



New wetland managers training programme for the Asia-Pacific

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Asia-Pacific Wetland Managers Training Programme begun by Australia



In fulfilment of the Ramsar 25th Anniversary pledge made in Brisbane in 1996 by the Hon. Senator Robert Hill, Minister of Environment, Sport and Territories, his country is taking strong initiatives to provide training opportunities in wetland management for the Oceania region. Australia has recently established the "Asia-Pacific Wetland Managers Training Program", an initiative of the Commonwealth Government of Australia that is managed and funded through the National Wetlands Program, and \$800,000 AUS has been committed to the initiative over the next three years. Stephen Hunter, Head of the Biodiversity Group, Environment Australia, has informed the Ramsar Bureau that "the training program will provide Australian and Asia Pacific managers with the skills necessary to achieve wise use of their wetlands."

"The Wetland Managers Training Program will commence in early 2000", Mr Hunter wrote, "at the Centre for Tropical Wetlands Management at the Northern Territory University in Darwin. The Northern Territory is renowned for its extensive, varied and spectacular wetland habitats, and provides the perfect environment in which to base field training in management of tropical wetlands research.

A suite of courses is being developed for the program, which will generally focus on operational level training and address current and projected future wetland management issues. The course design and content may however vary according to the needs of participants, as determined by a review of opportunities and deficiencies in existing training programs.

Some courses will be run within Australia, and there will be specific courses targeted to particular management issues to be run within other countries of the Asia-Pacific region. Participants from the region will be invited to attend courses, with their travel, accommodation and course fees provided for out of the training program.

Two initial in-country courses in Fiji and Irian have been suggested for running late this year, based on previous World Wide Fund for Nature and Wetland International courses. The first course will be jointly run by Wetlands International and the Northern Territory University and will provide an overview of wetland values and associated threats to wetlands in Fiji. The second course in Irian, which can be adapted to run in Papua New Guinea as well, will focus on invasive species and combine a component on safe herbicide use. Future course may include *waterbird surveys, freshwater fish surveys and water quality and wetlands education.*"