

ECA WA News

Quarterly newsletter of the Environmental Consultants Association (WA)
ISSUE 02 Summer 2012-2013



2012 ECA (WA) Inc Christmas Sundowner

21 November 2012 at Zamia Café, Kings Park and Botanic Gardens

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Above: Renee Young (from left), Mike Scanlon, Michael Curran, Dean Main, Mimi D'Auvergne and Kellie Honczar.

Left: Damian Grose (from left), Andrew Mack and Keith Lindbeck.

Below: David Rivers (from left), Charlie Welker, Rob De Roach, JJ Rao, Judith Ruppert and Jason Hart.

Autumn ECA WA News

Autumn ECA WA News contributions should be sent to ECA Editor Jo Tregonning at
editoreca@iprimus.com.au by
Friday 8 March 2013.

ECA WA News is a quarterly publication of the Environmental Consultants Association (WA) Inc (ECA). It aims to inform members on the activities of the ECA and its members, events and training, and developments in the environmental industry. The views and opinions expressed in the articles in ECA WA News are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the ECA.



At the office in the Mid West

By Matthew Cann

Graduate Environmental Scientist, AECOM

Working in the environmental consulting game sometimes means we have to put things like social lives, friends and life on hold for a while to get our job done. To be honest, I think it's completely worth it.

On level 2 of the GPO building in Perth, where the hard-working environmental consultants of AECOM are busy on reports and the like, there is a tradition – when a job is won, a bell is rung and the job announced. This action always generates interest and sometimes it stokes applause. A spring scheduled job can prompt excitement yet also a feeling of malaise, as this time of year means field work – and lots of it.

AECOM had won the second round of spring targeted flora surveys for the Oakajee Port and Rail, some 900+ km worth of transects **on foot**. Approach? Five o'clock sunrise starts and an average walk of around 14 km a day – on every day that our team was mobilised. This was set to be a long five weeks. My colleague next to me set the mood for some with, "There goes our social life for a month."

The Oakajee Port and Rail surveys took me and the team to Mid West WA. Having completed the first round of surveys in 2011, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what was ahead of us; *Acacia*, *Eremophila*, grass, goats and flat open country. The sight of just a small rise would excite me! This time round though, I was in for a bit of a surprise.

We began the survey at Jack Hills, a range most well-known for containing some of the oldest rocks on earth, at around 4.4 billion years old. We were escorted to the top of one of the more prominent hills in the area to identify a rare species of flora growing there. I was hopeful for a good view from the summit and I wasn't disappointed. The surrounding flat landscape meant unobstructed views to the horizon in almost 360 degrees. It's a shame plants can't see because this rare species has one mighty fine vista.

As we headed further south and towards the coast, the landscape began to return to the Mid West I knew. Day after day we found ourselves in the same vegetation, crossing the same dry river beds full of fresh animal tracks from the previous night's hunting and foraging. I began to wonder whether the sights had peaked at Mount Matthew. On the second last day of our survey, as we were burning the last of our energy, the station owner showed me that this monotonous landscape indeed had hidden treasures. After driving through what looked like the same open lightly-wooded plains we had been surveying for weeks, we turned off the track and drove for 200 metres. The sight that unfolded was one I will remember



Mt Matthew - a lone Acacia perspective.
Photo – Matthew Cann

forever. A huge breakaway fell away from us, and within the crater-shaped hole, drainage lines ran down and eucalypts grew. It felt....comfortable. I had the feeling I was sharing in a secret that only few before me had ever experienced

As the sun went down I paused for a while, took in my surroundings and reflected. Yeah, we can't always make every get together, party, family occasion or night on the town but it is visits to places like these that make my job worth it, and then some.



Treasures such as this breakaway on a station in the Mid West await if you know where to look. Photo – Matthew Cann

Ray Hart Memorial Scholar



Stefan emerges from the waters of Geographe Bay, Dunsborough as part of his latitudinal study of canopy forming seaweed recruitment.
Photo – Thibaut de Bettignies

Stefan Andrews was awarded the Ray Hart Memorial Scholarship in July 2012 in recognition of his extensive commitment to fieldwork and his multidisciplinary approach to ecological research.

Stefan moved to Perth in late 2011 to start research on subtidal habitat forming seaweeds as part of his honours degree at the University of Western Australia. In early 2012, Stefan focused his research towards a widespread endemic seaweed *Scytothalia dorycarpa* which had retracted from its northern distributional limits following a marine heat wave in the waters off south-western Australia. Stefan characterised the

reproductive timing of adults, explored the thermal sensitivity of sensitive microscopic early post settlement stages and quantified recruitment densities along the unique latitudinal temperature gradient of the Western Australian coastline. Results confirmed suggestions that the early life history stages of this seaweed were particularly sensitive to temperature and the species may act as a valuable indicator for climate related ecosystem stress in temperate Australian waters.

