

W.I.S.A.L.T.S.

NEWS

JANUARY 2015

Whittington Interceptor Sustainable Agriculture Land Treatment Society Inc

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

A snippet from an article from Perth City Farm, managed by Men of Trees: "Make use of every drop of water that falls on the land Their slogan is SLOW, SPREAD and SINK using earthworks to store water in the soil. Plant the water first and everything else will follow."

The above should give us food for thought as it makes good common sense. Hopefully the past year and festive season has been as good or better than you hoped for.

In April we had a google earth workshop which Don Woodcock organised. This will help WISALTS to put plans from paper which will eventually fade to a dvd or memory stick which will not fade. All details were in the May 2014 WISALTS News. *(Contact our Secretary if you need a copy!)*

We have been able to get approval from a landowner in the Aldersyde area to monitor plastic sheeted banks that have been filled in, to check if water will move through where plastic has been cut by the knife points. Thanks to Noel and Darrell for taking time out from their busy schedule to do this. They also plan, time permitting, to plastic sheet a barrier without a bank to monitor this way of construction which could allow more freedom of movement for machinery.

In July we met with DAFWA in Moora resulting in visit by Dr Richard George and Mark Pridham to the Turner/Powell property; details were in the December WISALTS News. We were informed by Dr George that Dutch engineers research and plan their projects from an office; he also suggested that we should inform the landowners what's required after the WISALTS system has been implemented which we do in a broad sense.

As outlined in letters to the Countryman and Farm Weekly mentioned in the December WISALTS News in Gavin's report, we would be more than willing to work with Agronomists and any other soil management organisation as this is their area of expertise. As for researching and planning a WISALTS system from an office, I do not know a lot about subsurface imagery, how deep can it go, can it define barriers and throughflows etc; much more research is needed for this to be clarified.

The Field Day in September was very successful as the people that attended were genuinely interested in understanding why WISALTS are doing what they do.

In the December issue it was mentioned that Gavin and I were communicating with NACC to get them involved; we succeeded and with their help we were able to apply for funding for two projects, one in the south and one in the north of the NAR.

A HUGE THANK YOU to the committee and all involved especially secretary PAM for helping make the year a successful one and my job so much easier. Once again thank you one and all. See you all at the AGM.

Regards. Jim

Annual General Meeting Friday 6th February 2015

Just a reminder and update!!

Venue: the Pig and Whistle Bar and Bistro on Morrison Road, Swanview.

Timing: 9.30am for a cuppa; 10am start with the AGM, guest speaker Mr Frank D'Emden from Precision Agronomics Australia who has results of some electromagnetic survey research work at the Stevenson's farm near Kojonup. Frank will also talk about other surveys offered by the company, and discussions on the future of WISALTS.

Members and friends are encouraged to join in the morning; stay and buy your own lunch and maybe a committee meeting in the afternoon.

If you plan to come, would you mind giving me a ring or flick me an email so that I can make sure there's enough biscuits! (And it also gives the Pig and Whistle an idea of how many extras there could be for lunch!)

I have to let them know on Monday 2nd February, so contact by then would be appreciated—thank you.

Phone is 08 9831 0401
Mobile 0417 942 326
Email MAYBENUP@bigpond.com

Pam McGregor, Secretary

**RESULTS THAT SPOKE
FOR THEMSELVES!**

Full report inside!

Format for the Annual General Meeting:

In an effort to inform all members and supporters as well as to save a little time at the AGM, the President's Report (on the front page), the Audited Financial Statement (two inserted double sided pages) and the Field Officer's Report (below) are included in this issue of the WISALTS News. There is also an up-to-date financial report from Treasurer Neville Marsh (below).

Jim, Gavin and Neville are all very happy to answer any questions on Friday 6th.

The Guest Speaker will be Mr Frank D 'Emden of Precision Agronomics Australia which will be a very worthwhile session—Frank is bringing along his projector with slides of the research results from the Stevenson's farm at Kojonup. And again, Frank is happy to answer questions.

