



From the Regional Manager's Desk

Palya!

The Alinytjara Wilurara (AW) region has gone through some major changes over the past year. The Department of Environment, and Natural Resources amalgamated with the Department of Water on 1 July to form our new Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR). With full transition complete all Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources (AW NR) staff are now employed by DEWNR. As such we will continue to deliver *Caring for Country* projects and implement the AW NRM Regional Plan in partnership with the AW NRM Board, communities and other stakeholders.

DEWNR's message is to...

increase our focus on managing the state's natural resources in close partnership with regional stakeholders and communities

Regional DEWNR Natural Resource Centres that support local interaction are opening across South Australia with the Natural Resources Centre to be opened in mid October in Ceduna. This service centre will accommodate both AW and Eyre Peninsula staff who will increasingly be working in partnership across the AW region.

In late June, our Adelaide office moved to the Waite Institute (Waite

Road, Urrbrae) where we are in close proximity to State and Federal Government partners (also located at the Waite). This will assist us in strengthening partnerships and delivery arrangements.

The Waite is located amongst beautiful surrounds, and we encourage our regional partners to drop in whenever they come to the big smoke.

We also have some significant changes in staff. We will be welcoming our new and very experienced Regional Manager to the team in October, we have a new Regional Project Officer, Nathan Williams who recently started in Ceduna and who by all reports is doing an exceptional job and Helen Donald, our new Communications/ Executive Officer who has hit the ground running liaising and supporting the AW NR Board, managing our publications and generally looking for ways to raise the profile of the AW region and the NR work being done there.

Despite the challenges which change inevitably brings, I believe the new department provides a perfect framework for delivering community based *Caring for Country* in the AW region. In fact, I would go as far to say that the AW region is leading the state in engaging and employing Aboriginal communities in *Caring for Country* and NRM projects, which will hopefully lead to long-term employment and broader community development. The AW NR Board, AW Regional Management Team and AW staff have all been working tirelessly to develop

strong partnerships with Aboriginal stakeholders and communities across the region. Some of the fantastic outcomes which have been delivered are highlighted in this newsletter.

Personally, I am extremely excited about what the next 12-24 months holds for the AW region. Enjoy!

Matt Ward

*A/Regional Manager
Natural Resources - Alinytjara Wilurara
DEWNR*

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Fire Management Strategy draft for the AW Region



Buffle Grass burning at Umuwa

The Alinytjara Wilurara Fire Management Strategy has been developed to help facilitate fire management planning across the AW NRM Region.

Nine different landscapes have been defined, according to biogeographic, soil and land types to make fire management more practical across the AW region's 28.5 million hectares.

Two landscapes, the Bunda Cliffs and Yalata coast, including marine areas in the Regions boundaries, are not discussed in the fire strategy.

The AW Fire Management Strategy provides a framework for Anangu (referring to any Aboriginal person with an interest in the AW Region in this strategy) to develop fire management plans and/or annual work programmes for seven Fire Management Landscapes in partnership (ngapartji-ngapartji) with supporting agencies.

The fire management strategies are developed using a risk-based, landscape-scale approach to address life and property, cultural and ecological protection needs and combines traditional ecological knowledge and scientific information to support contemporary Anangu aspirations and protect and enhance biodiversity.

Objectives of the Fire Management Strategy

1. **Support Anangu Fire Management aspirations**
 - Support the integration and continuity of traditional knowledge into fire management in the region
 - integrate active management with natural fire events to maintain and improve the viability of native species, populations, communities and habitats in the strategy area
2. **Protect Life and Property**
 - minimise the risk that bushfire poses to life and property, including significant infrastructure, within the strategy area
 - develop community awareness and education strategies
3. **Protect Areas of Cultural Significance**
 - ensure that sites and areas important in Anangu culture are protected from the threat of bushfire
4. **Manage Fuels on a Landscape Scale**
 - reduce likelihood of whole reserve and/or area of contiguous native vegetation burning in single bushfire event
5. **Protect and Enhance Biodiversity**
 - protect important habitats and provide for the protection of fauna and flora species of cultural and conservation significance at a landscape scale
6. **Identify Training, Resource and Infrastructure Requirements**
 - identify training, equipment and staffing requirements.
7. **Identify Suppression Considerations**
 - identify existing response plans and associated suppression considerations.
8. **Manage Fire Risk and Public Access**
 - identify visitor management issues
9. **Manage Post-fire Rehabilitation and Recovery**
10. **Manage Adaptively**
 - manage adaptively by continuously improving knowledge of fire regimes required by species, populations, communities and habitats through ongoing monitoring and research.

