

## **Minutes of the WISALTS Committee Meeting on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at the 17 Ashby Terrace, Viveash, WA.**

**Present:** Jim Sorgiovanni (Chairman), Lyn Messenger, Neville Marsh, Philip Surtees, Rosemary Bowring, Darrell Turner, Noel Powell, Don Woodcock, Gavin Drew, Pam McGregor (Secretary).

**Open:** The chairman declared the meeting open at 10.02am.

**Apologies for absence:** Tony Ruse.

**Minutes of meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014:** These had been circulated; moved Noel Powell, seconded Gavin Drew that these minutes be accepted as correct. Carried.

### **Business arising from these minutes:**

- 1. Hall of Fame Nomination for HW** – nomination unsuccessful. Discussion at AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015 resolved that a letter be written to the Committee asking why, pointing out that Mr Whittington had received an OAM for services to soil and land conservation in 1992. Draft letter read and approved for sending.
- 2. Brookton CBH** – Discussion resolved that there was no point in keeping this item on the agenda - if they need us, they know where we are.
- 3. Gaps in our knowledge** - transfer to General Business 3.
- 4. Murdoch Collection:** Sue emailed about anything WISALTS needs to do about building up of the two Trust Funds, as well as Sue finding out about costings for scanning all the documents in the Collection. No word from Sue - resolved no action until we hear from her.
- 5. Turner/Powell properties story:** discussion resolved that Darrell, Noel and Don work on this. Do pointed out that the Wheatbelt NRM have just announce that there is some funding available for soil sampling outside usual soil tests which could (if application successful) add data to the story.
- 6. Updating WISALTS web site** - Sepi had recommended changing from Westnet to increase search engine optimisation; Don had found a free hosting site which he will further investigate - depending on GB3 decision!!
- 7. Wave Rock** - discussion resolved that Gavin and Neville will progress.
- 8. Information Day Format** - resolved move to General Business 3.
- 9. Tim Stevenson's Research Project** – copy of Frank D'Emden's presentation to the AGM received and emailed to Committee - tabled.
- 10. Visits to Turners** - after much discussion, resolved that when work is being done at Aldersyde, we invite Arthur Conacher, Ken Baston (Minister for Agriculture), Ken Travers (Shadow Minister), Darren West, Rick Mazza, Andrew Watson and Buddy Wheaton to visit. *With having to lodge a NOID this work might not happen in 2015.*
- 11. Denmark Vineyard** – Jim spoke with Tony who is not interested in doing anything on the vineyard but is interested in doing something in the valley below which is waterlogged. Tony has extended an invitation to anyone interested to visit.  
Much discussion resulted in Noel Powell moving that Pam write Tony to advise that he needs to make a decision about whether he wants to have work done on the Denmark property, be prepared to pay for time and travel of consultant(s) to come to the property to prepare a plan with some estimate of costing, and supervise the work should it proceed. Seconded Don Woodcock and carried.  
Further discussion reminded those present that work planned must treat the cause of the problem not the symptom, should begin at the top of the catchment over which the owner of the property has control, with the first bank being a control bank to enable good results downslope.  
The Information Day previously discussed at Tony's northern property would need an excavator onsite; while it could be seen as a PR exercise for WISALTS, payment would have to be made to WISALTS speakers for their time and travel. The day should show the WHY not the HOW!