Hopefully there will then be time before lunch to have some discussion on "Where to from here" for WISALTS—some thoughts included on page 4 from Vice President Don Woodcock

From Gavin Drew WISALTS Senior Consultant and Field Officer: 20 January 2015

Gavin has written reports in each issue of the WISALTS News this past 12 months, so this is adding to those. Please note that Gavin is happy to answer questions at the AGM on Friday 6th February.

Since the last WISALTS Newsletter, some progress has taken place in regard to the application for finance towards the funding of interceptor banks on a Red Gully farm owned by L.G. & B.H. Timms.

The application is to control waterlogging and overcome areas of salinity which has developed over the years despite efforts by the previous owner to drain the country by means of shallow surface drains. This is a great opportunity to show that the interceptor banks can succeed where drains have failed.

The application is being put in by Lindsay Timms with the help of Roger Walker of NACC and based on surveying and planning which I have carried out with Lindsay.

The concept has been developed as a joint exercise between myself representing WISALTS and NACC in order to give the exercise a public appearance.

I have been given a copy of the completed application which I will discuss with the other consultants and put on the WISALTS file.

There is no time set for a decision on the application as yet but I am hoping for a decision in time for our AGM.

I am prepared to answer any questions at the meeting.

Our President Jim Sorgiovanni has also applied for a grant for a small property in the Geraldton area. Jim will report on this project.

Financial Statement from 1st November to 31st December 2014

Income since audit:		Expenditure:	
Memberships	\$1,350.00	Hall Hire	\$110.00
Cheque account interest	\$ 1.34	Rural Press	\$ 50.00
Transfer from Term Deposit	\$1,499.70	Print/post	\$ 64.35
Total In	\$2,857.04	Total Out	\$214.35
Term Deposit maturing 13.05.2015			\$11,223.89
Cheque account balance at 31.12.2014			\$ 3,457.74

WISALTS Committee 2014—2015

Under the WISALTS Constitution, five of the Committee of ten retire each year and are eligible for re-election; from these ten, the President and other officers are elected.

Elected at the AGM in February 2014 were Noel Powell (Leschenault), Tony Ruse (Perth, Gingin and Denmark), Neville Marsh (Hyden), Lyn Messenger (Brookton) and Phil Surtees (Muehea). Mrs Rosemary Bowring (Brookton) was elected for one year to fill the vacancy created by the passing of Laurie Adamson, completed 6th February 2015, and Mrs Bowring is eligible for re-election.

Elected in 2013 were Jim Sorgiovanni (Geraldton), Gavin Drew (Gingin), Brian Whittington (Bakers Hill), Don Woodcock (Quairading). *These members complete their two year term at the AGM on Friday 6th February 2015 and are eligible for re-nomination.*

President: Jim Sorgiovanni 9923 2771

Senior Vice President: Don Woodcock 0429 455 210

Junior Vice President: Lyn Messenger 9642 1018

Field Officer and Senior Consultant: Gavin Drew 9575 4023

Training Officer : Jim Sorgiovanni 9923 2771

Treasurer: Neville Marsh 9880 0025

Appointed Secretary: Mrs Pam McGregor 9831 0401

Email: maybenup@bigpond.com Post: P O Box 301, Kojonup 6395

WISALTS Consultants

Gavin Drew, Gingin 9575 4023

Noel Powell, Australind and Aldersyde 9796 1507

Jim Sorgiovanni, Geraldton 9923 2771

Lyn Messenger, Brookton 9642 1018

Brian Whittington, Bakers Hill 0427 328 068,

Darrell Turner, Aldersyde 9642 6014

If you would like a chat about solving some land degradation problems, please contact one of the consultants.

There are positive ways of fixing waterlogging and salinity problems! With the experience built up over the decades since Mr Harry Whittington OAM developed the first Interceptor Banks, and with the use of plastic sheeting since 1986, the consultants are confident in being able to return balance to the landscape, to rebalance the water/air ratio in the A and B horizons of the soil structure. New technology doesn't make Interceptor banks irrelevant!

Report on the 2014 WISALTS Field Day “Results that speak for themselves”

Good news is hard to come by in salt land reclamation. Darrell and Suzanne Turner of Aldersyde with Suzanne’s father, Noel Powell, have successfully returned 80 ha of salt degraded land to productive grain growing.

