

ENVIRONMENT

The Newsletter of the Environment Centre NT
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February 2003

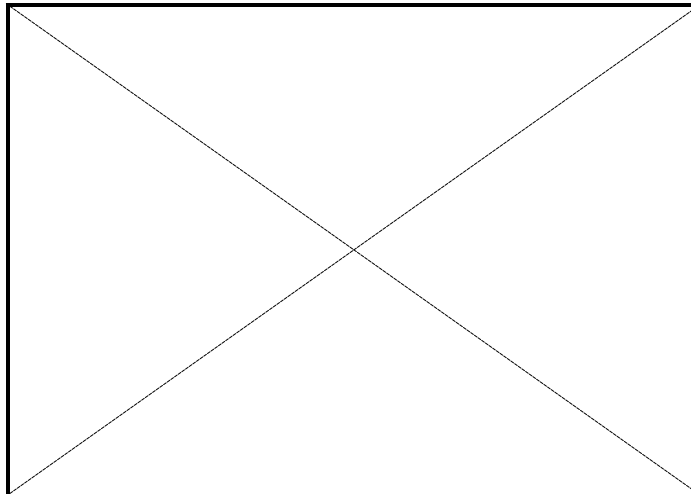
Website- <http://www.ecnt.org>

Big plans for 2003

Happy New Year to all Environment Centre members and friends and welcome to the International Year of Freshwater. In our last newsletter we summarised our activities, successes in challenges in 2002. We thought that we'd begin 2003, after a much-needed break, by outlining some of our priorities for the upcoming year.

In 2003 ECNT will continue to focus on 4 main areas- including landclearing, climate change, coastal and marine issues (including the Darwin Harbour campaign) and mining issues. We are currently recruiting for the revised landclearing campaigner position (see ad on page X)- this position will now focus on landclearing in the Top End, with a particular emphasis on the NT Government's destructive plans for agricultural development in the Daly. Our Climate Change work will continue to raise issues associated with the development of oil and gas reserves to our north, while our Cool Communities project is demonstrating that at the household level we can reduce our energy use and impacts on the global climate. Cool Communities is continuing to grow and we are hopeful that we will be able to extend the program significantly to new areas this year.

The NT coastal and marine environment faces threats on many levels. ECNT will be working in 2003 to ensure that the Northern Regional Marine Plan and the NT Government's marine and coastal policy and Darwin Harbour management plan will deliver increased protection for the NT's rich marine life. Unfortunately, despite strong pre-election promises, the Labor Government cleared a large area of mangroves (around 11 hectares) for the construction of the Wickham Point Road in November and December (see picture). Obvi-



ously we still have a lot of work to do in terms of ensuring all mangroves in the NT are protected. Finally ECNT will continue our mining industry watchdog role. In particular we will be ensuring that Rio Tinto is kept to its commitment of last year to rehabilitate the Jabiluka mine site.

Of course there are many other issues that we will address this year, as well as continuing to maintain a strong and healthy organisation. However there are 3 areas in particu-

lar that we will be trying to work on as the NT Government makes important decisions this year. The NT Government is set to make a decision on the introduction of container deposit legislation (CDL) in coming months and it will be extremely important that strong community pressure ensures that the Government does not back down on the commitment it made when in Opposition to introduce CDL. The NT Government is also conducting a review of the NT's public transport and looking into the establishment of an Environment Protection Authority this year- we plan to track these developments closely and contribute strongly to these reviews.

We're hoping to involve as many members as possible in our activities this year- please let us know if there are areas that you'd like to get involved in. Finally, you'll notice that this is an abbreviated newsletter- the newsletter will return to its usual size in March once we've dealt with the backlog from the office's closure over the Christmas period.

Thanks for your ongoing support

- Mark Wakeham and Kirsten Blair.

INSIDE

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Application rejected
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Some Development Application Results..

Towards the end of last year there was the usual flurry of development applications put before the Development Consent Authority. A couple of these were of particular interest to ECNT, one being an application to subdivide a large block and the other a proposed biomass energy project near the Adelaide River on the Arnhem Highway.

