

The newsletter of the International Riverfoundation

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World rivers sound warning on climate change



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The state of our water, rivers and climate, which are inextricably linked, is ringing warning bells across the world. More than ever before, water scarcity is uniting the global population, with billions being spent to protect water supplies and, ultimately, lives. The influence of climate change and expanding populations on water supply will be discussed under the theme of the 2006 International Riversymposium.

Climate change is now recognised as a real and significant worldwide trend. It is expected to shift precipitation patterns so that some regions already receiving abundant rainfall will get more, while others receiving little rainfall may get even less.

In Australia, one of the driest continents, a growing population and a drier climate are challenging environmental scientists, water managers and politicians to find solutions to the water shortage. And answers are neither easy nor cheap.

According to Australia's national science agency, the CSIRO, Australia's climate outlook is bleak. By 2030, rainfall in most major capital cities could drop by 15 per cent. The 2001 report, *Climate Change Projections for Australia*, states that Perth could receive up to 20 per cent less rainfall. At the same time, rising temperatures will increase evaporation, further reducing water supplies in dams, rivers and reservoirs.

The United Nations describes the global water situation as a 'crisis... essentially caused by the way in which we mismanage water'. In its 2006 World Water Assessment Programme report, it warns that more than 2.7 billion people will face severe water shortages by the year 2025 if the world continues consuming water at the current rate.

So concerned is the United Nations about water that it has proclaimed the years 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life'.

Despite the gloomy predictions, there are many success stories. Increasingly, new technology, adaptive management, public-private partnerships, economic incentives and predictive modelling are addressing the problem of water and food security for a growing world population.

Partnerships and community action—so critical for managing water and protecting rivers—are developing at local, regional, national and international levels.

Examples of such action, supported through the International and National (Australia) Thiess Riverprizes, will be presented at the 2006 International Riversymposium.

**9th International Riversymposium,
4-7 September 2006, Brisbane, Australia**
www.riversymposium.com

The International Riverfoundation

- advocates the protection of our rivers and waterways
- maintains the prestige of the Thiess Riverprize and manages the endowment fund
- sponsors Riversymposium delegates from developing countries
- supports the sharing of river management knowledge via twinning projects



IRF Chairman's report

**Martin Albrecht
AC**

Climate change is focusing global attention on water resources as the life-force of all living things. There has never been a more important time for people in all parts of the world to turn their attention to understanding more about water, climate change and the affects of droughts and floods on their rivers and water supplies.

A combination of human and environmental factors, including climate change and overuse of water, is having a major impact on our water resources. This is particularly evident in the developing world where the lack of water in many places is reaching a crisis point.

Central to the International Riverfoundation's work is the concept of working collaboratively across borders to improve our water resources and the quality of people's livelihoods. This approach underpins our support for and involvement in the International Riversymposium, where the sharing of knowledge and expertise on best practice for river

management and restoration is the main focus. It is also why we are committed to supporting delegates from developing countries to participate in the event.

Relationships formed through the Riversymposium have facilitated a number of successful twinning projects between river management groups in developed and developing countries. And, supported by the Foundation, twinning projects between previous Thiess Riverprize winners and teams in developing countries continue to make significant progress.

Thiess Riverprize winners from Israel (Alexander River), France (Drôme River) and Australia (Bulimba Creek) have made considerable progress towards improving waterways in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Thailand. You can read more about these inspiring projects in this newsletter.

In particular, the Alexander River-Burkina Faso twinning project is gaining momentum in its aim to save the shrinking Lake Bam. The project's feasibility study will provide the baseline information necessary for restoring the lake which is no longer able to support the 100,000 local

people that depend on it for water. Lake Bam, like many other lakes in West Africa, suffers from the impact of sedimentation and desertification. The outcomes of this project could well contribute to a lake restoration template for up to 1,500 similar situations across Africa.

To continue supporting such worthwhile projects, the Foundation remains focused on realising its vision of a AUD \$30 million endowment fund by 2010.

We are delighted that the Hon Shane Stone AC has just joined the Board of the Foundation. Shane brings to the Foundation a wealth of knowledge, experience and global connections that will help us move to the next phase of our vision.

