

# River Currents

Delegate newsletter for the  
8th International Riversymposium

Thursday, 8 September 2005

## Drome River project wins International Thies Riverprize



Communaute de Communes du Val de Drome (CCVD) members cleaning up the Drome River Valley

The Drome River Valley in southern France has won the prestigious 2005 International Thies Riverprize for its restoration and management efforts.

The AUD\$150,000 International Thies Riverprize was awarded last night at a gala function.

The Drome river, once too polluted for swimming and sucked dry by agricultural irrigation, has seen significant improvement in its water quality, wetland biology and flood risks.

“The restoration of the Drome River Valley is an excellent example of a collaborative partnership between local governments and local stakeholders working through the Communaute de Communes du Val de Drome (CCVD) to produce a model for European river management,” said Professor Paul Greenfield, chair of the international judging panel.

“The panel was particularly impressed with the achievements and progress made over a twenty year period to monitor river flows and upgrade sewage treatment facilities. The actions of the CCVD have ensured sustainable development of the Drome River Valley.”

**8th International  
Riversymposium 2005**  
6-9 September Brisbane Australia



Yesterday's Plenary speaker **Professor Wolfgang Junk** drew attention to the need for environmental impact studies in the South America's basins to inform good decision-making.

In his address, "Ecology Management of Large South American Rivers and their Floodplains", Professor Junk also highlighted the role of inadequate environmental legislation and inefficient administration in causing accelerated degradation of rivers, wetlands and associated resources.

Professor Junk said numerous hydroelectric power stations had been constructed in South America for political reasons rather than on the basis of cost-benefit analysis. He said pressure from local groups with development interests had contributed to a lack of long term planning. Professor Junk suggested the selection and damming of only one catchment area would have far less environmental costs.



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

# Water wars at the International Riversymposium

Speakers for today's media briefing at 10.00am, will discuss access to diminishing water supplies, an issue potentially dividing communities within Australia and internationally.

Philip Hirsch, from the Australian Mekong Resource centre; Ian Kiernan, the Chairman of Clean Up Australia

and Brian Richter, the director of The Nature Conservancy's Sustainable Water Program, will speak at this briefing.

The briefing is a chance for these speakers to discuss and share their views on the current conflicts over water scarcity and how an agreement on how this valuable resource can be reached.

## Australia's Young Water Scientists on show



Finalists for the Cooperative Research Centres' 'Young Water Scientist Award' presented their work yesterday at the International Riversymposium. From left: Michael Rose, Cara Beal and Amy George.

The winning finalist will present their research findings at 3.00pm on Friday in the Main Hall.

## Chernobyl legacy lingers in waterways

Nearly 20 years after Chernobyl, the legacy of the 1986 disaster remains in the waterways of the Ukraine, causing damage to fish chromosomes and their reproductive capacity.

Dr Dimitri Gudkov from the National Academy of Sciences (Ukraine) has found surface water run-off is still contaminated with radioactive material. This finding restores a previously established exclusion zone surrounding the Chernobyl site.

Dr Gudkov has detected two radioactive isotopes, strontium 90 (Sr-90) and caesium-137 (Cs-137) in the Dnieper River, the main waterway of the Ukraine. 'Both isotopes are products of nuclear fission with half lives of 28 and 30 years respectively. These isotopes do not occur naturally in ecosystems', Dr Gudkov said.

The most contaminated region of the exclusion zone is the Krasnesky floodlands on the left bank of the Pripjat River, the main transport waterway for radioactive substances of Chernobyl origin.

## Environmental flows for rivers and estuaries

Mr Shivashish Bose presented a detailed case study on Tuesday showing the conflict between pro-development and environmental causes in the Bay of Bengal in India.



Mr Shivashish Bose

The Sundarbans delta, fed by the Ganges River, flows into the Bay of Bengal. It houses mangroves that provide protection to the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Although the tiger has a high profile internationally and parts of the area have had protected biosphere status and world heritage listing since the early 1990s, the Sundarbans Development Board remains pro-development.

This is the cause of a very interesting conflict between high profile ecological conservation and the need for development – and so the story continues.

