

Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch

Good bye Tanya, we will miss you.

In this issue:

Goodbye Tanya, we will miss you.....1

Platypus Walk.....3

QA/QC Trainings3

Ginninderra a tail of Two Creeks.....4

It is very difficult to say good-bye to someone who by force of personality kept an organisation rolling along with direction and purpose. Tanya Rucosky is just such a person. In essence she was Waterwatch in the Upper Murrumbidgee from 2007 to 2011!

Waterwatch got going in the ACT in the 1990s, with the very enthusiastic Jinnie Lovett pushing things along. By the time Tanya took over from Nigel Philpot it was present in the three catchment groups in the area, with thirty or forty regular contributors. The SWAMP and CAMPFIRE campaigns had been great for generating interest and

shown potential; now Waterwatch had to demonstrate its worth. Tanya lifted the profile!

Tanya gently manoeuvred the catchment group coordinators into being more visible in their communities. The holiday programs started. We were in the local papers. We went to events at the rate of one a month. We reached out beyond the schools and volunteers and met the citizenry! Tanya got us products! We started small with the frog tattoos; next came (and went) the black jackets; then the jerkins, then the backpacks, then the new tattoos then the dog collars, then the pens.... These rewarded the volunteers first, and then went out to advertise our efforts.

Tanya eased our citizen science into the mainstream Environmental discussion. By 2009 our data was not just housed with ACT Water Resources but being used as background in reports. We were now on committees from Bush On the Boundary to the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority. We were being noticed!



She had us up at dawn watching for platypus and water rats on the banks of the Queanbeyan. She had us out in chill winter winds netting plague minnows in Lake Ginninderra. She had us driving out to the Badja looking for sand slugs in high summer.

And there was much, much more... Now there are four Waterwatch areas, and hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers. We wish her well on her return to *E pluribus unum* and the Pittsburg Steelers, and hope she can find new outlets for her great enthusiasm for life. Thank you so much Tanya, for passing our way!



Supporting volunteers



School holiday programs



Hunting water life



Seine netting for plague minnows



6 am platypus walks



Engaging with littlies



What's Happening

In the News

Waterwatch Fridge Door

(All programs are free and open to the public.)

Platypus Walk

Watch this space...date to be arranged in May.

QA/QC Trainings

21 April 2:00–4:00 pm
Lions Youth Haven,
Kambah Pool Rd, KAMBAH, ACT

Julian Cribb's recent review in the *Canberra Times* (Thursday 29th March) is thought provoking. To be told that the weeds may well have won is not good news. And what is even more horrifying is the thought that the new Australia will not be a version of England's green and pleasant land (a product of the Romans and the Normans) but rather a stark and grey land like the southern Africa and Patagonia so many of the weeds have come from.

Could we refill the Great Artesian Basin with floodwater? Annie Hastwell <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2012/04/04/3470245.htm> asks an old question that gets a well reasoned reply this time. There are no suggestions of turning rivers round or massive pipelines, just some well put descriptions of what is known, and not known, about how the Basin works. And it provides food for thought, will all the fractured tiny basins drilled and over-drilled round here.

Report puts value on Murray-Darling draft Peter McCutcheon <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-04-04/report-puts-value-on-murray-darling-draft/3933346> covers the fraught subject of putting dollar values on the costs and benefits of the basin plan. Once again no-one is really satisfied, and people are prone to argue from positions of vested interest. The uncomfortable truth is that the ways we have exploited the basin have been badly flawed economically and environmentally and there will be much social misery as a consequence of better practice. What many of the opponents of reorganisation choose to ignore is that the social costs of dust-bowl like environments, the most probable result of inaction, will be many times more awful than the short term change in land use and income.

I'm not sure the headline is quite appropriate but *Acidic drought scars easing in SA*. James Hancock <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-04-05/drought-damage-limestone-epa/3932678> describes a different kind of problem and solution to the ones we have seen round here with ten years of drought followed by three of flood. It does highlight the variety of landscapes that go to make up our inland river system.