And with the continued support of our present donors and sponsors, the realisation of this vision will enable the Foundation to support an increasing number of programs and twinning projects working around the world towards safer, cleaner and more sustainable water resources for today and the future.

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Hot currents – cool science

The majority of the world's scientists say we have just ten years to avert a major catastrophe that could send the planet into a tail-spin of epic destruction involving extreme weather, floods, droughts, epidemics and heat waves beyond anything we have ever experienced.

That's the bottom line message from the film *An Inconvenient Truth* that highlights former US Vice President Al Gore's crusade to halt global warming's progress. The film, showing at cinemas around the world, exposes the myths and misconceptions of climate change. It also presents some solutions.

In communicating the gloomy climate change scenarios, senior Australian scientist Bryson Bates is upbeat about how some governments and authorities are dealing with the issue:

'In the last three years, Australian water agencies have made big investments in understanding climate change', says Dr Bates.

'Governments are lifting their focus beyond economics to plan a future for communities that face change. Western Australia's government, for example, is to be commended on its long-term approach in dealing with climatic change.'

Dr Bates will outline new ways to detect and model climate change at the International Riversymposium in September 2006.

'Australians need to be mindful that variability in climate will be superimposed on continued warming and changes in rainfall', says Dr Bates.

'This will have a big affect on our rivers and water supply.'

'We need to find fair, cost-effective ways to minimise adverse impacts, understanding that the impacts of climate change extend far beyond economic theory and into the web of Australian community life.'

Dr Bryson Bates is Director of CSIRO's Climate Program and a Senior Principal Research Scientist with CSIRO Land and Water.



Riverprize winner continues good work on Drôme

The Drôme River Valley in south-east France is a small rural river basin of exceptional natural heritage and considerable local economic importance. With a population of just 43,000, the valley's restoration projects won the 2005 Thiess International Riverprize.

Competing against some of the world's largest rivers and restoration programs, and even a small sea, the Drôme took the prize as reward for a significant achievement in a small region over more than 25 years. Highlights include developing a water sharing agreement between water users, upgrading sewage treatment facilities and stabilising mountain slopes.

Ninety per cent of the Drôme and 100 per cent of the Gervanne and Bez Rivers are now 'bathing quality', gravel mining from the river beds has

been stopped, threatened fish species have been reintroduced, 400 metres of protective embankments were built, and 3,000 trees were planted.

The Drôme River restoration work began in 1976 when a group of municipalities came together; the group has evolved to become today's management group, the Communauté de Communes du Val de Drôme (CCVD).

The CCVD is using the Riverprize of AUD \$150,000 to continue managing and restoring the Drôme River, including environmental education initiatives, and to further develop its twinning project with Tiangol Mangol basin in Senegal.

When it came to take part in the Riverprize, the CCVD realised that it did not have ready access to documented evidence of its river management success, as requested by the Riverprize jury. As a result, it began the considerable effort of collating data on water quality, changes in hydrology, natural habitat and other factors. The data monitoring systems and databases that the project established are now proving important in informing stakeholders of progress in the field.

www.valdedrome.com



Bulimba Creek takes twinning to Thailand

In May 2006, Wayne Cameron, president of Australia's Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee (B4C), travelled to Thailand to establish a relationship with the Yadfon Association, and to discuss the potential for a twinning partnership. The Yadfon Association is an active conservation group in Thailand.

Wayne and his son Steven met with Khun Posit Charnsnoh who heads up the Yadfon Association in Trang, a region of southern Thailand.

'Khun Posit is one of the most highly respected community and conservation leaders in Asia', says Wayne. 'We're absolutely delighted with his interest and I have genuine hopes that we can progress this partnership.'

The Yadfon Association is trying to protect vital traditional food resources and cultural practices that have sustained villagers for many years. Forestry cash crops such as rubber are replacing paddy fields and preventing the natural flooding of rice crops and floodplains.

'Once, the floods were a gift', says Khun Posit. 'Now they are a disaster.'

