

SEARCH CRITERIA

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

1. PROJECT TITLE:

Ribbons of Blue/Waterwatch WA

2. FUNDERS:

Funding is provided by the Government of Western Australia through Department of Environment, and the Department of Education and Training. Natural Heritage Trust funding from the Commonwealth Government is also vital to the program.

3. PROVIDERS:

The Ribbons of Blue/Waterwatch WA Network is coordinated statewide. Regional Coordinators are based in eleven regions in Western Australia, namely: Avon (wheatbelt); Bennett Brook and Swan (Perth); Blackwood/Margaret River/Augusta; Gascoyne (Carnarvon); Geographe Bay (Busselton); Leschenault (Bunbury); Mid West (Geraldton); Kwinana/Peel (Mandurah), South Coast (Albany, Jerramungup and Esperance) and Warren Gardner (Manjimup and Pemberton).

4. KEY CONTACTS:

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See also attached contact list.

5. INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY

Ribbons of Blue was initiated as a schools environmental water quality monitoring program in 1989. Since becoming part of the Australia-wide Waterwatch network in 1994, the strong association with schools has been retained, while the program has expanded to include greater community involvement. Water quality monitoring and catchment management activities are used as tools on which to focus learning and develop understanding, while involvement in on-ground action projects builds a sense of environmental and social & civic responsibility for shared management of local environments.

6. PROJECT CONTEXT

In recent years water quality around Australia has rapidly deteriorated. Over one third of arable land in Western Australia has been lost due to salinisation of ground water. Water supply and quality has become a major political and social issue across Australia in recent times, highlighted by the worst drought in memory.

The challenge at hand is the urgent need to develop an understanding within the community that their behaviour has serious impacts upon local water bodies and that

through individual actions they can help to keep our waterways, wetlands and groundwater healthy for future generations.

The Ribbons of Blue program objectives are to:

- Increase community awareness and understanding of water quality issues in a whole of catchment context;
- Provide school and community educational opportunities through a range of curriculum areas and public forums;
- Encourage collaborative action involving the community (including schools), local government authorities, and State government agencies to identify and resolve water related catchment issues;
- Support community monitoring projects to contribute useful water quality data for community and agency application in raising awareness and resolving issues (restoring waterways and catchments, including streamline, waterway and wetland vegetation, stream health assessments and habitat construction and/or reconstruction); and
- Maintain networks and partnerships to share data and information, and to support to continuity of the program across the State Through training, education and fieldwork, thousands of students and community members state-wide are educated on issues such as erosion, salinity and excess nutrients, which are threatening the health of our waterways.

Teachers are assisted to plan on-going monitoring and education programs, connecting fieldwork and other learning experiences to the Curriculum framework, and linking schools to the wider community for on-ground remedial action.

7. PROJECT NICHE

Ribbons of Blue is a comprehensive environmental program that addresses the issues cited above. The program educates school students and the community, and facilitates their involvement in the protection of water quality.

8. PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH

Ribbons of Blue staff support and train teachers and community groups to become actively involved in learning about and protecting environmental water quality, and encourage shared responsibility for the protection, restoration and management of their local water bodies. The approach encourages local ownership and care for environmental resources, and fosters a community environmental management ethic amongst Western Australia's young. The approach also encourages wider community involvement and participation.

9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES

Now in its thirteenth year, the Ribbons of Blue program joined the national Waterwatch initiative in 1994. This nation-wide network of thousands of people works in local areas to learn about and protect their local waterways.

The Ribbons of Blue program is coordinated by a State team, and centrally administered through the Community Education and Involvement Section of the Department of Environment. The Community Education and Involvement Section is responsible for educating the community on prominent environmental issues through social marketing techniques, and eliciting positive behaviour change to ensure healthy and sustainable environmental resources for today and for future generations.

10. PROCESS/METHODS USED

Ribbons of Blue coordinators work with schools and communities to identify water monitoring programs and issues for local areas. Appropriate monitoring regimes are then developed and implemented by the schools with Ribbons of Blue assistance and guidance.

Further details of the program outcomes can be obtained from the Ribbons of Blue State Facilitator when the current evaluation is complete.

11. IMPACTS TO DATE:

Ribbons of Blue/Waterwatch WA involves the following community demographics in water quality education, water quality monitoring and catchment education every year:

- The Ribbons of Blue program is estimated to directly reach over 15 500 students and community members across the State, through education, fieldwork and on-ground remedial action.
- Contact with 1100 primary and high schools in Western Australia, of which 224 schools comprising a total of 13,500 students are actively involved in Ribbons of Blue.
- In addition, 105 community groups are actively involved with the Program, including approximately 1050 people.

12. EFFECTIVENESS:

An evaluation of the Ribbons of Blue Program is currently taking place. An early evaluation, undertaken in 1995, found wide support for the program and recognition of its contribution to student's education and improving the environment.

13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:

- For state and regional information visit the Ribbons of Blue/Waterwatch WA website on www.wrc.wa.gov.au
- Ribbons of Blue/Waterwatch WA Information and Registration brochure
- Ribbons of Blue/Waterwatch WA Strategic Plan
- Ribbons of Blue/Waterwatch WA educational resources (for use by registered Ribbons of Blue/Waterwatch WA groups)
- Waterwatch Australia Fact Sheets
- Waterwatch Australia Case Studies

14. ISSUES:

Current issues related directly to securing ongoing funding for the Ribbons of Blue Program.

15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:]

A comprehensive evaluation and review is currently underway which will, it is anticipated, contribute to securing ongoing funding by documenting the linkages between investment in this program and improvement in water quality and community environmental management.

16. REVIEW METHODS:

Information provided by Bronwyn Ryan to Debra Pearce, April 2003.



Ribbons of Blue / Waterwatch WA
State Team and Regional Coordinators
March 2003

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