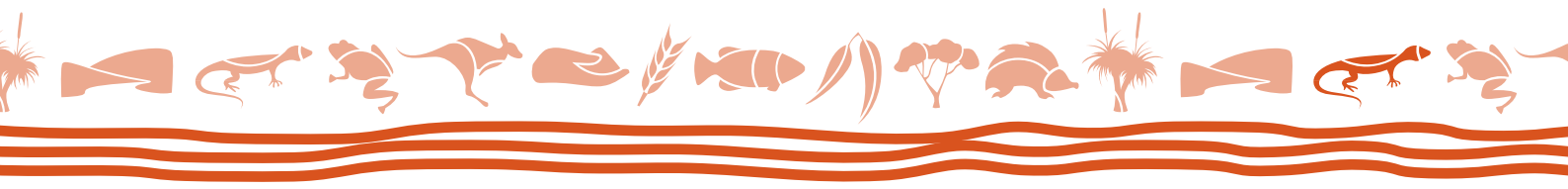


As Dr. Malcolm Gill, Australia's pre-eminent contemporary fire ecologist, has suggested that:

The possibility of emplacement of 'traditional' fire regimes...., through the restoration of cultural practices, depends on the legacy of traditional knowledge and its application within a context of changed landscapes, changed cultural mores and contemporary management aspirations.

(Gill 2000, pg 5)

On DEWNR managed reserves within the strategy area standard DEWNR fire management policy and procedure will be applied, where appropriate and in accordance with existing reserve management plans.



It is not the intention of this strategy to replace or direct cultural fire management activities undertaken by Anangu on Anangu lands, whether carried out by traditional or contemporary means. Rather, this strategy seeks to support the integration and continuity of traditional knowledge within fire management in the region, based upon contemporary Anangu aspirations and the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity.

On Anangu owned land, it is the Anangu owners who must have final say about the management of their country, and be supported to implement their plans by relevant land management agencies. It is important that all agencies work together to build trust and collaborate effectively, to provide the best possible support to Anangu. This includes sharing resources and information, and working with landowners and their organisations to make equitable and accepted resource allocation decisions.

On country that is to be jointly managed, it is vital that the process of joint management - Tjungaringu in Anangu - “reinforces Nguraritja (Aboriginal traditional owners) as the custodians and interpreters of their own culture, and advocates for the own social and economic interests”

Consultation with Anangu on the draft plan is about to begin with their comments, additions and changes being incorporated into the document before the standard public consultation process is undertaken.

For further information on the Strategy, please contact
 Joe Stelmann
 AW Regional Fire Officer

Email: joe.stelmann@sa.gov.au
 Phone: 08 83039711
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Teaming up to take care of Googs Lake, Yumbarra Conservation Park

Just a few hours’ drive north of Ceduna, is the entranceway to the largest remaining continuous Mallee ecosystem in Australia: Yumbarra Conservation Park and Yellabinna Regional Reserve. As well as being a significant biological corridor, these lands are inextricably linked to culture, with a living-connection to country sustained by the aboriginal people of the region, including numerous sacred sites such as rock assemblages and rockholes.

Googs Lake is a significant salt lake within Yumbarra, a place loved by many for the unique wilderness camping experience it provides. Over the years, locals and rangers have noticed that the area around the lake is becoming degraded, with unrestricted and uninformed 4WD access causing damage to important cultural sites, and to fragile native habitats.

Eyre Peninsula Ranger Tammy Cox, AW staff Ollanta Lipcer, Phil Landless, The West Mallee Protection group and local volunteers have teamed together to revegetate and rehabilitate the area around the lake and to protect and promote the special place that it is.



Preparing old tracks for re-vegetation



Aaron Birnell closing old tracks

In June this year they spent 5 days working at the lake, closing old tracks, and working to promote the regeneration of local species around the lake. There were kids, volunteers and local trainees all pitching in, closing old tracks, scattering seed, clearing up rubbish, monitoring weeds, and cultivating the soil to encourage some natural regeneration.



Example of a steep and dangerous track, causing vehicle damage to Googs Lake – now closed for re-vegetation



Mamungari Big Women's Trip

Minmya Tjutaku Manta

Ollanta Lipcer
Community Programs Coordinator

Traditional owners and elders from the areas surrounding Mamungari Conservation Park have expressed how important it is for women to be supported to get back to this country to visit sacred sites, teach young women, share knowledge and make sure these sites are cared for.

Along with the Mamungari Co-management Board, the Ceduna Aboriginal Arts and Culture Centre and all the Communities' help, AW NR are supporting a trip in September for women from Ceduna, Koonibba, Scotdesco, Yalata, Oak Valley and Tjuntjuntjara (WA) to re-visit women's sites of cultural significance around Mamungari Conservation Park – The Serpentine Lakes area.

From the beginning, this has been a community led project, with many people involved in the planning and advising. In May, Mima Smart and Lena Taylor helped to get women together to talk and plan for this big trip. There were 12 women from Yalata and Oak Valley, including Ada Hart and Margaret May and AW NR staff. We spent three days out on country, planning the trip and discussing its importance, as well as digging for maku and making bush medicine. Rita Bryant named the trip: Minmya Tjutaku Manta miil-miil, many women's sacred ground.