Other areas of waterlogged land on the properties are now producing even crops across the whole WISALTS protected catchments.

As long term believers in the Whittington Interceptor Bank System, Darrell and Noel, both accredited consultants with WISALTS, planned and surveyed and then installed with their own excavator and bulldozer, the banks necessary to control the sub-surface water flows creating the downslope problems.

In the early days of WISALTS (a play on “Why Salt?”) and still today, the aim is to return degraded land to production of crops and pastures. The Turner and Powell properties do have results that speak for themselves, ensuring a viable and productive farm in a district that has its share of salt affected land.

Darrel and Noel demonstrated, in the excavator trench, the seepage of fresh water flowing through the soil profile 24/365 which was creating waterlogging problems in the crop downslope. The problem of intercepting and controlling that water is made almost 100% effective with the use of plastic sheeting on top of the underground barriers – and regular monitoring.

The need to create the balance of water and air in the soil was highlighted as fundamental to the production of viable crops and pastures.

With the emphasis for increasing food production towards 2050 and the toll on productive farm land by increasing urbanisation, it makes good sense to rescue degraded land in the good productive agricultural areas.

The Hon Rick Mazza MLC found the day of interest as he puts a high importance on finding out what is happening in his Agricultural Region. Both in the Aldersyde Hall and out in the paddock, the questions came thick and fast,

TRIAL OF MODIFIED BANKS From Consultant Noel Powell

Over the last few years I have been trying to think of a better way to install WISALT banks to fit in with modern farming practices.

The problem at present is weed control on banks and also getting long runs to enable the GPS to be effective with the ever increasing size of machinery.

One of my earlier suggestions was to make a bank that we could work over: constructed with a grader to make a rollover type bank.

But machinery sizes have got bigger and bigger and we would now need more cover to protect the plastic which would be less cost effective.

Darrell Turner suggested we go and have a look at some plastic lined banks that had been filled in by the new lessee to see if they were still working.

We checked the banks for leaks, either over the top of the plastic and also under the plastic. There was not one leak. These banks were constructed approximately 14 years ago and worked over approximately 7 years ago.

This brought us to the conclusion that we could still use plastic sheeting but could finish it 30 cm below the surface. The idea to hold the plastic, while being back filled, was to dig a 30cm trench so the plastic can be held in place with soil.

We believe that minimum till will take care of surface water because it has made the ground softer and absorbs a lot more moisture. The plastic still being used to control sub surface water will result in the soil becoming more pliable. This system would solve the problems I mentioned earlier.

I want you all to understand this is an idea which needs to be trialled and perfected. The Turner / Powells are willing to try this idea with the modified bank in between two normal banks so we can compare the results. It does not mean there isn’t a place for key banks in the system where we must control surface water.

ALL WORK MUST BE SURVEYED AND SUPERVISED BY WISALTS CONSULTANTS!

Quotable Quote

"Most "impossible" goals can be met simply by breaking them down into bite size chunks, writing them down, believing them, and then going full speed ahead as if they were routine."
US writer **Don Lancaster**.

TIP: Set SMART goals
(SMART = Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely)

Food for thought perhaps!!

AUSTRALIAN FARMLAND CONSERVANCY

Don Woodcock provided the link to the website of The Australian Farmland Conservancy which has a vision to create multi-generational farms that provide income and yield whilst regenerating the soil and environment. By empowering people to develop the capacity to build resilient communities through regenerative agricultural activities that are synergistic with the local ecology, and producing nutrient dense foods for the local and wider markets.

"The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself"
(Roosevelt 1937)

Agricultural land in Australia is being degraded by industrial agricultural management with an estimated 89 million tonnes of topsoil being lost each year at an average rate of 4.7 tonnes/ha/yr with a range of 0.5 - 14 tonnes.

The Australian Farmland Conservancy's vision is to reverse this degradation by implementing best practice regenerative agricultural methods that build topsoil, maintain vegetation cover, rehydrate the landscape and provide food and water security to communities.