Subdivision at Townend Road: Rejected!

The proposal to subdivide about 500 hectares near Noonamah into 61 lots of varying sizes lead many locals to contact the Environment Centre with concerns about the impact this would have. People were worried not only about the effect the subdivision would have on their lifestyle but also on the environment of the area. The land includes two wetlands and the subdivision proposal did not include an adequate protection plan for either of these. ECNT encouraged concerned residents to make submissions voicing their concern. 20 submissions were lodged with the Development Consent Authority (DCA) about this proposal.

ECNT objected to the proposal in our submission because the proposed subdivision included several blocks that were smaller than the 8 hectare minimum prescribed for that area under the recently declared Litchfield Shire Land Use Objectives. The lack of an adequate management plan for the wetland areas, which are identified as Priority Environmental Management zones in the Litchfield Shire Land Use Objectives was another major concern for us. We understand that several other submissions raised similar issues.

We are pleased to report that community concerns have been listened to in this case and the development application was rejected late last year. The DCA cited the same concerns as raised by ECNT and others in relation to the Litchfield Shire Land Use Objectives and environmental management. It is certainly encouraging to see that the DCA is giving due consideration to the guidelines set out in the new Land Use Objectives. While the Objectives are far from being a perfect document, they will continue to be important in the assessment of development applications in coming months and years.

Mimosa Biomass project - approved

The Development Consent Authority approved Power and Water Corporation's biomass energy proposal. This innovative project involves the clearing and burning of mimosa (one of the Top End's worst weeds) to generate electricity. The approval is for a pilot scheme to determine the viability of this form of energy. ECNT made a submission on the proposed project and wrote to the Minister welcoming the efforts to secure less polluting sources of energy. However we will be tracking the project closely to ensure that areas that are cleared of mimosa are not allowed to re-seed given that one of the major benefits of the proposal is that it assists in weeds eradication. For a copy of the ECNT submission email: ecnt@octa4.net.au.

-Kirsten Blair and Mark Wakeham

Environmental Defenders' Office (NT) Inc. SOLICITOR

The Environmental Defenders' Office is an independent non-profit community legal service practising public interest environmental law. The Office provides legal advice and representation, carries out educational activities and promotes policy and law reform in environmental law.

The Office seeks a lawyer to undertake the work of the Office and to supervise its administration.

Applicants should be eligible to obtain an unrestricted practising certificate in the Northern Territory and have a commitment to protecting the environment.

Salary \$45k pro rata for 30 hours per week plus super and six weeks annual leave.

Applications addressing the selection criteria should be sent to The Solicitor, EDO, Gpo Box 3180 Darwin NT 0801 by 14/02/03.

Position description, selection criteria and enquiries phone (08) 8982 1182.

Position available at ECNT! Landclearing Campaigner

The Environment Centre of the Northern Territory is seeking a motivated and experienced campaigner with relevant experience to develop and implement campaign strategies aimed at preventing broad-scale land clearing of the woodlands of the Top End.

This full-time position will be based in Darwin. The salary is around \$40,000 pa. For a copy of the position description visit <http://www.ecnt.org> or ring 08 8981 1984.

Applications must be received by close of business 7th February 2003.



Bits and Pieces

Big-Headed ants eradicated in Kakadu

In a world first, the Big-headed ant has been successfully eradicated from Kakadu National Park under a joint initiative by CSIRO and Parks Australia. It is the largest eradication of a pest ant infestation in the world and the only one to have occurred in a National Park.

CSIRO first confirmed colonies of the African Big-headed ant in Kakadu last year and Parks Australia has since implemented procedures to eradicate the infestations and then prevent re-entry of the ants into Kakadu.

The African Big-headed ant has been widely introduced throughout the tropical world. It is a highly aggressive species capable of forming enormous colonies containing millions of ants. In infested areas the ants virtually exterminate all native ants and reduce populations of other small creatures such as other insects by between 40 and 85 per cent and therefore have very serious implications for biodiversity conservation.