News from Ginninderra



'Ginninderra' a tail of two Creeks

The Ginninderra creek has somewhat of an identity crisis, its name thought to mean 'throwing rays of light' suggesting sparkling clear water is no longer an accurate description for the creek especially for the upper reaches. Whilst the creek below the Lake Ginninderra wall does still sparkle with clear water much of the time the upper sections including the Lake itself often, perhaps far too often more closely resemble a farm dam and more deserving of another name given to a lake in Victoria; Burrumbeet (Bormbeet) meaning 'muddy/dirty water'.



Upper Ginninderra Creek Crace, February 29 2012

You may think that because the lower creek runs clear most of the time, this proves that the system is working. But that assumes that the

primary role of Lake Ginninderra is as a sediment pond. Tens of thousands of regular users of the lake would argue that the lake is one of our most important recreation areas and should be treated as such! You may also suggest that erosion is natural and occurs wherever we get heavy rain! True, but it very rarely looks like paint and the creek systems above our development do not look anything like the water below!



Lower Ginninderra Creek Latham, February 29 2012

To plan for a cleaner creek we must first recognise what our problem is! And there can be little doubt about what that is; runoff from very large areas of fine powdery clay covering the bare ground in our development sites in the Gungahlin region.

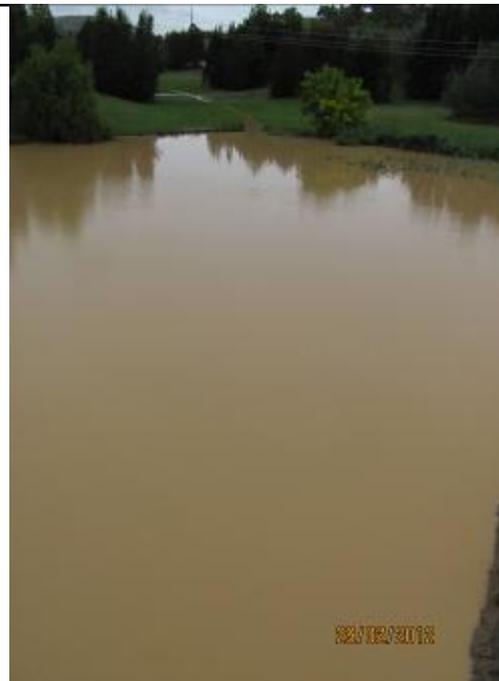
There is no end in sight to the urban development in the north. We must acknowledge that if we do nothing, problems identified in the 90's, which are still impacting heavily on our Catchment, will continue to impact our Catchment for many years to come. If we do not accept that doing nothing is an option, better planning and greater accountability in dealing with high sediment loads is our best way forward.

Why plan for better water quality in our urban streams? In the interest of trying to keep this relatively short only some of the key reasons from a community point of view will be expressed, there are many more from a variety of perspectives.

The first reason is to help the thousands of volunteers working very hard to improve the 'health' of our creek. From Landcare/Parkcare volunteers improving reserves and the creek corridor by controlling weeds and planting native flora to create more bio-diverse habitats, Waterwatch volunteers monitoring water quality throughout the creek to help identify key issues and plan for onground works, Frogwatch volunteers helping keep an ear out for frogs; a key indicator species for the health of our ecosystems and the Clean Up Australia Day volunteers who are all working to provide the community with better, cleaner urban open space.

Secondly, these volunteers do not do this alone their work complements that of many ACT Government workers and subcontractors who maintain our urban open space. Millions of dollars have been spent on improving urban habitats and providing high quality recreation areas for the community to enjoy, to provide quality vantage points and then allow the scenery to be defaced is somewhat counter intuitive not to mention a little wasteful.