For more information contact Stefan at 21086444@student.uwa.edu.au.

2013 Ray Hart Memorial Scholarship

If you would like to contribute to the Scholarship fund you can download the donation form at www.eca.org.au.

Students wishing to apply for the scholarship can obtain more information by contacting Sophie Peoples on 6488 8071 or sophie.peoples@uwa.edu.au.

YECA is launched

By Judy Ruppert

The Young Environmental Consultants Association (YECA) is a subgroup of ECA (WA) targeted at young professionals with less than three years of work experience. The main purpose of YECA is to provide a platform where young and future environmental consultants can gain valuable business and industry-specific skills which are not necessarily taught at university or work. This for instance will include presentations and workshops about useful business skills such as time and project management as well as industry specific topics such as Strategic Environmental Assessments.

YECA's first event will be held in February 2013. It will provide an opportunity to network and will run on the principles of a

'speed dating night' with the topic 'What it is like to be an environmental consultant?'

Ideally, attending these workshops will be integrated with company professional development programs so graduates can earn 'professional development points' when participating in such events. Apart from presentations and workshops, YECA will represent a perfect medium for networking amongst young and more experienced consultants which will provide the basis of a mentoring program.

The YECA committee is comprised of seven young consultants from various environmental consultancies in Perth:

- Judy Ruppert (360 Environmental) – Chair
- Adelaide Bevilaqua (Oceanica) – Marketing and Communications

- Kristen Radnidge (SKM) – Event Manager
- Matthew Cann (AECOM) – Event Management Support
- David Rivers (Oceanica) – Membership Coordinator
- Jeevarayan Rao (360 Environmental) – IT and design
- Katharine Cox (Oceanica) – Treasurer

For more information on upcoming events or the mentoring program email judyruppert@360environmental.com.au.



Photo Story: *As environmental consultants, we work behind the scenes to achieve the best outcomes possible for our clients and the environment. But every now and then, we get the chance to be involved in something remarkable. Initiating the opportunity to move a giant boab tree from the Kimberley to Kings Park is one of my career highlights.*
Photo – Jamie Shaw (Associate Director , Environment, AECOM) July 2008

11th Environmental Assessment Training for Practitioners

5–6 November 2012

Notes by Adam Gartner (Oceanica Consulting)

The 2012 Environmental Assessment Training for Practitioners Course was held at the Vines Resort. Dr Angus Morrison-Saunders (Course Coordinator, Murdoch University) provided lectures, case studies and role playing opportunities (from multiple perspectives of the EIA process) with energy aplomb. This was an excellent achievement given the extensive coverage of the EP Act that was addressed during the two days.

Although the course was intended for newer and less-experienced practitioners wishing to gain a solid overview of the EIA

process in Western Australia, it also delivered on its aim to offer more experienced practitioners a refresher and highly relevant discussion on recent changes to the EIA process, such as the new State government policy on environmental offsets. As with most previous years, the course was attended by a full house of enthusiastic consultants, with highlights including excellent representation of OEPA officers among the course attendees, opportunities to network with industry colleagues and clients, and several entertaining and informative talks from leading industry experts, such as Barbara Brown from Sinclair Knight and Merz.

I think all who attended would agree, the course offered an excellent 'marriage' between academic theory and real world problem solving, delivered in a format that found the right balance between general understandings and unravelling some of the complexities of the EIA process.

Photo Story

Have you taken a ripper photo and have a great yarn to tell about the photo? We'd like to hear from you! Photos and accompanying stories will feature in *ECA WA News*. ECA members will have the opportunity to vote and the winning entry will be announced at the 2013 ECA (WA) Inc. Annual General Meeting. Please send your photo and story to Jo at editoreca@iprimus.com.au.

The partnering agreement signed in 2005 between ECA (WA) Inc. and Office of the Environmental Protection Authority (OEPA) (formerly EPASU) aims to jointly support regular training courses on EIA in Western Australia.

Some past workshop overheads are available at www.eca.org.au/downloads.

Offsets Workshop

18 October 2012

Notes by Danika Taylor (GHD)

The Environmental Consultants Association (WA) hosted a one day workshop at Technology Park in Bentley to clarify the recent offset policy developments at the State and Federal level. There is obviously much interest in this topic with around 140 people in attendance.

The workshop aimed to provide consultants and proponents with an insight into Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) expectations, the roles of various stakeholders, and the preferred negotiation process under the new offset policies released by EPA and SEWPaC in October 2012.

The audience heard from a range of speakers including representatives from the EPA, Office of the EPA (OEPA), Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and SEWPaC, as well as hearing consultant and proponent perspectives on the recent policy changes.

