

Australian Landcare International Newsletter

February 2011



Australian Landcare International (**ALI**) is an incorporated, not-for-profit organisation whose aim is to assist other countries to take up Landcare ideas. **ALI** does not normally provide funds for overseas projects – this is left to various aid organisations.

President's Note

Needing a break after a challenging 2010, I headed to Taiwan in late November – a great place for food, forest, farmland, factories and friendliness. As with Japan, which I visited in 2009, a major opportunity for Landcare appears to me to exist along waterways running across the coastal plains. Almost universally in both countries major levees delineate and generally control these frequently broad and wet (compared to Oz), flood-prone watercourses.

Sometimes golf courses and allotment gardens appear in the no-mans-land between the levees and streambeds, but often grass, gravel and low scrub cover these strips. It seemed to me that their biodiversity could be readily enhanced with suitable planting and wetland creation. In each country I saw just one exemplary urban stream with walking tracks, access for fishermen and genuine attempts to create wildlife habitat – what you'd expect in similar situations here.

In Hong Kong I discovered the ultimate in urban wetlands – 60 hectares in the northwest of the New Territories, with a splendid entrance paved with granite and studded with statuettes of waterbirds, a magnificent visitor centre, beautifully

finished boardwalks, dense revegetation, two-storey bird hides, a range of wetlands from freshwater to mangroves, saline of course – and with several rare species readily observable. It reminded me of my own group's efforts at Westgate Park, but with an extra \$15 million thrown in. The HK Wetlands Park has a volunteer program – the nearest thing I saw to Landcare there.

In late January I was in New Zealand briefly to see friends. The Auckland park managers are enlightened, I have found. Besides running volunteer programs, they purchase urban-fringe farms in advance of development for future parks, often thereafter running the properties as combined working farms and parks, including mountain-bike tracks. In the Hawkes Bay region, I enjoyed visiting a kiwi nursery, an extensive hilly area of bush encircled by predator-proof fencing. Indeed the human kiwis excel at pest control for biodiversity – they've had to of course, with possums, fitches, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs and so on! What I didn't see anywhere was an NZ Landcare Trust logo on a sign, but that organisation has always been lower-profile than ours.

Finally, **eTree**, Computershare's major revegetation program run by Landcare Australia Limited for some eight years

now, has given us \$2500 for overseas tree projects. We've been supporting for a while a small program in Nigeria creating habitat for Sclaters genon, the *nsombo ebok*, the only endemic Nigerian primate. Let us know if you are in touch with other overseas revegetation groups that might need help.

Rob Youl

Landcare to play a major role at 5th World Congress Conservation Agriculture

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) have joined forces to host the 5th World Congress for Conservation Agriculture (WCCA). This will be held in Brisbane, on 26-29 September 2011, integrated with the 3rd Farm Systems Design conference, and with opportunities for input from Landcare.

The 5th World Congress for Conservation Agriculture brings together scientists and policy makers from around the world to discuss issues in and around conservation agriculture and associated issues of farming systems and Landcare. The Congress is overseen by an International Steering Committee, with support from an Australian-based Local Organizing Committee with links to conservation agriculture research, extension and farmers. Mary Johnson, an ALI member, is on this local committee.

Australia has been a significant contributor to research on conservation agriculture systems and currently leads the world in terms of the proportion of cropped area under no-till. Australian farmers, researchers and extension officers have identified home-grown solutions that restore soil health while profitably increasing crop productivity, sequestering carbon in soils, and reducing GHG emissions.

Conservation farming and Landcare work hand in hand as demonstrated through projects around the world. For example the Landcare approach to soil conservation in the Philippines and the widely adopted practice

of maize intercropped with cow peas in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Theme 3 of the Congress focuses on achieving impact through more effective consultation, participation and knowledge sharing. One Sub theme (3.3) is *Landcare and participatory natural resource management*. The call for conference papers is now open. This is a great opportunity for Landcare people to display their experience and to promote Landcare both locally and on the world stage.