In July, Ada Hart, Margaret May and Cindy Watson took us out to find a suitable site for all of the women to camp at. We chose a base camp, and visited some of the sites we will be travelling to on the big trip. On the way we spoke to women in Tjuntjuntjara about the trip, and checked all the roads to make sure that the way there will be safe for all of us to travel.



Planning where the camp site will be

With only weeks to go before we set off, we are all working hard to make sure that this trip is a success - helping to bring women together to share knowledge and care for country.



Planning where to set up the camp site



Traditional bush tucker, Witchetty grubs

Rockhole recovery

Over the Easter Break 50 participants travelled the sandy tracks of the Yumbarra Conservation Park and the Yellabinna Regional Reserve for another successful Rockhole Recovery trip.

This ongoing program focusing on the cultural and ecological care of surface waters was initiated and implemented by Kokatha Mula (FWDAC) and West Mallee Protection and is supported by the Alinytjara Wilurara region of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR).

The trips help facilitate the sharing of traditional ecological knowledge between generations and continue to engage volunteers from around Australia in natural resource management activities.

Motion sensor cameras were set a week prior to the main trip as part of monitoring biodiversity and feral animal threats. Motion sensor cameras confirmed the presence of wild dogs as well as dingoes in the region casting doubt on the topical debate regarding the validity of removing sections of the dog fence.



Yalata – Revegetation and beach clean-up

In 2012, AW staff, Yalata Land Management and Yalata youth spent two days revegetating the roadside and borrow pits around Pintumba and Nundroo, along the Eyre highway. Funded by Transport SA, AW and Yalata 1100 trees were planted across 1.7 hectares.

Now, two years later, many of the seedlings that we planted have grown and are ready to have their tree-guards removed to start facing the world on their own!



Yalata youths working with Land Management staff



We spent two days visiting these seedlings, removing tree guards, clearing weed matting and checking on the different trees that had succeeded in different places. With an early finish on the second day Yalata youth took us out to their most visited beach – Yalata beach and we all set to work clearing away rubbish and marine debris from around the campsites and reef. We collected over 20 kilos of marine debris, mostly consisting of ropes and plastics, which can be a big entanglement threat to some of the larger marine mammals who also call the area home.

This project is part of an ongoing partnership between Yalata and AW, working together for the country, coast and people.

New Community Grants Yalata Community Incorporated

The Yalata Community will be involved in revegetating several vacant areas of their land with a selection of native plants that are significant to the community and environment. Some of the activities will include seed collection, planting of seedlings and spreading seed, and mulching. This project supports native fauna and traditional bush food and medicinal practices.

With the guidance of Yalata elders and the support of Alinytjara Wilurara NRM staff, Yalata Land Management and various volunteers from the community, the youth of Yalata will be educated on the cultural and environmental significance of rockholes surrounding the community. The youth will learn how to monitor feral and native fauna activity around two specific rockholes, manage weeds and erosion, clean the rockholes using specialist tools and machinery, and continue to maintain and preserve these significant sites.



Sue Haseldine setting up a motion sensor camera



Dingoes and wild dogs captured by a motion sensor camera



Anangu involvement in the Nullarbor Bio-monitoring Project

Harald Ehmann

Threatened Species Officer and Nullarbor Bio-monitoring Project Manager

Project overview

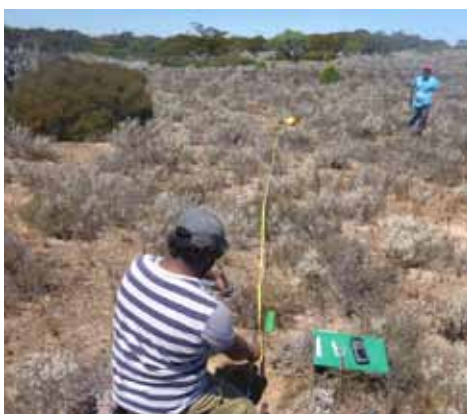
The Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resource Management Board received funding for monitoring the Nullarbor in South Australia for habitat health, trends and changes with a specific emphasis on climate change. The analysis of the 2012 monitoring will use the data gathered in the 1984 Nullarbor Biological Survey to assess trends in habitat health and changes.

Preparations including field evaluations, community engagement, site re-commissioning work and fine tuning of the proposed monitoring were underway for almost three years prior to undertaking the main monitoring event in April 2010.