From Topical Savannas Issue 69, December 2002

Daly Basin landclearing goes National

Some ECNT members may have heard the story on Radio National at the end of last year about landclearing in the Daly Basin. The 15 minute story which broadcast on the Earthbeat program delved into plans to develop the Daly in some depth and included an interview with ECNT coordinator Mark Wakeham. This year ECNT plans to continue to put the spotlight on the NT Government's destructive plans for developing the Daly area.

To read the transcript of the program visit: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/earth/stories/s740428.htm>

The \$6m Question: 'Does Nestle know it's Christmas?'

Nestlé, the world's largest coffee company, are demanding millions of dollars from a country where 11 million people are facing famine. Take action to stop this scandal now!

<http://www.maketradeair.com/go/scrooge>

Ethiopia is currently experiencing a terrible drought. This crisis has been compounded by the collapse in the global coffee price, which many of you have been helping us campaign on.

The Ethiopian government fears this drought could cause the worst famine the country has ever faced.

Nestlé has demanded that Ethiopia pay over \$6 million in compensation for a company that was nationalised 27 years ago, a company that Nestlé didn't even own at the time.

The \$6m represents 0.01% of Nestlé's turnover last year. But for Ethiopia, \$6m would buy food for over a million people for a whole month.

Take action now:

1. Email a message to Nestlé, telling them to drop the claim for \$6m from Ethiopia.

<http://www.maketradeair.com/go/scrooge>

2. forward this email to 15 or more friends, family and colleagues. Make your voice count. Join the Big Noise to make trade fair.

Planet Organic Darwin (POD) back to normal hours

The fabulous food coop at Northern Territory University has been opening shorter hours over the Dec-Jan period but as of Feb 4th will be back to normal. Opening hours are Tues, Wed, Thurs 10-3 and 10-2 on Saturdays. There will be a new coordinator this year so drop in and say hello and

pick up some yummy bulk, dried or snack foods while you're there. You might even like to volunteer some time in the shop. POD is located on the NTU Casuarina campus under the Students Union in shop 31 (next to the basketball courts).

Wetlands In Litchfield Shire Public Forum and Field Trip"

The Local Government Association of the NT are currently coordinating a public forum titled "Wetlands In Litchfield Shire Public Forum and Field Trip"

Friday 7 Feb 2003

9.00am to 5.00pm Palms Village Resort Berrimah

Field Trip

Sat 8 Feb 2003

9.00am to 1.00pm Bus departing from Litchfield Shire Council, Barbecue lunch at the Council.

Purpose: The forum and field trip are being organised to raise the awareness of the variety and value of wetlands in the shire and highlight the valuable contribution the local community is making towards the wise use of wetlands in addition to opportunities for their protection and conservation.

Themes

Wetlands in Litchfield Shire

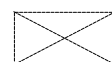
Approaches to Conservation

Threats to Wetlands

Protecting and conserving wetlands

For further information contact Paul Lloyd (0408 167 830, paul@octa4.net.au)

Don't Forget the Darwin Harbour Public Presentations (see back page for more.)



DATES FOR FEBRUARY 2003

2 February: World Wetlands Day

7 February: World Wetlands Week seminar

8 February: World Wetlands Week Field trip (see Bits & Pieces for details)

Public information sessions about Harbour issues

11 February: Presentation 1: NTU, building 22.01, 8.30 - 5pm (Harbour & Marine issues)

19 February: Presentation 2: NTU, building 22.01, 8.30 - 12.30pm (Terrestrial & Freshwater environments)

26 February: Presentation 3: NTU, building 22.01, 8.30 - 12.30pm (Social & Economic context)

For more information, contact: 8999 4478 or

email: DarwinHarbourAdvisoryCommittee@nt.gov.au

The views expressed in *EnvironmeNT* are not necessarily those of the Environment Centre NT management committee

Please recycle this newsletter: leave it in a waiting room or other appropriate place for someone else to read

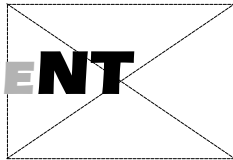
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