- 12. Chittering Orchard** – discussion resolved that Gavin and Noel follow up data collection with Mr Redgrave re quality and quantity of wine and oranges, rainfall figures, production statistics, lowering of sodium content of grapes etcetera. Also Gavin and Noel to ask Mr Redgrave that if WISALTS could interest one of the farming papers in doing a story, would he be willing for that to happen.
- 13. Good WISALTS Stories** – discussion resolved that documentation including as much data as possible is important and needs to be done. Pam to ring Brian Baxter and ask if he would write his story (think he did the banks before plastic); Ian Collard's story (especially with the quick response) could be put in the WISALTS News; involving the farming press in writing up some articles. Pam has a list started - to be circulated to Committee for their additions.
- 14. From General Business 3 last meeting - any further action needed?????** Solving Land Degradation the WISALTS Way and research needed – an article found which was part of the show bag that Jim developed for agricultural shows. No further action.
- 15. Jim's contact with John Deere** he'd heard of a scraper doing curve drains (easier to drive machinery over) and wondered if it could be useful for doing WISALTS banks. Discussion resolved that seeding equipment and the curve drains don't go together! Pam to ring Bill Fraser of Quairading (Peter had spoken with) about the benefits he has had from WISALTS banks - perhaps another WISALTS story.
- 16. Research project at the Powell/Turner properties** - plan is to put in the bank without a bank before seeding 2015 (*but NOID may put the kibosh on that plan!*). There are two banks to be filled in that have plastic below; they have never had water in them (*don't think that needs an NOID!*) so photos will be taken before and after and data kept. Darrell and Noel are concerned about the weed spread from the banks so looking at whether a grader bank (when a bank is needed) might make it easier for the boom spray to be closer to the ground to reduce the weed burden. Again keeping data and photos would be of benefit to a good WISALTS story.
- 17.** Questions to Callum Love of NACC re the unsuccessful application for funding: much discussion on this including the following points: 80 - 90 years of research into the salinity issue by AGWA has still seen salinity increase; when Richard George and Mark Pridham visited Aldersyde, they agreed that the banks were working but weren't scientific so they can't recommend them; suggestion that AGWA be required to prove that water is coming up under pressure was discussed but decided it would be a waste of or time; WISALTS had met with four AGWA people at Moora one of which (Mark Pridham) came to Aldersyde with Richard George but Andrew Watson, Commissioner of Soils was unaware of those meetings. The following questions were documented: Committee requested to send Pam any additional questions by the evening of Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March and she will forward them to Jim.

You say that WISALTS has been well documented.

Which documents are you referring to and who did the documentation?

May we have a list of those documents?

There was quite a deal of Department of Agriculture assessment done on Whittington Interceptor Banks done in the 1970's and early 1980's, well before the introduction by WISALTS of plastic sheeting to assist sealing of banks and later on, the identification of underground barriers on which the system is now based.

How can anything to do with reversing degradation have a determination in two years? Land takes a long time to degrade. To expect results in two years is generally unrealistic for many solutions, although we do have properties with Whittington Interceptor Bank Systems where some results have been shown the following year (Ian Collard's at Badgingarra and Redgrave's orchard/vineyard at Chittering).

Did anyone on the panel have any hands on knowledge of today's WISALTS system? It has changed since the 1970's!

Did they know that rebalancing the water/air ratio increased microbial count in the soil? We know that one farmer, Brian Baxter at Perenjori did microbial counts on his property in the mid 1980s which showed an increase in microbial counts although he is unable to find that documentation.

What is your understanding of how the current Whittington Interceptor Bank System works?

#### **Correspondence out since last meeting:**

- 1** Minutes & reports to members plus arrangements for March meeting with agenda.
- 2** Invites to September Field Day
- 3** WISALTS News sent to members and supporters in August and December 2014, and January 2015 (AGM Notice included).
- 4** To most Committee re Life Membership for Noel - all agreed, presented at AGM.

- 5 Requests to ABC and Radio West Stations to publicise AGM.
- 6 Various re organising Frank D'Emden, Precision Agronomics Australia to be guest speaker at AGM.
- 7 Various to farming press - letters and report of Field Day and AGM - both farming papers printed at least some reports and some photos of each.
- 8 Thank you email to Frank D'Emden, then asking for report on Tim and Steph's place
- 9 Various to Imprint Plastics and former life members re badges; reply from Lyndon with photos; emailed Imprint again to ask for cost of supplying three or six badges.
- 10 Email with belated thanks to Danny, Venue Manager, Pig and Whistle, thanking him for complimentary morning tea and venue; booking 2016 AGM there for Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February. *Reply from him, saying give him a call closer to the date.*

Moved Gavin Drew, seconded Don Woodcock that outward be endorsed and the inward dealt with. Carried.