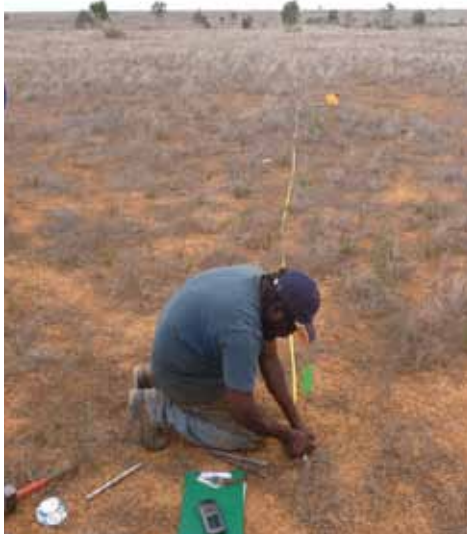
There are now 104 (of which 64 are new) plant and animal monitoring sites, and 160 'trees' sites (all are new).



Roger Williams putting in pitfall trap



James Peel jnr and Roy Dunn measuring a photopoint



Parker Hogan placing a photopoint

Claimants Group provided unpaid guidance, advice and counsel

- In total at least 43 Aboriginal people were involved in these activities

Anangu community engagement: April 2012

Visits by community groups to the accessible monitoring sites at Catacombs, Koonalda, Colona, Ifould, and Muckera were prepared for, and a group from Yalata travelled to the Catacombs and Koonalda area.



Parker Hogan and Roy Dunn checking tjina (tracks)

Anangu community engagement: General

Anangu involvement was and will continue to be foremost in this project:

- Anangu have been kept informed through meetings, individual contact, through direct involvement in field work, and through the AW newsletter articles
- Senior men from Yalata, Oak Valley and Tjuntjunjara Communities were involved in advising and field reconnaissance work for this project
- Aboriginal people from or associated with Yalata, Oak Valley and the Far West Native Title Claimants Group were involved in paid work
- Aboriginal people from or associated with Yalata, Oak Valley and the Far West Native Title

Anangu school's involvement was also sought but unfortunately, because the 2nd monitoring week coinciding with the 1st week of the autumn school holidays and with Easter, this proved impractical.

Ongoing steps and continuing Anangu involvement

Some additional follow-up work occurred in late June to get photopoint data that could not be obtained in April. In the near future about 40 of the 272 photopoints that are at risk to dingo damage need to be consolidated. This work will provide work and training opportunities for Anangu.

The field work data is currently being collated and analysed and a preliminary summary is due in September 2012.



A spinoff from this work has been the development of a training module on how to select photopoints, how to place them, and how to take the images that can be used anywhere. It can be provided to Anangu community members and land management trainees from Oak Valley, Yalata and the APY Lands as required.

A preliminary report of the results and the implications for management (especially the potential early intervention measures) will be presented to the AW NRM Board as soon as possible.

In the future it is planned that Anangu land managers will conduct the photopoint monitoring at the 272 field sites that are clustered in 8 widespread parts of the Nullarbor in South Australia. This work will need to be repeated about every 3 to 8 years depending on the preceding and prevailing seasonal factors. It is envisaged that this will become one of the regular monitoring and land management activities for the Land Management groups (existing at Yalata, forming at Oak Valley, and potentially in the far west). This monitoring will be essential in managing the health of the Nullarbor Plain and its environs.

Early recommendations

Further recommendations will be in the awaited reports.

1. That an early report of the results and management outcomes be presented to the Maralinga Tjarutja (MT) Council and Oak Valley Community, and Yalata Land Management and the Yalata Community as soon as possible.
2. That the Board sustains and strengthens its position on control of camels and their impacts on the Nullarbor and its environs. During this bio-monitoring project we were struck and alarmed by the extent and severity of camel impact at many sites of high biodiversity and cultural significance including dongas, rockholes, dolines and caves.
3. That about 30 additional monitoring sites be added to include an adequate number of the 800+ of under-represented dongas of the northern Nullarbor Plain. These would particularly monitor the long-term trends in camel, rabbit and mouse impacts and damage and thereby inform habitat management actions for donga-dependent wildlife. Their placement and ongoing monitoring would be a good work activity for the MT Land Management group that is being formed.



Pygmy Possum, Yalata Lands

Native and feral inhabitants of South Australia's Nullarbor Plain



Tinka (Sand Goanna) near Muckera, Maralinga Tjarutja



Tarkawarra (Mitchell Hopping Mouse) near Muckera, Maralinga Tjarutja



Papa inara (dingoes) near Hughes, Maralinga Tjarutja



Severe rabbit damage near Hughes, Maralinga Tjarutja



Camel remains and kuna (faeces) in Nullarbor rockhole
Photography courtesy of Harald Ehmann



NR work with the Indulkana Community

Bruce MacPherson
Community Engagement Officer

DEWNR has commenced a series of partnership projects with Iwantja Community (Indulkana) in the Eastern APY Lands. With increased focus by AW NR on providing support for this community there is much that can be achieved into the future. In 2011 AWRM (as it then was) assisted the community to lodge an application for NRM funds entitled Restoring Culture and Protecting Land. A grant for \$23,000 was allocated and a series of meetings with the Iwantja Community Council, Iwantja School and Iwantja Youth Shed, has revealed a great deal of passions and enthusiasm for work to commence on a number of sites surrounding the community. As a result of the community's enthusiasm, DEWNR has also committed some other program funds to the community to assist in the monitoring and maintenance of Cultural Water sites. The community has selected a number of sites to start work on.

