use from

lower horsepower requirements and reduced workload from greater sowing speeds. "During a 12 hour working day we can cover 200ha on one tank of fuel (1000L)", Nathan recalled. "If we were using a tyne these shorter working days wouldn't be possible." Another advantage that has been noticed since adoption of the zero till system is that there has been less runoff after large rainfall events and as a result Mike believes in the long term soil health will improve.

The disc seeder

The Buegge's disc seeder is approximately 15m (50ft) wide and is set at 20cm row spacing (8 inch). The width of the disc seeder makes operated up and back at sowing a better option as it allows for easier turning and better tracking. Large paddocks and relatively flat terrain also makes working up and back more efficient. Each module consists of a large diameter rippled leading coulter followed by paired double discs and a wide press wheel immediately behind. This arrangement offers good cutting ability and crop safety. The modules are fitted under two ranks offering excellent access beneath the bar. Sowing depth can be easily adjusted on this disc seeder by hydraulic operated coulters and a slot depth gauge for the press wheels. "It doesn't take long for us to make adjustments to a module which is handy as we tend to seed shallower in wet conditions and deeper in dry conditions," Mike said.

Challenges

Since the seeder was purchased second hand in 2007 it has only undergone simple modifications. "The original Walker bar design was relatively suited to our country, however we identified that there were some easy

Long term satisfaction with discs

Mike Buegge alongside his bar which was being maintained ready for seeding.



changes we could make to improve its performance.” Mike said.

To improve weed control higher operational speeds have been selected. “In the first few years we had been travelling at 10-12km/h, but now operate at 15km/h as this provides us with good incorporation,” Mike highlighted. “To reduce weed competition in crop however I always try to apply a double knock and use a pre emergent spray of either Boxer Gold (2L/ha) or Trifluralin (1.5L/ha).” The main weeds the Buegge’s contend with are barley grass, spear grass and ryegrass. Interestingly silver grass is no longer a problem since refraining from burning. Although the majority of the soils of the property as light to medium there have been instances in wet condition that some soils have been difficult to handle. “For example penetration can be difficult in our Sunday soil country after a rainfall event, so we try to keep sheep off these areas to reduce packing,” Mike mentioned. To avoid problems in the wet the Buegge’s have also added scrapers between the double discs to minimise clogging from mud and changed to soft rubber press wheels to avoid build up.

Although the occurrence of fertiliser toxicity is rare, this summer the Buegge’s fitted extra hose holders to convert the bar from single shoot to double shoot. The main reason for this was to enable fertiliser to be placed below the seed for improved crop establishment and fertiliser efficiency gains.

Maintenance

The Buegge’s have found the main strength of the Walker triple disc to be that it is easy to use and easy to maintain. “Recently we took off all the bearing caps to check whether for any wear,” Mike said. “To our surprise they were still holding up strong.” Mike believes that the bearings have never needed replacing due to the fact they are well sealed and capped. They also get good use from recycling their coulters. Rippled coulters are purchased new at 21cm then after one season they generally wear down to 18cm and are used as double discs. “We normally get three years out of our double discs and then throw them out for scrap metal once they wear down to 16cm.”

Protection for endangered Wheatbelt flora

Rob Boase on his property south west of Dowerin



A Wheatbelt farming couple has made a discovery of at least 10 rare and endangered plants on their property south west of Dowerin.

Rob and Beth Boase said they found the flora on 250 hectares of Banksia woodland surrounding a natural saline seep or wetland, considered the only one of its kind left in the state.

“We have found at least eight endangered and two rare plants, not to mention water birds like the Australian Spotted Crake, not seen this far inland before,” Rob Boase said.

“Because of land clearing and the introduction of weeds and sheep, species like the one sided bottle brush or *Calothamnus Brevifolius* found here, have been placed on the endangered list.”

The couple owns a native tree nursery, and has taken measures to protect the bush land that exists on their property.

“With our background, we saw the value of this wetland, and wanted to protect the rare and endangered flora that rely on it,” Rob Boase said.

The couple has now decided to place a voluntary conservation covenant on the land.

This has been negotiated with the help of natural resource group Wheatbelt NRM, WWF – Australia and Greening Australia through the Healthy Bushland project, funded by the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country program.

Rob Boase said the covenant would help protect the threatened ecological community.

“We weren’t worried about a covenant being placed on our property, because it wouldn’t affect our farming land,” Rob Boase said.

“We also think that in the future it could help to increase the value of the land, because of the small amount of remnant vegetation left in the Wheatbelt.”

WWF – Australia’s Phil Lewis said the number of private landholders wanting to enter into voluntary conservation covenants was increasing.

He said he hoped Rob and Beth Boase’s discovery would inspire other people with significant areas of natural bush to investigate the idea of a covenant.

People interested in conservation covenants can contact Phil Lewis on 9681 1152 or Mike Griffiths on 9690 2250.

Building knowledge and skills in the Wheatbelt with Community Small Grants

Emma Wilson with the Kulbardi film crew in Quairading as part of the 2009 community small grants for Banksia Cuneata Filming



Interest in the 2010 round of Community Small Grants has demonstrated that Wheatbelt locals are committed to building their capacity to manage the environment and live sustainably.