Finally we are the Nation's Capital and if we cannot set an example for responsible living then it is a sorry state (territory) of affairs. We should be well past the days when our waterways are seen as a convenient way to wash our troubles away. Do we still think it is ok to push our problems over the fence or across the border?



Pond Below Casey (upper creek) February 29 2012

This article is not a criticism of any group in particular; more an open call to take responsibility for our actions and accept that our current system of sediment control is broken and we need to look at ways to fix it. Contrary to popular belief sometimes it can be as simple as identifying a problem and fixing it. We may just need to stop looking for the excuses or barriers and create solutions.

What we do in our catchments is a community concern and what we do at one end of the creek affects everyone downstream.

Whilst the focus of this article is development in the north, working towards clean waterways and "best (or even "good") practice" in waterways management is applicable to the entire ACT region. We have a heavy reliance on our reserves and urban open space and water plays a big role in that, to ensure we get a positive connection to nature when we visit our public open space we need to do better!

Damon Cusack,
Waterwatch Coordinator

Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch

ACT Waterwatch Facilitator

vacant
GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601

Phone (02) 6207 2246
<http://www.act.waterwatch.org.au/>

Ginninderra Waterwatch Coordinator

Damon Cusack
PO Box 446, Holt 2615
waterwatch@ginninderralandcare.org.au
Phone (02) 6278 3309
<http://www.ginninderralandcare.org.au/index.php>

Southern ACT Waterwatch Coordinator

Martin Lind
PO Box 2056, Kambah Village ACT 2902
waterwatch@sactcg.org
Phone (02) 6296 6400
<http://sactcg.org.au/node/36>

Molonglo Waterwatch Coordinator

Dr Stephen Skinner
Shop #13 Cassidy Arcade
72-74 Monaro Street, Queanbeyan NSW 2620
Phone (02) 6299-2119
waterwatch@molonglocatchment.com.au
http://www.molonglocatchment.com.au/molonglo_waterwatch.htm

Cooma Region Waterwatch Coordinator

Antia Brademann
Monaro High School
Mittagang Road, Cooma NSW 2629
Phone: (02) 6452-4611
antia@coomawaterwatch.org.au
<http://www.coomawaterwatch.org.au/>

What is Waterwatch?

Waterwatch is a national community water quality monitoring program that encourages all Australians to become involved and active in the protection and management of their waterways and catchments.

Who is Waterwatch?

Waterwatch involves local community groups such as Landcare, Park Care and Catchment groups, as well as residents, schools and landowners who regularly monitor the water quality of local creeks, wetlands, lakes and rivers.

Why monitor?

Healthy catchments produce healthy ecosystems with happy fish, frogs, birds, plants, macro-invertebrates and people. Waterwatch aims to create awareness of water quality issues by involving all members of the community and by forming partnerships between the Waterwatch group and water authorities, resources management authorities, business and industry.

First step

If you are interested in improving the health of your waterway and meeting or forming a group of like-minded individuals, you should begin by contacting your local Waterwatch Coordinator.

Making a difference

Water quality information collected throughout a catchment provides a picture of the health of your waterways. Waterwatch groups have initiated many positive, community based conservation activities such as creek restoration, willow removal, removing litter from waterways, eradicating weeds, development of habitats, and reducing the use of pesticides and other pollutants.

Waterwatch is proudly supported by:



ActewAGL



**Volunteers work for free
but not for nothing!
Our Vision—
Healthy Waterways**

**Upper Murrumbidgee
Waterwatch
is supported by the
ACT and Australian
Governments**

Published by the Environment and Sustainable
Development Directorate (ACT Government)
Enquiries: Phone Canberra Connect on
13 22 81
Website: www.act.waterwatch.org.au

Waterwatch Program enquiries should be
directed to:
Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch Facilitator
ACT Government
Department of the Environment, Climate
Change, Energy and Water
GPO Box 158
Canberra, ACT 2601
Phone 6207 2246
Fax 6207 6084