The women in the community have identified two important rockhole sites with cultural significance. The Iwantja school has offered to support this aspect of the project, which will focus on visiting sites, ensuring that the stories pertaining to the sites are passed onto the younger generation, assessing environmental issues related to the sites, including threats from feral species, weeds, etc and developing a plan to maintain the cultural and environmental integrity of the sites. These stories will then be woven into the school activities.

A second project, running concurrently and supported by the Iwantja Youth Shed and CDEP, will focus on Policeman's Bore. This is a culturally

significant site, with considerable evidence of extended occupation, a water soak which has been impacted by the erection of a windmill during the Pastoral days and significant rock art. The community has indicated that they wish to open access to the site to teach 'tjukarpa' to the younger community members. The site was visited by DEWNR's Threatened Species Officer Harald Ehrmann, who carried out an ecological assessment which will guide further work. The Senior men have also burnt the site, which was very overgrown limiting vehicular access.

Detailed planning will take place on both sites in coming months.



Far end of water flow away from windmill with fire in the background. Note absence of any node rushes or other aquatic or fringing vegetation, and salty ground

Restoration project at Policeman Soak

Harald Ehmann
Threatened Species Officer and Nullarbor Bio-monitoring Project Manager

On 24 July 2012 I visited the site with project participants Elders Huey Cullinan, Peter Mungkuri, Alec Baker and David Pearson, and younger men Jeffrey Baker, Robert Strangways, Shaun Brumby and Dion Cullinan. The Iwantja Youth Shed Coordinator, David McGuinness, facilitated the on-ground work and the visit.



At the slowly approaching fire front

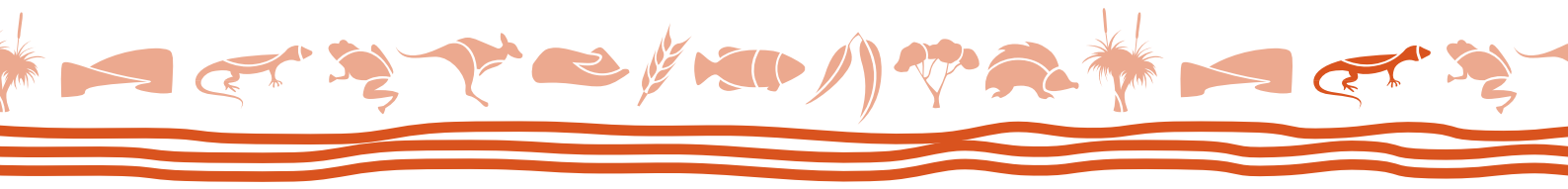
Two Elders, Huey Cullinan and Peter Mungkuri, considered to be most knowledgeable in traditional burning practices, burnt off the encroaching and choking growth around the Soak the windmill and the adjoining ground.



Part of the burnt area at Policeman Soak with the fire front burning slowly into the southerly air flow

Site and wetlands evaluation with restoration potential

David McGuinness reported that on his previous visit two weeks ago the windmill was turned off, the water level in the dug well was about one metre down, and there was no flow of water in the totally dry surface drainage line. The fringing vegetation within 30 metres of the surface drainage line (which is part of the natural drainage line/creek) did not include any plant species that are usually associated with elevated water availability (eg rushes, node rushes).



Widespread scatter of stone tool chips found at the site indicating former prolonged Anangu habitation

Prior to well being dug into the original soak site during the pastoral days, this area was an important water source and residence site for Anangu.

Generous and widespread scatter of stone tool chips on the extensive sandy soil to the west of the site as well as the rock art in the small caves in the southern rock wall near the soak supports that this area was an important water source and residence site for Anangu. During the driest times Anangu would have dug down to the subsurface water table for their personal needs, hence its recorded designation as a soak.

When the site was a stock watering point water dependent plants and animals were destroyed through intense grazing and trampling. It is difficult to say whether the Soak's natural flow conditions can be partly or fully restored.

With restoration of water flow by cleaning and clearing the site, some plant and non-vertebrate animal species may return by natural dispersal. To determine the nature and extent of such re-habitation further evaluation of available records combined with local knowledge of the wetlands plants and non-vertebrate animals is needed.