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## "D" on River report card gets local council and community motivated

The Maroochy Shire Council responded to a bad report card of its much-loved Maroochy River with a strong commitment to improve water management within the Shire.

John Williams of the Maroochy Shire Council identified the main causes of this degradation as the sea-change movement resulting in increased urban run-off, agricultural run-off and effluent pumped into the river.

A five-pillar plan, including a \$34 million upgrade of the sewage treatment works, was implemented in 2005. This sewage treatment upgrade aims to get the effluent out of the river completely, and to turn wastewater into a useable resource.

John Williams also emphasised that "no amount of government funding can fix the problem".

"We have to change the human behaviours so we don't create the problems in the first place," he said



From left: Stephen Dudgeon, John Williams and Graham Webb from Maroochy Shire Council

# Bulimba Creek wins national Thies Riverprize

Brisbane's Bulimba Creek Catchment Association (4BC) caught the eye of judges to win the prestigious 2005 National Thies Riverprize.

This once degraded urban waterway, being restored by an active group of volunteers, was recognised as a role model for successful rehabilitation and community participation.

The prestigious \$50,000 Riverprize is awarded each year to an outstanding Australian river or catchment restoration project. It is the first Queensland group to ever win the national prize, now in its eighth year.

Mr Luke Diett, coordinator of Bulimba Creek Catchment Association, said

the group has an outstanding record of revegetating bushland and improving water quality in a network of Brisbane creeks.

"The association coordinates Waterwatch, supports 23 local Bushcare groups, provides training programs to volunteers, and involves students and community groups in practical conservation projects."

"Since 1999, the group has involved the community in rehabilitating 46 sites within the catchment, and four sites outside it with support from Landcare, the Natural Heritage Trust and local leaders," said Mr Diett.



Catchment Coordinator Luke Diett clearing water hyacinth

## What's happening tonight at the Riverfestival?

### Tammy van Wisse

Marathon swimmer Tammy van Wisse, is going to give a one-hour speech on environment issues from 6 pm tonight (Thursday 8 Sept) at the Plaza Terrace Room, Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Everybody is welcome with free entry to share Tammy's inspirational stories that happened during her journey and adventure on waterways, like the Murray River. For more information, please see [www.riverfestival.com.au](http://www.riverfestival.com.au).



### QPAC presents William Yang 'Objects for Meditation'

*'I have found the surface of water a most alluring image, something I could look at for hours'* William Yang

Find the extraordinary in the ordinary with master storyteller and photographer William Yang. He uses the spoken word, photography and video to translate his observations about the world.

This performance takes place at the Cremorne Theatre, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, at 7.30pm tonight and 7.30pm Friday night. Tickets cost \$32.75 and can be booked via phone: 136 246 or website: [www.qtix.com.au](http://www.qtix.com.au).

## Funding the 'Twinning projects' between successful river managers and their African neighbours

Participants at yesterday's 10am media briefing agreed that the International Riverfoundation (IRF) needs more funding to be fully effective in sustaining the Twinning projects between successful river managers and needy African countries.

The IRF's goal is to raise \$30 million. The IRF is looking for funding from Australia and the rest of the world. Australia is a generous nation as shown by its great contribution to the recent tsunami disaster. The German government may also support future initiatives in Burkina Faso.

The IRF is looking for more funds from AusAID. Mike Raynor, Director of the Operations and Engineering at the Tweed Shire Council has been encouraged by the strong local community support from their African partners in Nairobi, Kenya.

## Healthy Waterways Conference Dinner

The Symposium Dinner will be held tonight at the River Canteen restaurant at South Bank, a short walk from the Convention Centre. The cost is included in all Riversymposium registration fees and we will be leaving as a group after the talk by Tammy van Wisse.

Tickets for day delegates or invited guests are available from Jane at the Registration Desk at an additional cost of \$95.00 per person. The dinner starts at 8.00pm.