#### **Correspondence In at Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

- 1 Email from Frank D'Emden with 13 documents (one a summary, two others the same in different formats; emailed to the Committee plus. Copy done for Neville, another copy to be done for Gavin.
- 2 From Rob Bradley - paper "Things I have learnt about water divining - a layman's guide, gleaned over 38 years from various sources" - copied for committee+. He requested information about Laurie's divining and the proposal was to send him a Consultant's file. Discussion expressed concern about why he wanted the information and whether the file should be just on loan; *after the meeting, Neville found a 14 page document in his file from Laurie about divining so resolved that that be emailed in pdf (thanks Don) to Rob. Pam to get Rob's email address and send.*
- 3 DVD compiled by Mary Sorgiovanni of a large range of WISALTS documents - copies done with a typed list of the contents and given to everyone present. Jim has six remaining copies so if you would like one, please ask him.
- 4 Imprint Plastics - quote received of \$8.80 (incl. GST) plus freight for 25mm or 35mm life member badges. Resolved order six.

#### **Reports:**

1. **Meetings with Department of Agriculture personnel:** 24<sup>th</sup> July in the Moora Department of Agriculture office with John Ruprecht, Mark Pridham, Russell Speed and Don Telfer; 1<sup>st</sup> September with Richard George and Mark Pridham at Aldersyde; reports sent to Committee. Possibly maintain a rapport with them but put to GB3.
2. **Attendance at Northam NRM debate:** As a results, letters sent to farming papers and published. Resolved no further action.
3. **Field Day 12<sup>th</sup> September at Aldersyde:** Reports and photo in two farming papers. Discussion resolved that non-members present be put on our mailing list with free membership to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015; send membership a/c for the 2015/2016 year .
4. **Field Officer's Report:** Gavin's report copied for everyone present (emailed to Brian and Tony. The report was on a Field Day that Gavin (and Jim) attended about a new salt tolerant grass NyPa at Gillingara. Takes a lot of time and expense to establish form cuttings, needs wet salty ground, a bulldozer with ripper; initially seedling planted 5 - 6 metres apart in 2006 and they have now joined up. Another Nypa day planned for 30/31 March but not sure where. Gavin felt quite strongly that DAFWA should be challenged to prove that water is coming up from deep down under pressure. Much discussion on this but eventually decided against it.

<b><u>Financial Report</u></b> – Neville reported balance at 30 January 2015 of		\$4,558.75
In since then:	Subs	\$200.00
	Donations to air fare	\$250.00
	Interest	\$ 1.87
		\$ 451.87
		\$4,010.62
Out since then:	Fares for Frank D'Emden	\$525.81
	Insurance	\$594.05
	Website (Sepi)	\$ 60.00
		\$1, 179.86
Balance at 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2015		\$2,803.76

Moved Philip Surtees, seconded Gavin Drew that the report be accepted. Carried.

## General Business:

1. **Rules and regulations for intercepting groundwater/** Notice of Intention to Drain (NOID) required. Don had contacted Buddy Wheaton, DAFWA Research Officer (offsider to Commissioner of Soils) and in short: If a landholder is draining/moving subsurface/groundwater from one area to another, the landholder should notify the Commissioner via the NOID (\$50 fee) process. Don will email the emails to and from Buddy to the Committee+. It should be noted that 'other land' includes the same property or/and downstream properties. In the 90 days after the Commissioner registers the NOID, the Commissioner will circulate the NOID to various departments and districts who may then call to discuss the matter with the landholder. If nothing is heard in the 90 days, the landholder can proceed. In the discussion that followed about the implications for the installation of Whittington Interceptor Banks systems, it was agreed that it was good insurance for WIBS, a professional thing to do and fulfils our social responsibility. Pam and Don to work on a draft 'Policy Document' to cover this.
2. **Next WISALTS News** - include mention of Neale Pike's letter re his company Prime Earthmoving - discussion resolved we give him a complimentary mention in the next WISALTS News (Pam to prepare draft from his letter and email it to Neale for OK before printing) pointing out that it is printed in black and white not colour; any further mention at the rate of \$100 per advert. Mention made that if he was to construct WISALTS banks, then supervision would be essential.
3. **Where to from here:** there was a wide-ranging discussion with input from most people round the table (though several members initially round the table had to leave before this section because of other appointments). Don had a copy of the Five Year Plan developed in 2007 and suggested that it could still, in spite of being prepared eight years ago, be a good place to start.

*I have found that on my computer, so attach it just in case you don't have it. If you would like a printed copy, please let me know and I will post one to you.*

*Headings from that are in bold below although what follows is what we discussed/resolved on Friday. The advantage I have as your Secretary is that I can add in some bits as these come to mind as I am typing up the minutes, so have done so - in italics - for you to agree with or chuck out!*

Don went through that document's strategic plan, but most of it is for later consideration. So what follows first is the content of our discussions in relation to some headings in the Strategic Plan, then I have included comments made which need consideration in the preparing of our Management Plan/Strategy.