Early bird submissions of condensed papers close on the 28 February 2011 while the last opportunity for submissions of condensed papers is 15 June 2011. For more information go to: www.wcca2011.org

ALI in discussions with the International River Foundation

In December 2010 Horrie Poussard had discussions with Matthew Reddy, CEO of the International River Foundation, based in Brisbane.

Matthew was formerly the Managing Director of Landcare CarbonSMART, an offshoot of Landcare Australia Limited, which assessed forest and agroforest projects for carbon sinks.

The International River Foundation works to protect and restore the world's rivers and waterways. The IRF has a suite of innovative products including professional development, on-ground projects, River Prize, River Symposium, international twinning programs, Africa Challenge and publications. International Landcare projects could have a link with IRF through their role in catchment management and its influence on river health. In particular Horrie was interested in the experience of IRF in their twinning program and the possibility for ALI to contributing to this program.

Further information on the International River Foundation can be found on www.riverfoundation.org.au/

Landcare International teleconferences still to be resumed

The Department Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) agreed to organize the resumption of the Landcare International teleconferences with its committee members. However this has not yet been set up and we have no word on when this will be so. The list of teleconference participants has been widened and includes representatives from Landcare International (LI), Secretariat for International Landcare (SILC) and Australia Landcare International (ALI). The teleconferences provide a valuable means of keeping international Landcare contributors in touch, discussing issues, sharing learnings and enabling opportunities. As such it is a valuable way to link all the interested parties.

Volunteers in Aid Expo

ALI has been interested for some time about the potential for setting up a volunteer program, given the volunteer nature of Landcare and the wealth of experience by Landcarers in the program, on-ground and community development aspects of Landcare.

Horrie attended a 1-day conference in December run by the Mandala Foundation (www.mandala.org.au) which showcased the roles of a range of organisations involved in international aid (health, engineering, business, education, training, etc) , many involving volunteers. Key organisations present included Australian Volunteers International (AVI), Engineers without Borders (who take non-engineer volunteers), DFAT (Youth Ambassadors, VIDA, AusTraining), Australian Business Volunteers (ABV- who are interested in Agribusiness and community based projects), Global Project s and Global Vision International (GVI). An interesting website for anyone interested is the Australian Development Gateway at www.developmentgateway.com.

Ali is continuing to make contact with groups such as those above to see where suitable opportunities exist. Many of these groups tackle issues of NRM and specific concerns like food security and clean water supply. It is early days but if you are thinking of volunteering for such a project let us know and we will start to develop a database of

volunteers and match that with a database of possible projects. Contact ALI at enquires@australianlandcare.com

Landcare Lanka

Landcare in Sri Lanka has taken off. In June, 2010 two ALI members (Sue Marriott and Victoria Mack) joined the newly formed Landcare Lanka board of directors and travelled to visit four project sites and participate in three workshops initiating Landcare Lanka with local stakeholders including participating farmers, tea estate workers, union representatives, local government agents, university researchers, donors and high level elected officials. The primary goals of Landcare Lanka are to establish Landcare in Sri Lanka and to collaborate with Landcare at an international level.

Mike Newman will serve as executive director of Landcare Lanka. A former manager of large tea estates, Mike supervised the transformation to organic production and the establishment of income generating activities and improved diets for estate labour through vegetable production. Serving on the board of directors are Kamy Melvani-Iyer, D. C. Panabokke, Parveen S. Dassanaik, R. M. Kumudini Kumarihamy, Susan Marriott, Victoria Mack, Yvonne Everett, and Jerry Moles from the US. Kamy was joined us at an ALI meeting last year and outlined her work to date and her hopes for the future of Landcare Lanka.

Two Landcare stories from Africa

1. Improving vegetable production in Lushoto, Tanzania

Lushoto District is located in the West Usambara Mountains of northeastern Tanzania. The pilot watershed covers an area of 6006 hectares; it spans 6 villages and a population of 13,163. The initial focus has been on the Kwalei village farmers.

