

WESTERN CATCHMENT LANDCARE FORUM STEERING COMMITTEE

MEDIA RELEASE

3 September 2007

WESTERN CATCHMENT FORUM GREAT SUCCESS

More than 100 people from the Western Catchment and beyond attended the Western Catchment Landcare Forum in Cobar on Saturday, September 1.

The Buckwaroon and Mount Boppy Landcare Groups and the Kergunyah Rangecare Group hosted the forum, whose theme was "*Soil Sustainability in the Western Catchment*".

Guest speakers included Don Burke, Chairperson of the Australian Environment Foundation, who officially opened the forum. Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute, Mick Keogh outlined carbon sequestration, carbon trading and future developments in this area. Also featured were Colin Seis of Stipa Native Grasses Association who discussed pasture cropping and soil health, Ray Thomson of the Central West Catchment Management Authority who discussed rangeland rehabilitation and Dr Peter Mitchell a soil scientist who spoke about changes in the underlying premises of soil science in Australia.

Western CMA Community Support Officer, Suzie Bunting, said that as well as Catchment residents from Broken Hill, Brewarrina, Bourke, Wilcannia, Lightning Ridge, Nymagee, Canbelego, Louth and Cobar, there were also a number from outside the Catchment.

People also attended from Ivanhoe, Girilambone, Nyngan, Muswellbrook, Wagga Wagga, Orange and Darwin.

"Despite the prolonged drought we are experiencing, the atmosphere was very positive and people were very interested in the speakers and the field trips, Ms Bunting said.

"Most participants agreed that to remain sustainable in agriculture, they must change with the times, try new ideas and think outside the circle.

"The need to consider the long-term implications of their management decisions to ensure they remain viable in the future was also a common theme.

"Participants were particularly interested in learning new ways to establish and maintain groundcover and the effect of micro-organisms on soil health.

"Main concerns were the Native Vegetation Act and gaining an understanding of carbon trading," Ms Bunting said.

In the afternoon participants chose one of three field trips including a tour of the Peak Gold Mine and Cobar township, conservation farming at Osterley Downs owned by Robert and Donna Chambers or a tour of Mt Drysdale Conservation Area owned by Shirley and Michael Mitchell, which showcases unusual native vegetation and Aboriginal heritage and European settler sites.

"People enjoyed the opportunity of mixing with others in their industry and the field trips were very popular," Ms Bunting said.

"Delegates enjoyed dinner and the presentation of the Country Energy Western Catchment Environmental Care Award to the Buckwaroon Catchment Landcare Group for their efforts as a community group over the past 13 years.

“After dinner entertainment was provided by Bourke local and CMA staffer, Andrew Hull, and his bush poetry.

“This forum built on the success of last year’s forum in White Cliffs, so it was great to see the momentum continue and to see such enthusiasm and interest, despite tough climatic conditions,” she said.

ENDS - For further information contact:

Suzie Bunting, Community Support Officer, Western CMA on (02) 6836 2575 or

Captions:

Roberts_Burke_Sullivan:

Dougall Roberts, NSW Farmers Regional Service Manager, Bourke, Don Burke, Australian Environment Foundation and Lachlan Sullivan, "The Meadows", Cobar

Mitchell_Mitchell_Steele:

Michael Mitchell, "Mt Drysdale" Cobar, Dr Peter Mitchell, Speaker from Groundtruth Consulting, Gladesville NSW, Louella Steele, "Mundadoo" Girilambone

MtDrysdale:

Field trip to Mt Drysdale