Participants at the media briefing yesterday talk to 7 News reporters, from left: Olita Ogonjo, Martin Albrecht and Salif Diallo

# Please note: Important changes and additions to Riversymposium Program

Sessions moved to **Thursday 8 September 2005**

## Session 2B.2 M1

Water Scarcity – Urban and Rural Tensions Over Sharing Water Resources  
**Tim Wrigley** – The Australian Sugar Cane Industry and How Environmental Sustainability is Being Met

**Now moved to 3B.3, Thursday 8 September 2005, (final speaker)**

### Change to Twinning partnerships session time

The Twinning partnerships session has moved to Thursday afternoon 13.30 in room P1 - session 3C.4. Speakers include:

**Sergei Stepanovich Makeev** of the Sakhalin Wild Nature Fund, Igor Mikhailovich Bystrov from Sakhalin Regional Center for Coastal Fisheries and Producer's Exploration, and **Johnny Sumdstrom** from Siuslaw Catchments on the Russian-Siuslaw Twinning project

**Ambrose Ouedraogo** from the Burkina Faso delegation, **Eitan Israely**, the Honorary Consul from Burkina Faso in Israel, and **Vikki Uhlmann** from the International Riverfoundation on the Burkina Faso and Israeli Twinning project

**Peter Krause** from Grand River Conservation Authority on the San Roque Twinning project in Argentina.

**Olita Ogonjo**, Kenyan community development officer, **Mike Rayner** and **Jane Lofthouse**, from the Tweed Shire Council on The Tweed Kenya Twinning project

The International River Foundation (IRF) has generously sponsored 40 delegates to attend the International Riversymposium, adding to the richness and diversity of knowledge brought to the symposium and facilitating the scientists networking potential with support organisations.

Both Sergei Makeev and Olita Ogonjo are sponsored by IRF.

## Session 2C.3 M1

Environmental Flows for Rivers and Estuaries

**Poh-Ling Tan** - Institutional and Legal Arrangements to Manage and Resolve Water Disputes

**Now moved to 3D.2, Thursday 8 September 2005 (last speaker)**

**Thursday 8 September 2005**

## Session 3B.4 M2

Transboundary Catchment Conflicts and Resolutions

**Entire Session Withdrawn**

## Session 3C.4 P1

Transboundary Catchment Conflicts and Resolutions

**Moved to 4B.4 (last speaker) – Kurt Mørk Jensen and replaced with Twinning Sessions previously scheduled for Friday 9 September Session 4B.2**

## Session 3D.5 P3

River Pollutants – Problems for Human and Ecosystem Health

**Wai-Tong Wong** – Satisfying a growing thirst with limited Resource Planning for the Moreton area in South East Qld

**Friday 9 September 2005**

## Session 4B.1 M2

Water Benefits (CSIRO) – Management for Multiple Uses

**Eric Baran** (third speaker) – Floodplain Fisheries of Cambodia

**Unable to attend**

## Session 4B.2 M1

Twinning Initiatives

**Moved to Thursday 8 September 2005, 3C.4 P1 to replace Transboundary Catchment Conflicts and Resolutions**

## Session 4B.3 P1

Institutional and Legal Arrangements for River Management

**Carlos F. Lascurain-Fernandez** – Managing the Border Rivers: Mexico and the United States

**Unable to attend**

## Session 4B.5 P3

Living with Floodplain Rivers

**Max Finlayson** – correct title should read: Benchmarking Northern Australia's Rivers Before Further Degradation: Practical Approaches and Constraints

## Session 4C.5 P2

River Pollutants – Problems for Human and Ecosystem Health

**Additional Speaker: Matti Chandra Sekhar** – Assessment and Prediction of Nutrient Loads Contributed by Musi River Basin



Belinda Wedlock (Environment Branch) and Peter Hayes (Brisbane City Council). Belinda found the case study on the Thames very useful and practical in relation to her own work despite the difference in scale of the problems.



Jane Eales (Pioneer ICM Assoc. Inc.) and Margaret Rose (MWNRM) have both enjoyed hearing stories of people in similar fields to their own yet on the other side of the world. While they've been inspired by the approaches people are taking to tackle their problems they are also grateful for the conditions we have in Australia. Margaret has loved seeing the films of Liquid Lens!!



Zoe Bainbridge (Australian Centre for Tropical Freshwater Research) and Bronwyn Masters (Natural Resources & Mines) presented today and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. They thought Veronica Strang was eloquent and very relevant to catchment management issues in Australia.

