

Conference told of 'model' emergency response



Success of the Lower Eyre Peninsula Bushfire Program delivered by Rural Solutions SA has led to it providing a model for delivery and management of programs to assist with rebuilding people's lives and livelihoods after the tragedy and trauma.

Program Director Helen Lamont and her team needed to work on several levels and in collaboration with government agencies and the community. Along with PIRSA and DWLBC, the team helped landholders to deal with the many short and medium term issues that overwhelmed them when the fire roared through on 11 January, 2005.

Tragically, nine lives were lost while more than 83,000ha were burnt out, some 42,000 livestock perished, more than 90 homes were destroyed and nearly \$17m worth of primary production lost. The total estimated bill was more than \$100m.

After helping the victims cope with the physical and environmental loss, as well as the emotional trauma – the team worked with its partners to help the landholders handle the financial and continuing emotional stresses and rebuild their lives and businesses. Helen presented a report on the program to the International Emergency Management Conference in March, and Rural Solutions SA presented a trade display at the event.

Winning ways with waste

The EIANZ conference provided a platform to demonstrate the team's practical contributions to organic waste management and its expertise in delivering Environmental Management Systems (EMS).

Rural Solutions SA's Trevor Clark spoke on the development of a waste management manual. Packaged as an interactive CD, it contains 'WASTLOAD' spreadsheet models for helping calculate the best and most sustainable balance of effluent, solids or a combination of both spread on the same area.

"Resource Not Waste, the New Paradigm" : The SA Dairy Effluent Project – was Trevor's second paper (presented on his behalf by Amy Williams) reported on a successful dairy effluent management program tested in the South East of South Australia.

A Dairy Development Guide detailing the process and steps involved in the expansion or building of a new dairy evolved from this process. Details from www.dairyindustrysa.com.au.

The third paper - **Pathways to Industry EMS and Environmental Assessment** by Rural Solutions SA consultant Michael O'Keefe – focused on managing environmental issues resulting from a national trend of pig production expansion. An auditable EMS for all sizes of piggeries was helping to achieve EMS certification up to ISO 14001 level.

For more detail, see www.ruralsolutions.sa.gov.au or phone 1300 364 322 and ask for Trevor Clark or Michael O'Keefe.

Top tips for building business

Delegates to a recent conference were given insights on how to build and maintain a successful consultancy – from people who have done just that.

One of those sharing their experience was Rural Solutions SA consultant Wayne Brown. Wayne explained his team's practical solutions customer approach, drawing on case studies in the wine sector.

"Everyone wants to know how you can make a decent living from consulting," he said. "How you can win and keep customers - and maintain a healthy set of fees.

"I said you have to really master what your 'value proposition' is - what can you offer that sets you apart from the pack? You need to demonstrate you are adding that bit extra to your service and deliverables."

Wayne joined a national panel at the Environmental Institute for Australia New Zealand (EIANZ) Conference.

"The audience really welcomed the panel's response to the question: "What one piece of advice would you give a budding consultant? he said".

"Our activities at Rural Solutions SA put us in touch with land owners, farmers and other businesses who all face specific challenges directly affecting their profits.

"All consultants – budding or otherwise – must demonstrate they can directly benefit a client's business. People pay for outcomes."

For more information, see www.ruralsolutions.sa.gov.au or phone 1300 364 322 and ask for Wayne Brown.

RURAL SOLUTIONS SA newsletter

CONFERENCE ISSUE

The breadth and depth of our team's knowledge and experience is reflected in the range of conferences and expos at which we present. Here is a sample of the 2006-07 events.

A desert full of opportunities

Rural Solutions SA's expertise in Natural Resource Management (NRM) was highlighted at an international conference focusing on sustainable business in desert environments.

The team's case study was a tool developed collaboratively to help communities assess their capacity to run local NRM programs.

The presenters were Jenny Cleary and Karen Cosgrove together with Chris Raymond from the SA Department of Water Land and Biodiversity Conservation.

The venue was the **Desert Knowledge Symposium: Global Desert Opportunities** held in Alice Springs from 1-3 November, 2006.

The event showcased enterprises, innovations, business opportunities, science and technology solutions, culture and collective knowledge thriving in the world's deserts.

The NRM tool and process stimulates capacity-building discussion through a series of statements presented electronically. The South Australian Arid Lands NRM Region was the first community to work with the tool and their trialing and feedback has been invaluable in refining the product.