Photography courtesy of Harald Ehmann



Peter Mungkuri at Policeman's Soak after burn



Surface water near mill outflow. Note green submerged ground colour due to very recent algal growth

It is also possible that all vertebrates that favour wetland conditions (eg mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs) from the general vicinity would eventually find their way there and re-colonise the site.

General area evaluation with restoration potential

Beyond the 50 to 300 metres zone, associated with a pastoral stock watering point, the plants and habitats in the vicinity and area surrounding Policeman Soak are in good condition.



The scat being pointed out is from a Nintaka, the others are from a various sized Kanula

The rocky slopes and rock faces have many small eroded shelters and caves that are likely to provide habitat and refuges for mammals (esp. bats), birds and reptiles. The characteristic scats of Fat-tail Pseudantechinus were seen and bird habitation appears to be extensive. Scats of Nintaka and the shed skin of a large-blotched Python were found. Both of these reptiles are top level carnivores, and their presence indicates a high level of habitat.

Cleaning up the site with fire using smoke and heat. The way the fire was lit was carefully planned to minimize the intensity and run-away potential.





Weather stations at Oak Valley and Rodinia Airstrip

Project Report

Natham Williams

AW Project Officer, Ceduna

On the 27th March 2012, Ollie and I took two guys from MEA (Measuring Equipment Australia) to Oak Valley to install two weather stations. This type of weather station consists of one solar panel (to keep the batteries alive), a small glass dome (to measure the sun light), a rain gauge and wind direction sensor, a soil sensor (to measure the temperature on the surface) and a smart computer to relay all the information gathered via satellite to the head office in Adelaide. These weather stations measure:

- radiation from sunlight
- air and ground temperature
- rainfall
- humidity (water in the air)
- the amount of dust in the air

The first of the weather stations was installed near the Oak Valley School where the Oak Valley CDEP workers had already put up a security compound to protect the weather



Oak Valley School children viewing the new station from being damaged. No state of the art tools and gadgets were needed, just a couple of screw drivers, a spanner, a shovel and the smallest post-hole digger I've ever seen.

It normally takes about 2-3 hours to install a weather station but we took some extra time to educate the older school kids from the school about what it does and why it is important to record information about the weather. The school children were very inquisitive about what we were doing. We included a class activity where the kids made small posters showing how the rainfall cycle worked.

We installed the second station at the Rodinia Airstrip which is about 2 and half hours west of the Oak Valley community – about 50 km from the WA border. We chose a well maintained patch of the airstrip at the bottom end of Mamungari

Conservation Park. This weather installation will give the Oak Valley community the ability to find out exactly what the weather is doing around the region. This time we didn't have an audience so the work was able to be done more quickly. We had a CDEP participant with us, Ivan Bryant who was a very good worker and an excellent story teller, he kept us entertained all the way to Rodinia telling stories about the land and how he's connected to such beautiful country.

The long term use of these weather stations will allow us to look back over data from previous years and compare it with more recent data, which could then be used to roughly say what time of year it should rain, when it will start cooling off or when it might start heating up ...

Unfortunately this type of weather station can't predict the weather but with a bit more understanding of how this tool works, the local people will be able to have a pretty good idea of what weather to expect and when.

We can also compare data to the Bush Tucker seasons. This information could be an excellent tool to have in schools to teach kids how to recognise the changes of the four seasons and know what is available at different times of the year.



Learning about how the weather station equipment works on location



Classroom learning and activities at OV Primary School



Dreamweaver:

Supporting Women's Participation in Natural Resource Management

DENWR AW has received funding for a project entitled *Dreamweaver: Supporting Women's Participation in Natural Resource Management*.

The project idea grew out of a *Women in NRM Conference* held in Broken Hill in 2010, where a number of inhibitors to women's engagement were identified. These included lack of transport, a preference for family oriented projects, and those which include a plan for transmission of knowledge between the generations.

The *Dreamweaver* project application was submitted in 2010 and was unsuccessful in attracting funds. However, AW was advised in February this year that the Project was to be funded from slippage funds, with a shortened time-frame. DEWNR AW has modified the project slightly to cover the SA Arid lands (SAAL), Eyre Peninsular (EP) and AW regions. The project will focus on assessment and management of 16 women's *cultural water* sites across the regions.

A couple of sites, Mimili and Indulkana have already been selected and the remainder will be negotiated in coming weeks.

The women in the selected sites will carry out a comprehensive assessment of two women's water related sites. These may be rockholes, claypans, soaks or springs. The assessment process will be common across the sites, with cultural transmission of stories related to the sites an integral part of the project. Some work in maintaining sites will be carried out during this phase of the project.



Involving youths in maintenance of the rockholes is important to safeguarding water supplies into the future.

In the second phase of the project, women in each area will select one of the sites they have visited to do intensive maintenance work, such as draining and cleaning, burning, removal of invasive weeds or past animals, identification of species which rely on the site for water.

The level of documentation will be guided by the women themselves and sensitivities around some site will greatly restrict the way and extent of information collected.

