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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome all

This will be my last Christmas as your Chairman. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and may the coming year bring all you wish. I would like to especially thank the committee who have continued to support the administration and myself. Special thanks to Stu Martin for his untiring efforts during year.

We welcome our new Executive Officer, Jayme Peltz after Chris Alderton moved to greener pastures. Jayme has shown great leadership and we look forward working with him over the coming years.

A quick reflection - Our strategic Environment Initiative, previously the Land & Water Management Plan, is continuing to move forward. The Murtho Road SIS is gaining pace and 2008 should see further ground works commence. Boundaries of the Chowilla Ramsar Site have also progressed.

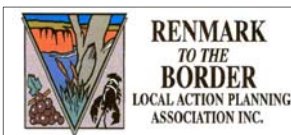
During the year the Committee has hosted various visitors, ran several workshops, conducted tours, and entertained Departmental heads and speakers.

I again thank all those for their support and commitment to the Murtho Road Irrigators and wish all and their families the very best for 2008.

SALT INTERCEPTION SCHEME UPDATE

The Murtho Business Case (approval submission) has been submitted to the Murray Darling Basin Commission meeting last week for the next stage of approval. It has been successful and will have a total of \$3M approved to continue with the construction ready phase of the project. The final approval of \$30M will be made sometime in February when the Murray Darling Basin Commission Ministerial Council Meet. In the mean time SA Water are preparing contracts and awarding tenders for the preliminary works to proceed. AWE has been contracted as the hydrological consulting team who will be completing the SIS designs to a construction ready level. The Engineering Consultants are likely to be finalised soon. Once contracted they will begin to investigate pipeline routes and potential bore locations. The project has also been submitted for Cabinet approval early in the New Year. Once Cabinet approval and MDBC final approval is given work on ground will become more intensive. A meeting will be called for late January with the community representatives and engineering contractors.

The project is looking for work to start on ground around April next year.



IRRIGATION INFORMATION TOUR

The Renmark to the Border Local Action Planning conducted an irrigation information tour on the 25th and 26th of October for 20 irrigators from the Murtho and Pike regions.



THE CREW

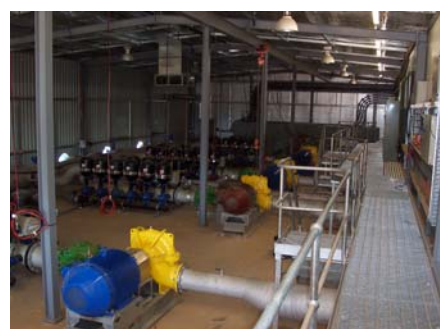
- The tour was conducted over 2 days in which the group traveled some 620km throughout Victoria and NSW and took in 7 farm visits.
- First stop was Aus Citrus in Dareton NSW which is a non profit organisation who supplies budwood and rootstock seed production for distribution
- Next we met with a Board and member irrigator from Western Murray Irrigation Limited in Dareton who are an irrigation trust with three pumping stations (Buronga, Coomealla and Curlwaa) supplying water to 400 irrigators across 4000 hectares.
- Then we traveled to a salt interception scheme disposal basin at Mourquong where we met with the owner of Sun Salt Duncan Thomson. Sun Salt have been operating at the basin since 1979 and has received over a million of tones of salts which it has produced into high quality salt for a range of uses.
- Last stop for the day was John Hendricks property in Mildura where we saw a state of the art fertigation system on citrus and vegetables.
- Friday the 26th saw us travel to Boundary Bend olives a 2800 hectare property who are Australia's largest manager of olives groves with 2.5million trees (6,636 hectares) under management and Australia's largest supplier of olive oil to the domestic market and export markets.



Sun Salt Mourquong



Pump Shed and 500 megalitre dam at Boundary Bend Olives



IRRIGATION INFORMATION TOUR CONT

- Heading back to Robinvale we stopped at Lake Powell Almonds a 4000 hectare property who are undertaking some trial work with Netafim in the use of low flow drip (.6 Lt/Hr).

Scheduling with trunk Phytech Dendrometer sensor with TDR (Time domain reflectometer) and replacing daily ETO's from a nearby weather station.

Phytech Dendrometer sensor at Lake Powell almonds



One of the 300 megalitre dam's and at Lake Powell Almond Farm & Irrigation manager's talking to the group



- Last stop for the tour took in Chalmers Nurseries a 648 hectare property who are seen as the leader in best vineyard management practices in NSW. Last year 3.18 megs of water per hectare plus 1.5 megs of rainfall for production figures of approximately 24 tones per hectare across the property, through a variety of practices including;
- Pre-planning amelioration with the addition of nutrient and organic composted cow manure
- Good irrigation design, control and monitoring
- Weed control
- Reduced soil compaction
- Nutrition
- Commitment to build organic carbon the soil
- No tillage policy

Chalmers Nurseries Vineyard and Dam



Overall the tour was very well received with all that participated gaining some helpful knowledge that they could take home.



REGENT PARROTS

The Department for Environment and Heritage is calling on local landholders and community members to report Regent Parrot sightings. Sighting's are very valuable as they highlight the type of habitats important to the birds. Sightings can also indicate possible threats to the parrot and determine conservation actions to protect the species for the future. Regent parrots are listed as vulnerable at both a state and national level. Currently there are thought to be only 400 breeding pairs in South Australia with about 24 nests between Renmark and Chowilla. Mark Schultz, a Threatened Species Ecologist with the Department said he is particularly interested in hearing from anyone who observes the parrot feeding. "We currently have a good idea of where the birds nest but we need to know more about where they go feed and if they are feeding on the ground, shrubs or trees," he would also like to gather more information on flight paths, preference of foods they are targeting and how often they are flying these corridors in search for food. Regent Parrots nest in the hollows of mature and dead River Red Gums. From these trees they forage in large areas up to 12km from their nests and in agricultural areas such as fruit and almond orchards. Regent Parrots will sometimes feed on insect larvae in addition to the seeds, buds and flowers of native and introduced plants and they need flight corridors of native vegetation that link their nest colonies on the river with good feeding areas such as large intact areas of mallee woodlands, they breed between August and November. All male-feeding flocks can sometimes be seen heading to and from their nests near the River Murray, this is during the 5-week periods where female parrots incubate their eggs and sit with the newly hatched chicks. Regent Parrots are medium sized weighing 160 / 190g, Males may be slightly larger than the females. The male is brightly coloured with a golden-yellow head neck and shoulders. Females and juveniles are similar but are greener, particularly around the head and neck.



To report a Regent Parrot sighting or find out more about these magnificent birds contact Mark Shultz on 8595 2181.

LAP CONTACT DETAILS

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