### **"Uniformity of message"**

**What message to we want people to understand now as well as into the future?** That the Whittington Interceptor Bank System balances water in the soil and by doing that, restores soil health and structure, and balances the water-to-soil ratio.

**Promotion:** a new brochure is required (*could we find a sponsor to print it??*); action - gather all previous known publications and send to Secretary Pam who will prepare a list for distribution to Committee for further action to be decided. The web page must be kept up-to-date so a person needs to be made responsible for ensuring that this is done.

**Field days, training courses, information days** - this will be dealt with later in the year.

### **"Public understanding and acceptance of concept"**

**Success Stories:** Pam has a list of many success stories (*attached*) which she will send to Committee for members to add to. Consultants to be asked to prepare a list of all the places on which they have worked. Current and future work by all consultants must be well-recorded. Pam to contact Brian Baxter to ask him to write up his story. *Could we ask other folk to write up their stories???? Would it be an idea, once we have the updated brochure, to offer a consultant to various other groups who care about their land/production etcetera to speak about the Whittington Interceptor Bank System and our uniform message of what it does? (And this suggestion is after a comment from Gavin in a chat yesterday.) We used to have a power point/slide presentation but I'm really thinking of a 20 minute speech (the why not the how so it needn't necessarily be a consultant), hand out the brochures which would have consultants names/contacts and answer questions (sticking to the why not the how!!)*

**Future Work:** It is vitally important that photos are taken before (and after); that as much data is collected before (as well as after) by way of, for example, soil tests; rainfall and any other applicable records must be kept.

**“Professionally publish handbook of principles and their application”**

Would this include the consultant’s handbook? As Noel mentioned AGE as being a problem, this is fairly important to capture the huge amount of knowledge in the consultants heads! You may remember Don asking me about Holistic Management and I mentioned the Aide Memoire. Allan Savory developed this for planning the grazing in both the open (growing) season and closed (non-growing) season and it is invaluable. When talking with Jim about this, he said that WISALTS needed an Aide Memoire for consultants to follow from the first contact with a potential client. I will ask Jim to have a look at the Consultants Handbook and see what he thinks but it may well need a few changes to make it more consultant-proof!

**Comments which (in my opinion) relate to developing our plan/strategy** - there were lots of other comments which were more related to future research on banks etcetera.

We need to do something different to stop going round in circles.

Challenging DAFWA won’t change the textbooks.

A management plan is the action of what’s needed in the Society.

We need to have steps forward.

The AGE of all of us involved - well most of us!

Dates on any brochures/aide memoires produced.

Need to be able to SHOW people so photos and actual data records essential and extremely important for before and after.

Focus on what’s in any action **for** the Society - keep our actions in the box.

*So, initially we need a plan for the next 12 months (or 11 till the next AGM).*

*Shortening some of the headings from the 2007 Strategic Plan, it could look something like this:*

<b>What do we want to achieve;</b>	<b>what’s needed to achieve it;</b>	<b>who will do it,</b>	<b>by when.</b>
Uniformity of message	Develop message	All Committee	Done!!
New brochure	Look at old ones - if you have any, send to Pam	All Committee	End of March
All committee having old ones	Send all to all	All committee	End of March
Promotion	Web page kept current	Pam	7 <sup>th</sup> April
Success stories written up	Initial list of these to all	Need a person	Volunteer?
	Add other potential ones	Pam	10 <sup>th</sup> March
	Them or someone else to write up the stories	All	End March
	Mention in WISALTS News	???	End May?
Public Understanding of WIBS	Success stories	Pam	Varies
	Data records of work	All	???
An Aide Memoire for consultants	Revise current handbook	Consultants	???
		Consultants	???

4. 2015 Field Day - resolved discuss later in the year after Management Plan developed.

**Next Meeting:** Resolved that this be held on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at the Uniting Church Hall, Swanview (or - depending on the season - 26<sup>th</sup> June or 3<sup>rd</sup> July).

**Close:** Jim declared the meeting closed at 3.16pm.