It is an exciting project, which dovetails with People, Country and Water priorities of DEWNR AW.

For further information contact AW's Manager, Community Engagement, Bruce Macpherson on 0467765511.



Helping with cleaning up one of the polluted rock holes



Lorna Dodd from Sandy Bore standing by the "no men allowed" sign near one of the women's cultural water sites



2012 Far West Coast Whale Survey

Over a hundred southern right whales were counted at the Head of Bight on South Australia's west coast during the the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) annual monitoring program.

With 119 individual southern right whales, including 55 calves, recorded within the Great Australian Bight Marine Park (GABMP) at the Head of Bight during a two-week monitoring expedition. Between August 17 and the August 31 staff from the Alinytjara Wilurara and Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources along with four volunteers and 25 local Aboriginal community members from Yalata monitored the coastline for whale activity.



Visitors to the whale watching platform

Yasmin Wolf, DEWNR's Alinytjara Wilurara coast project officer said that visitors to the Head of Bight were treated to sightings of large numbers of migrating whales while they were residing in the area for their breeding season. This generally takes place from May to October.

The type of information that the group recorded included: how long it takes before a female commences breeding; how often females breed; how long the calves stay with mothers and; movement between locations.

Whale watching on location...



Getting a hand to watch the whales through binoculars



Whale showing distinguishing callosite patterns



Pointing out the latest whale to visit the watching platform



Whale diving showing tail



Recording the activities of the monitoring program





Binoculars were used to survey the number of whales in the area, and photographic records were made to record individual whales taking note of the patterns of callosities (roughed patches of skin colonised by crustaceans) on their heads and other markings such as white blazes on their backs and undersides.

During the 2010 survey only 95 whales (including 42 calves) were sighted and details recorded; in 2011, 148 individuals (including 67 calves) were sighted in the GABMP compared to this year's sightings of 119 individual southern right whales, (including 55 calves).

The 2012 monitoring results are part of a three-year DEWNR study and will be added to a regional catalogue whereby individual whales can be matched to photographs taken of whales at other locations to understand their movements.

Some interesting sightings this year included four white calves and a few pods of curious dolphins.

This year a greater emphasis was made on training local community members to enable them to take more ownership of the monitoring program in the future.

The GABMP is part of the Alinytjara Wilurara region. It was created in the 1990s to protect breeding southern right whales, Australian sealions and other marine life.

The warm, shallow waters with sandy ocean floor of South Australian areas such as the GABMP are popular with breeding whales because they are protected from harsh weather conditions and sea floor structures such as coral reefs that are potentially dangerous for the young calves.



Visitors observing whale activities



Young local man creating photographic records



Whale showing baleen - the feeding filter in the mouth habitats they rely upon for breeding.

The 2012 southern right whale monitoring results coincide with the State Government's launch of the public consultation period for South Australia's 19 marine parks.

Marine parks with effective zoning have been designed to help to protect threatened and endangered species, like the southern right whale, and the

The proposed zoning, which will protect a range of animals and ecosystems, including other whale breeding hot spots, mangroves, fish breeding sites and important reef ecosystems, can be viewed at www.marineparks.sa.gov.au



Aerial photograph of whale adults and calves near the Bunda Cliffs at the Head of Bight



Oak Valley Land Management

There is new enthusiasm for land management work in Oak Valley.

In late 2011, Maralinga Tjarutja launched its Land Management Plan Kuwarila Tjaatarinyi, outlining its plans for the huge section of south-west South Australia that it is responsible for. The area includes a large section of the Great Victoria Desert, Mamungari Conservation Park, Maralinga Village and Section 400.

Early this year, Maralinga Tjarutja and Oak Valley Community Council gained funding through Ceduna Indigenous Cultural Centre for a pre-Employment Training Program. The community selected Dave and Michelle Anderson to run the course, both of whom have long and strong connections with the community.

In an early planning meeting, AW NRM as it then was, offered to run two threatened species surveys during the course, for the Mallee Fowl and Sandhill Dunnart respectively. We also undertook to identify contract work which could support a level of employment at the end of the course.

The course is now nearing its final stage. An average of 10 participants have been involved at each session and the enthusiasm is infectious. Joe Benshemesh, the consultant to DEWNR AW who coordinated the Mallee Fowl survey in July, said that he had rarely worked with such an enthusiastic and capable group. Trainees have learnt to use digital survey tools, including Palm Pilots and GPS; have undertaken their certification for Safe Handling of Chemicals, have rejuvenated the Land Care Office in Oak Valley and begun to work toward regaining Driver's Licenses.

Supported by Ollanta Lipcer, the Community Programs Manager, Nathan Williams, DEWNR AW Project Officer in Ceduna, spent two weeks assisting the course facilitators and is keen to play an active role in supporting future land management projects out of Oak Valley.

