

SEARCH CRITERIA

Model	Model C: Technological Development Model
Industry	Agriculture, conservation
Focus/Level	Community
Purpose	Testing available knowledge
Outcomes	Development of a management practice
Special Interest Groups	Other
Design and Implementation	Designed and managed by researchers/experts

1. PROJECT TITLE:

Living Landscapes

2. FUNDERS:

Greening Australia, WA.
Alcoa World Alumina
Natural Heritage Trust.

3. PROVIDERS:

Greening Australia, WA.

4. KEY CONTACTS:

Dr Rob Lambeck. CEO Greening Australia WA
Ms Tricia Gowdie. Project Manager Greening Australia WA
Ms. Anne Smith. Project Officer. Greening Australia WA

5. INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY:

Central wheatbelt of Western Australia.

6. PROJECT CONTEXT:

The project aims to improve the ecological health of landscapes in agricultural systems by integrating nature conservation into the farming landscape so that life on the land continues both the native flora and fauna and for farmers and their families.

The landscape within which this project is conducted is between 90-97 per cent cleared. Broadacre agriculture dominates the region. The remnant vegetation is biodiverse rich.

The social context of this project were 2 landcare catchment groups during the pilot phase of the project and 4 landcare catchment groups established once the project began in earnest. The majority of these groups have been established more than 10 years and have been receiving Alcoa World Alumina sponsorship for more than 8 years.

7. PROJECT NICHE (SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES):

The aim of this project is to:

Assist community groups develop landscape management practices which protect biological diversity within an economically viable and sustainable landuse system.

Its specific objectives are to:

- Develop, in partnership with communities in rural landscape, workable nature conservation plan that integrate nature conservation needs with evolving agricultural production systems
- Research and define the attitudes, values and perceptions individuals have for nature conservation;
- Identify the guiding principles and process that may be adapted by other catchment groups and their partners in order to develop contextually relevant nature conservation plans and implementation strategies;
- Identify the skills and knowledge needed by those working with the groups in order to develop adaptive and dynamic landscape management plans.

8. PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH:

Living Landscapes is a project that recognises that in developing a nature conservation planning process, the economic priorities of agriculture must ultimately merge with the ecological priorities of the natural environment. Arising from the melding of these priorities into a planning process will be new understandings, tools and techniques that may be used to encourage landscape management that benefits the natural environment.

9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES:

Managed by Greening Australia, funds received from a bequest made to GA; Alcoa World Alumina and NHT. Total funds are approximately \$400,000 administered over 5 years.

Field staff are located in Northam WA.

10. PROCESS/METHODS USED:

This project is founded on participatory principles and group processes. The process encourages whole families to be involved simply because nature conservation is often regarded as an 'add-on' or additional to the core business of land management. The process involves selecting groups that have been working together for a reasonable period of time, usually 5 years or so, as these groups are most likely to be receptive to nature conservation planning processes and practice.

Once the group has been selected, families are encouraged and invited to participate in a range of awareness raising activities, these are both social and ecological. In the social sense, the groups complete a photo elicitation exercise where discussions among group members take place as to what their idea of sustainable landscapes may include using photo's taken by catchment group members as the basis for discussion. In terms of ecological awareness, group are invited to attend a campout where local flora and fauna are described by ecologists. The whole family is encouraged to attend these events.

Individuals then sit down with their neighbours, once they have become aware of their broader issues of the catchment, and plan what can be done at their local scale. Finally these broad plans are brought back to the entire group, where the landscape plan is 'put together'.

Monitoring and farmer trials are encouraged in this project. A Bird monitoring book is an example of one tool and direct seeding trials are an example of the farmer-based trials.

11. IMPACTS TO DATE (AND EVALUATION APPROACHES USED):

It would seem that this project has had significant impact, so much so that the demand for ecological advice exceeds supply. The project is now in a new phase where the planning concepts are being developed into tools that may be adapted and applied by a range of people who work with catchment groups. Other states, including Queensland and New South Wales have adopted this project also.

12. EFFECTIVENESS:

Moderate to High.

This is a long-term project, particularly given the long regeneration rates of the vegetation, the extensive revegetation required if species are to return to the region.

High – in terms of the heightened level of awareness and appreciation people have of their native bush.

High – in terms of the involvement of the partners. It is open, transparent and long-term.

Very high commitment to capacity building of whole families, using a range of techniques and information. There is a strong commitment to use local knowledge in this project.

13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:

Final Report – Greening Australia

Paper by Dilworth et al 1999.

Draft report prepared by Dinkum Results. 2002.

14. ISSUES:

This is a challenging project, and one that is vulnerable to criticism particularly as some regard the adapting of scientific knowledge to suit local contexts as not acceptable. The considerable investment in capacity building and social process is lengthy and difficult to measure in terms of ecological health.

The project is strengthened by the commitment of Alcoa funds and the working group who oversee the project.

15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:

The strengths in this project lie in its commitment to participation and capacity building. It is a project that is long-term and therefore vulnerable given its dependency on government funds. This project is well regarded by those in rural areas since it recognises that interdependency of nature conservation with economic priority.

16. REVIEW METHODS:

Interview with Greening Australia staff.

Focus group discussion with 6 farmers representing each of the catchments.

Interview with Alcoa Project manager.

Desktop analysis

by Fionnuala Frost