A number of activities are proposed for the partnership. The Green English education initiative was inspired by the International Riverfoundation's Twinning Program and is based on environmental care for rivers and wetlands through language exchange

between school children. Green English will be partly funded by B4C's 2005 Thiess National Riverprize.

'We have an opportunity to work together and with our children in this proposed program', says Wayne. 'This will hopefully ensure a better future for them and their community.'

'We can start with a small series of steps. Our goodwill towards each other will grow and ensure that this is the start of a rewarding and enjoyable twinning initiative.'

www.bulimbacreek.org.au



Wayne Cameron presents Khun Posit with Tingle the kangaroo

The Palian River in Trang Province, southern Thailand



Wayne Cameron proudly holds the 2005 Thiess National Riverprize

Wayne Cameron

Custodian of the environment

Wayne Cameron is the quintessential volunteer, donating his time to environmental and social causes for 30 years now. The founding president and current manager of Australia's Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee (B4C), Wayne clocks up more than 40 hours a week for B4C despite working full time. B4C won the Thiess National Riverprize in 2005.

Wayne's primary focus has been to protect and improve the natural environment, but he firmly believes that, as catchment managers, 'we must become custodians, not just curators' of our environment; we must go beyond the concept of

planting trees in the ground, to also include ethical, cultural and social causes. Wayne's campaigning for low-impact, nature-based recreational activities, his passionate commitment to environmental education, and his support of long-term unemployed and disadvantaged volunteers reflect his belief. And as Brisbane's first catchment manager to employ a traditional knowledge holder, Wayne has brought an indigenous perspective on rehabilitation and an increased cultural awareness to his group.

Contact Wayne Cameron at
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International Riversymposium 2006 – a critical time in our history

The theme of the 2006 International Riversymposium is '*Managing rivers with climate change and expanding populations*'.

The program focuses on the challenge of meeting human needs for fresh water under changing climatic conditions at a critical time in our history of urbanisation.

The symposium is held annually in Brisbane, Australia. This year's keynote presenters include: David Grey, The World Bank; Fred Pearce, author of *When the Rivers Run Dry*; Dr Jon Olley, CSIRO Land and Water; Dr Caroline Sullivan, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology; Roberto Epple, European Rivers Network; Emilio Gabbrielli, Global Water Partnership; and David

Molden and Max Finlayson, International Water Management Institute.

Sessions will focus on local action and will include issues such as planning for climate change; managing wetlands; responding to natural disasters; the role of NGOs in managing rivers; challenges for rivers in the Pacific region; Indigenous river management; environmental flow for rivers and estuaries; and community catchment management.

Of particular interest this year is a climate change workshop exploring the current position and future prospects of world water scarcity. Titled *Vulnerability to Water Scarcity and Droughts – Adaptive Management of River Basins*, the session will include presentations from the Co-operative Programme on Water and Climate, The World Meteorological Organization, Melbourne Water, and

the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO Australia).

Finalists and winners of the highly anticipated annual Thiess International and National Riverprizes will once again be announced at the Riversymposium. Recognising outstanding achievements by river conservation and management groups, the prestigious prizes have increased substantially this year to AUD \$225,000 for the international prize and AUD \$75,000 for the national prize. Last year's prizes were AUD \$150,000 and AUD \$50,000 respectively.

International Riversymposium registrations are still available.

For information, program outlines and bookings, visit www.riversymposium.com

The shrinking Lake Bam

On-ground action to save Burkina Faso's Lake Bam is imminent

The restoration of Burkina Faso's Lake Bam, part of the Upper Volta river system in Africa, is now well into the first stage of the feasibility study.

The looming environmental and human crisis posed by the degradation of the lake, which is the water supply for tens of thousands of people, makes this project increasingly urgent.

Israel's Alexander River Restoration Administration—winner of the 2003 Thiess International Riverprize—initiated the restoration of Lake Bam as a twinning project with Burkina Faso's Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Water Resources.

The feasibility study is funded by the International Riverfoundation and will be peer reviewed by the International Water Centre. Data is currently being collected.