State Policy

Presentations from EPA Chairman Dr Paul Vogel and OEPA's Naomi Arrowsmith provided a comprehensive overview of the EPA's *Draft Environmental Assessment Guideline for Environmental Offsets* and application of offsets through Part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. The draft guideline aims to deliver offsets that will achieve best environmental outcomes focusing on biodiversity values, rather than a preference for direct land offsets targeting specific species or values.

DEC staff, Jane Clarkson and Nic Woolfrey, outlined how the offset policy impacted existing legislative process and other management frameworks. Jane discussed offsets in relation to native vegetation clearing and that offset requirements would continue to be determined on a case by case basis. Nic examined the offset policies in relation to existing plans and strategic policies such as threatened species recovery plans, area management plans and *Draft – A 100-year Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Western Australia: Blueprint to the Bicentenary in 2029* (2006).

Dr Ray Masini of OEPA provided a case study regarding a strategic approach to addressing offset via the WAMSI dredging science node. This approach recognises the significance that scientific uncertainty plays in environmental impact assessment; and the value coordinated research can provide to proponents, regulators and stakeholders. The aim of this research is to reduce uncertainty, which in turn will reduced risk and result in better environmental outcomes.

Federal Policy

Kelly Pearce of SEWPaC presented on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 Environmental Offsets Policy*. It includes a new requirement for direct offsets to account for at least 90% of an offset package. A demonstration of the impact and offsets calculators was provided to demonstrate how impacts of an action are quantified and offset requirements are calculated. The audience was warned that the offset calculator was normally presented to smaller groups over several hours... and I think most of us understood why after the presentation.

Although at first glance an offset such as a contribution to WAMSI does not appear consistent with Federal policy, in some circumstances the level of scientific uncertainty may be so high that it is not possible to determine a direct offset that is likely to benefit the protected matter. This may become more apparent over time as these types of offsets are proposed.

Consultant and Proponent Perspective

Darren Walsh and Kane Moyle presented a consultants and proponents perspective of the offset policies released, respectively. These presentations articulated that offsets are now a normal consideration in the environmental approvals process, but even with the new policies, offset negotiations would most likely continue to be protracted due to it not being an exact science, costly for the proponent and complicated due to the divergent positions at the State and Federal level.

The workshop also provided an opportunity for numerous questions from the floor, in addition to the networking opportunities for consultants, regulators, and proponents throughout the course of the day. The

workshop was closed with sundowner drinks and great food.

A video of this workshop is available at <http://vimeopro.com/studiovideos/offsetsworkshop/page/1>. SEWPaC's offset policy can be downloaded at www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/environmental-offsets-policy.html and the State offset policy at https://consultation.epa.wa.gov.au/policy-and-guideline-development-and-review/eag_offsets/consult_view.



Hon Bill Marmion (MLA, WA Minister for Environment) (Above from top) opened the offsets workshop and Ian Le Provost (ECA WA President) gave the welcome and introduction. Dr Paul Vogel (EPA Chairman) and Kelly Pearce (SEWPaC Regulatory Reform Taskforce) presented a State and Federal perspective respectively.



Nuytsia floribunda post fire located 50 km east of Esperance. Photo – Jo Tregonning

ECA WA
wishes you a
happy and
safe
Christmas
and New
Year.

Conferences / training in early 2013

Late January or early February 2013

PATN Training Course, Gaia Resources, Leederville

A two-day course on how to get the most from PATN – a comprehensive and versatile pattern analysis software package often used in WA for vegetation analyses. Cost: TBC (dependent on number of participants). For bookings/registration contact Tom Brownlie on 08 92277309 or tom@gaiaresources.com.au.

Friday 1 February 2013

2012 Wetland Management Conference, Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre

The conference will feature keynote and poster presentations, concurrent workshop sessions and interpretive tours of local restoration sites. For more information contact Denise Crosbie on 9417 8460 or denise@cockburnwetlands.org.au.

18–22 February 2013

Global Herbicide Resistance Challenge Conference, Perth. Visit www.herbicideresistanceconference.com.au.

Apps

Michael Morcombe eGuide to the Birds of Australia for iPhone and iPad contains illustrations, descriptions, distribution and bird song for each species. RRP \$31.99. Available online www.mydigitalearth.com and iTunes stores.

ClimateWatch FREE iPhone app enables you to record the seasonal behaviour of plants and animals to help scientists understand how Australia's environment is responding to climate change. Listen to bird, frog and mammal calls to help identify species. Record your observations through GPS, date and time stamps in real time even if you have poor mobile signal. Available online at the App Store.

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Previous editions of ECA WA News

From September 2012 the Environmental Consultants Association WA commenced publishing a quarterly newsletter *ECA WA News*. Past editions of this newsletter can be found at <http://www.eca.org.au/downloads>.

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