DEWNR AW is now working closely with Oak Valley community to support ongoing and purposeful land management practices.



Mallee Fowl tracks



Joe Benshemesh working with the trainees and locals



Learning about using the Palm Pilot



Joe showing how to monitor and record signs of activity of threatened species



Welcome to...

Janet Queama



Welcome to Janet Queama who has recently become a member of the AW NR Board. With experience as a Member of the Maralinga Tjarutja Council, Member of the Oak Valley Community Council and Member of the Governing Council, Oak Valley School, her knowledge and experience is greatly valued.

Educated in Oak Valley and later at the Yalata Senior School she is a highly regarded member of the Oak Valley Community who has worked hard to support the community for a long time. She is particularly well known for speaking up for the women and their children who need support.

In her work at Oak Valley School she offers guidance and acts as a community liaison person between community/school/staff.

Sydney Chamberlain



Sydney grew up on the tribal lands but now resides in Pt Germien. He joined the AW NRM Board last April and has a long association with aboriginal issues and a wealth of understanding about aboriginal employment. He is keen to see aboriginal youths gain experience through involvement in natural resource programs. Welcome Sydney.



Geoff Axford

Geoff will be joining the AW Natural Resources team as the new Regional Manager. Coming to us from the position of Regional Manager with SA Arid Lands, Geoff has also worked in a variety of positions that provide him with a clear understanding and well informed background relating to natural resource management in remote South Australia.

Geoff's wide experience includes working as a Regional Conservator, Landcare Officer and Manager of Granite Downs Station, which was later incorporated into the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. After this Geoff stayed on at Grait Downs for five years training aboriginal youths in a range of station skills.

With many of his former associates now acting as community leaders in the APY Lands it is also fortunate that Geoff speaks Pitjantjatjara.

Welcome Geoff.



Nathan Williams

Originally from Hermannsburg and more recently living in Yalata, Nathan Williams is now supporting and facilitating a range of LandCare and Caring for Country projects in the AW region. Nathan's connections with the Yalata and Oak Valley communities will be extremely important in strengthening partnerships and leading young Anangu interested in employment in NRM and Caring for Country projects in the region. We hope Nathan has a long future in DEWNR and in SA NRM in general.



Helen Donald

Our new Communications and Executive Officer Helen Donald has also recently come on board.

Helen has had to hit the ground running, liaising with and supporting the AW NR Board, managing the Opening of the Ceduna Natural Resource Centre, reviewing and developing our current communications including our website and the AW NR Board's *Caring for Country* newsletter. Good luck Helen.



Farewell to...

Trevor Naismith



Departing Regional Manager Trevor came to the region with an extensive knowledge of the outback from years of working in it. He also has an understanding of Aboriginal ways and a strong understanding of working with community to look after land.

He is a mad cyclist and just for fun rode from Adelaide to Melbourne during a break from regional activity. He also raised funds for the Smith's Family in the 2012 Mt Lofty Challenge.

During his time as AW Regional Manager, Trevor supported the development of many Board programs and the number of activities completed increased. He was also played a key role in the increase of relationship building across the region.

Trevor will be missed by the staff and the Board however we recognise that, as he is now working in the SAAL region his link with Geoff Axford, our new AW Regional Manager, (formerly from the SAAL), will further improve understanding of our joint programs.

Chris Dodd

Chris Dodd was appointed to the board in October 2009. Chris has been a part of the Oak Valley community for many years working in different areas ranging from Operations Manager, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Project and Field Officer within the Maralinga Tjarutja region.

Aside from his many and varied talents as a musician and active aboriginal advocate Chris proved himself as a valuable member to the board and we wish him well for the future.



April Langerak

April Langerak came to work with the AW and the APY Land Management Group with an anthropological background and years of experience in other areas but had not really been into areas with the raw beauty and isolation of our region.

April worked in an area of the APY where the APY Land Management group identified that the community wanted to work but there were no IPA programs for that area. She was also instrumental in getting the remote weather stations up and running in the APY Lands.

The respect of the community for the work and support April undertook was evident by the fond farewell that she



received when she left.

April has moved from one extreme to another and is now in Tasmania in the shadow of Cradle Mountain. Thanks April, all the best from the AW team.



Ian Haseldine

Ian Haseldine worked as a Buffel Grass project officer with AW for 6 months. Ian brought a good cheer and spirit to the Ceduna office, developed good relationships with Oak Valley and made significant progress with Teresa Gurney in almost eradicating Buffel Grass from this community. We wish Ian the best of luck in his next pursuit.

Belinda Berry

Belinda moved on from AW in June. She brought a sense of calm, order and friendly service to the role, and developed fantastic relationships with all Board members. Although Belinda will be missed by us she hopes to continue to work in the region in a different capacity so we may well still see her around. All the best Belinda.