The land use system is relatively intensive with cultivation of cash crops in the valley bottoms, staple crops and tea on the hillsides and small livestock holdings. There has been an increase in soil erosion due to cultivation

of steeper hillsides and mountain tops. There has been a dramatic increase in tree cover within the farmland area following afforestation programs dating back to the 1950s.

Some years ago, an assessment, low crop productivity was reported to be the major problem in the village. On the other hand, vegetables were identified to be the best fast-cash earning crops because they can be produced food and cash three times a year. As a result, the majority of farmers, especially the youth, selected tomato and cabbage as the top priority vegetable crops that they would like to be assisted to improve its production and marketing. The market demands the small-headed cabbage and firm tomato varieties that can withstand transportation hustles and long shelf life. Tengeru Horticultural Training Institute supplied the required varieties. Through the Landcare site team in Tanzania, farmers were then taught improved agronomic practices, from nursery, transplanting, spacing, soil fertility, weeding, disease and pest control, harvesting, packaging to marketing. After several seasons of bumper harvest and good marketing, more than 50% of farmers in Kwalei are now eagerly producing tomato and cabbage. As a result, farmers are able to pay school fees for their children, built improved houses, bought more land, and are using improved land management practices. Farmers are now responding to the market demand through grading, improving the quantity and quality of produce timely. They are also in contact with traders in Dar es Salaam and Arusha via telephone, to know the current market prices. In this way they are making more informed decisions. Through Landcare farmers have been linked to markets while improving their access to high quality varieties for increased on farm productivity.

2. Elim Landcare Project, South Africa

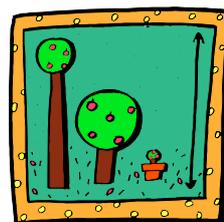
The Elim project won the overall category in 2010 for the best community Landcare project in South Africa. Environmentally; the community has used areas wide planning as a basis for action. is well exercised at the community. They have cleared weeds, and clearly demarcated Veld camps. They have encouraged all land users to use natural

resources sustainably. There is a designated area for special management as a game reserve and there is proper land use system for clean dams and water supply.

There are 46 commercial farmers in the project area. They generate income through sales from the dairy products and cattle and have supplementary income from the sale of vegetables and other livestock. Socially; the community receives support from project funds to pay rates or services. There are youth development projects. Employment has been created for women and the unemployed to supplement household income. They receive calves and lambs to kick start them on the project. A dairy provides milk to the community and the Parks department provides employment for 100 people. Fire prevention activities and a clothing factory provide further jobs.

Farm Trees and Landcare Assoc,

Landcare in Victoria celebrates 25 years (1986-2011) this year. ALI is a member of VFF Farm Trees and Landcare Association, the Victorian umbrella group which provides us with our incorporation status and member insurance. It is having its Annual foirum and meeting on 24th February at Marland House, Level 16 , 570 Bourke St Melbourne. Registration 10.15 am. These will be a series of workshops and speakers including Prof Alan Curtis (latest survey on the health of Landcare) and Rowan Reid (Farm Trees for Conservation and Profit). Contact FT&LA at ftla@vff.org.au



UN International Year of Landcare

In another side-event to the Nagoya conference, mentioned in the previous newsletter, Landcare International called for a UN Declaration for an International Year of Landcare (IYL). Landcare International's Delia Catacutan discussed the IYL feasibility study by Namibian researcher, Emily Mutota. The UN process is long and complex, with many more stages. But we are hopeful the IYL will eventuate

Become a member of ALI

The Benefits of ALI membership

- Using your landcare experience to assist overseas groups
- Overseas contacts for future travel
- Developing links with possible sister groups overseas
- Being part of a world-wide movement for land, biodiversity and community improvement
- Regular e-newsletter on overseas Landcare developments

Surname.....**Given Name**.....

Address.....**P/C**.....

Email.....

Skills/interests.....

Send cheque or money order for \$40 to:

Secretary/Treasurer ALI :
32 Loch Avenue, St Kilda East 3183

Or direct Bank Transfer to Bendigo Bank
Acct : Australian Landcare International. BSB 633-108 Acct 1331 03598
And inform Horrie on poussard@thereef.com.au