The Australian Farmland Conservancy aims to raise more than \$100 million from ethical investors to purchase and regenerate 100,000 hectares of farm land. The purchase of land will enable the demonstration of agro-ecological and permaculture methods to produce diverse economic yields that are reproducible across agricultural soils and climates in the Australian context.

One part of the regeneration will be using an appropriate mix of native bush foods and exotic plants to strategically re-vegetate 30% of the land to provide protected corridors for native animals. To provide the opportunity to manage, harvest and value add a range of perennial wild harvest foods.

Their Goals: 20 Year 70% of farmers have adopted better practice regenerative agricultural methods; 2000 New farmers practising regenerative agriculture in Australia; Adoption of the Farmland Conservancy model in most Australia states and other countries

10 year 100,000 hectares - \$100,000,000; 500 New farmers practising regenerative agriculture in Western Australia

Promotion of the Farmland Conservancy model in other states and countries

5 year 10,000 hectares - \$10,000,000 Promote better practice regenerative agricultural methods; Profitable return to investors

3 year 5,000 hectares - \$5,000,000 Develop and adapt better practice regenerative agricultural method

Immediate Engage supporters of the Australian Farmland Conservancy; Raise funds to develop the company structure; Company registration - Financial modelling, corporate structure and law >\$20,000; Purchase of Land, stock and initial set up > \$1,000,000.

Lots more information on their website:
<http://www.australianfarmlandconservancy.com.au>

Committee member Tony Ruse sent this information about a **Field Day and Workshop about NyPa, a new grass which will soak up lots of water.**

Join the West Koojan-Gillingarra LCDC to hear the latest information on NyPa grass project and to discuss issues related to groundwater discharge in the region.

When: Monday, 16 February 2015; Time: 9:00am to 3:30pm; Cost: FREE (Morning tea and Lunch provided).

Where: Starts at NyPa Project Site, Gillingarra (Peter Kelly's property) and followed by presentations in the Gillingarra Community Hall. For direction, please take Bindoon Moora Rd (State Rd 116). Peter's property is 30 old km.

RSVP Essential by Wednesday 11 Feb 2015 for catering purpose. RSVP John Longman on 9653 1672 or Rebecca Kelly on becgillingarra@gmail.com

Featured speakers are: Russell Speed, DAFWA's regional hydrologist; Dr Dean Revell, principal consultant of Revell Science; Professor Alan Lymbery will talk about the efficacy of NyPa grass in reducing nutrient loads from waste water.; John Leake, Director and founder of NyPa Australia Ltd; Ray Matthews, local farmer in Wickepin.

Jim Sorgiovanni and Gavin Drew are hoping to attend.

Where to for WISALTS?

This was a question I posed to the Committee a few months ago as I am concerned about what the future for our Society is, given non-acceptance by Government bodies, apparent lack of take-up by farmers of a method that works well when properly planned, installed and monitored. One set of comments below which might start some thinking! Pam McGregor Secretary for one more year.

From Don Woodcock, Quairading:

Regarding where is WISALTS going, Review of the 5 year plan is required. Questions needed to be answered, written down and addressed are (just for starters);

1. Why is WISALTS not adopted? (a bit similar to Yeomans Keyline)
2. Can the land management (agricultural management) be adapted to suit a WISALT system? - How?
3. Can WISALT be adapted to suit the current Ag system? - How? What are the principles of WISALTS? - can the actions be modified to suit
4. Does WISALT need a business plan? Has WISALTS done its job?
5. Do 'farmers/land managers' need another major biological collapse before they will consider listening to alternatives?
6. Does WISALTS narrow its focus on the projects that it has going to make those better instead of trying to expand? Add you own questions and answers for discussion.

My thoughts are (as I have previously said);

Soil/Water management is imperative to rebuild biology Many techniques can address this aspect. Some of them are cheaper and as effective as engineering solutions.

I think we could go back to a statement I made back in my deep drainage days, and that is; 'we can try to change the landscape to suit an agricultural management practice. Or we could change an agricultural management practice to suit the landscape. One of the actions is very expensive'

I think that by 'value adding' to the work that has been done and finding a better marketing mechanism may enable a way forward.