"The feedback is that it's a useful framework for discussing aspects of community capacity that can sometimes be difficult to quantify or consider," said Jenny Cleary. "For example, the extent to which networks and relationships, trust and the availability of information affect the level of NRM participation."

Rural Solutions SA also presented a showcase to promote its services – providing an excellent platform to demonstrate its practical skills and contribution to the community.

New networks, information and potential customers are all being followed up.

For further information, see www.ruralsolutions.sa.gov.au or phone 1300 364 322 and ask for Karen Cosgrove.

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How are we dealing with Alien invasions?

One of Rural Solutions SA's tasks is pest and plant management. The 15th Australian Weeds Conference last September presented an ideal opportunity for Rural Solutions SA to present some of its work in South Australia.

The team presented on specific species – and the level of research and collaboration was clearly demonstrated.

Question: When is a weed not a weed?

Answer: Ask your local community.

Paper 1 was '**Onion weed: pest or perception?**' Rural Solutions SA's John L Pitt and John G Virtue with Leah J Feuerherdt of Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation proved how a community's views must be considered when deciding where Natural Resource Management dollars are spent. Despite having varying degrees of impact on farming activities, this weed was judged a major concern from a community survey.

Paper 2 presented by Rural Solutions SA's Robin B. Coles looked at '**The distribution of a Western Cape form of bridal creeper (Asparagus asparagoides) in SA and Victoria.**'

This research was undertaken with team member Katrina L. Willing and John G Conran from Adelaide University and Dennis Gannaway of the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, Animal and Plant Control. The study included a GS mapping survey to discover the range and extent of the infestation and an examination of biological control agents.

Paper 3 titled '**The Distribution of Rorippa sylvestris, creeping yellow cress, in South Australia**' was presented by Robin Coles and looked at the favourite places for infestation by this mustard seed family member.

A Rural Solutions SA team comprised of Heidi Nicholson, Katrina Willing and David Creeper presented paper 4 - '**Feral host species limiting the reduction of pesticide use for Codling moth Cydia pomonella (L.) in the Adelaide Hills.**'

For more information, see www.ruralsolutions.sa.gov.au or phone 1300 364 322 and ask for one of our consultants.



Free ranging promotion of services

A Riverland conference learned of the team's digitally-delivered services; soil conservation and pastoral practices; and pest management in Outback South Australia.

A Rural Solutions SA promotional stand also featured – along with a delegate survey a \$250 gift voucher incentive. The stand also attracted attention with its prize of a Garmin handheld GPS (RRP \$600).

The team presented 3 papers.

Jenny Cleary and Ann Johnson from Rural Solutions SA plus Wendy Golder from DFEEST presented '**Outback Connect: Bridging the Digital Divide**' - reporting on the rollout of broadband Internet services and the training initiatives introduced to remote communities, including rangelands areas.

Rural Solutions SA Ali Ben Khan, Adrian Friedel, Simone Lawson together with DWLBC Camilla Osborn have studied soil conditions in the former Kingoonya Soil Conservation District and showed, by photo comparisons of regions, how land systems respond to a variety of factors - from fire, rainfall and grazing to pastoral management practices.

Bethany Greenfield, Ben Shepherd and John Pitt presented '**Delivering Pest Management Solutions in the South Australian Arid Land**'. The team reported on a successful holistic approach in the arid regions, combining planning, on site surveys, on-ground direct pest control and community consultation.

For further information see www.ruralsolutions.sa.gov.au or phone 1300 364 322 and ask for one of our consultants.

Working to ensure fair flow of water



In a very timely paper, consultant Mark Skewes from our Loxton office, reported on more efficient water management.

Delegates at the 5th International Symposium on Irrigation of Horticultural Crops were given the latest scientific research information in irrigation across a broad range of horticultural crops from fruit trees to cut flowers.

With the majority of our horticulture relying on irrigation to maximise yield, there's pressure on water resources from competitive users and the need to clearly demonstrate practices that do not impact on the environment.

From every angle, water means survival – and so water allocations are a hot topic.

Under the South Australian State Water Plan, all water allocations have been converted to a measurable volumetric basis and how these volumes are calculated and allocated can naturally be crucial for seasonal growth and yield.

Mark made the point that the evapotranspiration (Eto) calculation methods need more careful scrutiny and that there are many areas for improvement.

His questioning of current reference data and listing of extra items impacting on results were received as a valuable improvement on assessment methods.

For more information, see www.ruralsolutions.sa.gov.au or phone 1300 364 322 and ask for Mark Skewes.