'The information already collected by the planning team is far beyond the expectations of the project group', says Amos Brandeis, Project Manager and Chief Planner of the Alexander River Restoration Project and of the Lake Bam Restoration Project.

'This will enable the team to prepare scientifically sound and professional work in all planning areas of the restoration of the lake that is based on a broad range of sources of information.'

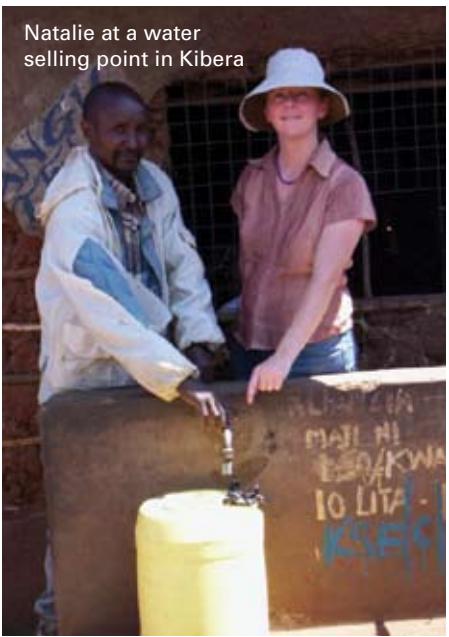
Mr Salif Diallo, Burkina Faso's Senior Minister for Agriculture, Water and Water Resources, is pursuing an initial government budget of US \$1 million for implementing the first phase of the project once the feasibility study is complete.

The restoration team is planning a pilot/demonstration project at the beginning of the on-ground works program to start in the area in most need, Kongoussi. This project may include small-scale components of the final plan, including deepening and stabilising the margins of the lake and creating a natural buffer zone between the lake and agriculture. The buffer zone would reduce erosion, filter sources of pollution, restore the banks and vegetation and enable free public access to the lake.

The US \$1 million budget for this first phase will also be used as seed funding to secure further international assistance.

Once the pilot project is underway, by early 2007 it is hoped, the results will be used to evaluate how well the project met local and catchment-wide objectives.





Australia–Kenya grassroots relationships built to last

In Nairobi, Kenya, many communities live in shanty towns without the resources and infrastructure that many of us take for granted. Raw human waste, and abattoir and car wash effluent are emptied into the region's Dagoretti catchment. Residents are forced to rely on water from polluted wells for drinking.

Australia's Tweed Shire Council, a finalist in the International Riverfoundation's 2005 Thiess National Riverprize, has reported remarkable activity from its Kenya Mentoring Program in the areas of support, outreach, fundraising, networking and government collaboration for youth in Nairobi.

The ambitious goal of the twinning program—to improve living conditions in the towns through water, sanitation and community initiatives—is coming into focus.

'Youth mentoring is a way to connect with the wider community', says Mike Rayner, General Manager of Tweed Shire Council.

'There are very positive indicators of the impact that the program is having locally and in Kenya, and the confidence that is building around it.'

The mentoring program supports a water and sanitation desk manned by a water development community worker and a water engineer. They were recently joined by volunteer ecologist Natalie Baker from Queensland's Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

'The relationship forming between the Tweed and Nairobi communities is a tremendous driving force to reduce poverty and increase health', says Natalie.

'The program is not only providing technical and financial support, but is building relationships and developing projects at the grassroots level that might well outlast the life of the mentoring program.'

To find out more, visit
www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/kenya/

Contact Mike Raynor at
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About the IRF

Founding partners include the Queensland Government, Brisbane City Council, BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) and Thiess Pty Ltd. The IRF has established an endowment fund with an ambitious target of AUD \$30 million by 2010 to underwrite its exciting programs and twinning projects globally. All donations are tax deductible.

For more information, contact manager@riverfoundation.org.au



Application for membership of the International Riverfoundation

Members receive quarterly *RiverConnect* newsletters and notifications of the Annual General Meeting. Please send your cheque for AUD \$100 (plus 10% GST in Australia) to:
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PO Box 15056 City East
BRISBANE QLD 4002
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Name: _____

Email: _____

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Area of special interest: _____

Address: _____