After receiving an overwhelming response to the 2010 call for Community Small Grant applications, twenty-one projects were selected to receive grants ranging from \$1,500 to \$15,000.

Projects will enable community groups and schools to engage volunteers and students to get hands-on involvement in an environmental project. Projects that attracted funding in 2010 were able to demonstrate a strong commitment to share the knowledge and skills gained from their project amongst the wider community thus creating a ripple of growth in community skills, awareness and participation levels.

Wheatbelt NRM is particularly delighted by the number of schools wanting to get involved in environmental projects with their students. The future of our wheatbelt community is in good hands when local children grow up to value our natural environment and have the skills to make it happen! An example of this is building community health by learning how to produce and eat fresh foods grown locally in healthy soils that recycle precious nutrients.

The types of projects funded range from sustainable school vegetable gardens, river health science activities

and native "waterwise" garden development, through to production of educational media such as a children's book detailing the unique life-cycle of the rare 'Arid Bronze Azure Butterfly' and educational DVD's that tell the story of successful Wheatbelt Tree Cropping farmers and local Sandalwood industry development.

Other interesting activities include a Bush Tucker garden at Northam High School, a Nyungar six seasons garden walk adjacent to the York Residency Museum, and a Natural Sequence Farming field day in Mukinbudin with Peter Andrews who advocates a farming sequence that aims to return the Australian landscape back to its original condition. The Gwambygine Pool Conservation Reserve Invertebrate Survey Report will soon be completed and made available to schools and libraries as a knowledge building tool that highlights the important role that invertebrates play in ecosystem health.

The 2011 round of Community Small Grants will be released during September 2010 to enable groups to develop high quality revegetation projects, using locally collected seed able to be pre-ordered in time for the 2011 planting season. If you have a project idea aimed at building knowledge in your community then contact Liz Kington, Sustainable Communities Program Manager on (09) 96902250.

For a list of 2010 projects please see back page

Community Small Grants successful applicants

- Invertebrate Survey of Gwambygine Pool Conservation Reserve – **River Conservation Society**
- 'Changing Landscapes – Wheatbelt Tree Cropping Farmers tell their stories' – **AVONGRO Wheatbelt Tree Cropping Inc.**
- Waterwise Community Garden adjacent to Bridgeley Community Centre – **Northam Church of Christ Inc.**
- Bolgart Primary School's Local Vegetation Program 2010 – **Bolgart P+C Association.**
- York DHS Environmental Sustainability – incorporating **Ribbons of Blue.**
- Yelbeni Community Biodiversity Restoration Project – **Yeelanna Catchment Group**
- Awareness and Education of the Rare and Endangered Arid Bronze Azure Butterfly – **Mukinbudin Conservation Group Inc.**
- Extension of vegetable garden and worm farm – **Meckering Primary School**
- Bencubbin Beautification – **Lake McDermott Catchment Group**
- Mukinbudin DHS Garden Rehabilitation for education program – **Mukinbudin P+C**
- Establishment of a Bush Tucker Garden – **Northam SHS**
- Redevelopment of Gabby Quoi Quoi Lookout – **Gabby Quoi Quoi Catchment Group**
- DVD Landscape scale revegetation using sandalwood – **Australian Sandalwood Network**
- Sustainable Kitchen Garden – **Moorine Rock Primary School**
- Ballardong Noongar Budjar Museum Interpretation project , phase 2 – **York residency Museum**
- Rivers of Blue study of the Avon River Basin – **Avonvale PS**
- School visits to Mt Stirling – **Avon Valley Environmental Society**
- Mukinbudin Natural Sequence Farming Field Day – **Avon Catchment Natural Sequence Association Inc.**
- Restoration of Nungarin Heritage and Nature Trail – **Nungarin Community Development Group**

How well is your land functioning?

Greening Australia recently hosted an introductory training session on a method of monitoring called 'Landscape Function Analysis' or LFA, developed by David Tongway, distinguished retired CSIRO scientist.

LFA provides a practical way of monitoring how well a system is functioning in the landscape. It can be used:

- Prior to mining or before an intervention takes place to provide valuable baseline information
- To assist in designing restoration activities, including prioritising where to begin, what types of activities are needed and how much it will cost
- During rehabilitation, to measure how well the system is functioning and whether it is succeeding or failing, providing much more detail than seedling survival.
- To provide evidence to funding bodies for accountability
- To examine the functional role of key species in a system, including for culturally significant species.

LFA uses 11 simple visual indicators to assess how well an ecosystem is working and can be applied to a wide variety of landscape types and uses. It has been used to monitoring the WA Rangelands since 1994, and has been used across Australia, as well as in South Africa and New Guinea. For more information on LFA, visit the Wheatbelt NRM website at www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/projects/monitoring-and-evaluation/



wheatbelt
natural resource
management

PO Box 311
Northam WA 6401
www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au

Phone 08 9690 2250
Fax 08 9690 2255
info@wheatbeltnrm.org.au