

## What's New?

Keep up to date with new initiatives and activities that are fostering research and practice pertinent to *EcoHealth* readers. In this issue, you can find out about:

- Natural Resource Management (NRM) as an Intervention for Indigenous Health
- LEAD Young Leaders Program 2005
- International Symposium on Emerging Infectious Disease and Social-Ecological Systems
- Youth Representatives to Join European Environment and Health Committee
- Integrating Biodiversity Science for Human Well-being: DIVERSITAS Open Science Conference

Regular updates are also available at the *EcoHealth* website: <http://www.ecohealth.net>

### NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (NRM) AS AN INTERVENTION FOR INDIGENOUS HEALTH

Northern Australia is grappling with two enormous problems:

- The protracted ill-health of its indigenous populations, compounded by manifest social, political, and economic disadvantages.
- Declining biodiversity as a result of the breakdown of indigenous management and the invasion of introduced animals, weeds, and destructive wildfires.

Indigenous peoples own 44% of the land and 87% of the coastline in Australia's Northern Territory. However, the depopulation of vast tracts of northern Australia in favor of "serviceable" centralized townships has been

characterized by poverty, poor health outcomes, social dysfunction, and environmental decline. Further, if current trends continue, future generations of land owners will be poorer, sicker, and more marginalized than the current generation of custodians. The fate of biodiversity on large areas of northern Australian landscapes is inextricably linked with this demographic and sociological trajectory.

Indigenous peoples assert that continued association with, and caring for, their ancestral country is an important health determinant. Many are seeking new and innovative ways to return to, and remain in, their country, incorporating customary and contemporary approaches such as specific land and sea management projects. The social, health, and ecological impacts of such activities have never been evaluated. Funded by Land and Water Australia, a multi-disciplinary team of indigenous researchers, public health physicians, landscape ecologists, and social scientists at Charles Darwin University are planning to examine these activities from a number of perspectives including: (1) seeking indigenous views about sustainable landscapes, (2) comparing landscape health under contrasting indigenous land management regimes, (3) evaluating policy options for sustainable indigenous land management, and (4) comparing the health and well-being of indigenous participants in NRM compared with non-participants.

More information is available from the contact people for the three project teams: Landscape Ecology: Professor David Bowman, e-mail: [David.Bowman@cdu.edu.au](mailto:David.Bowman@cdu.edu.au); Health: Dr. Paul Burgess, e-mail: [Paul.Burgess@menzies.edu.au](mailto:Paul.Burgess@menzies.edu.au); or Policy: Dr. Bev Sithole, e-mail: [Bev.Sithole@csiro.au](mailto:Bev.Sithole@csiro.au). Project details will be updated on the following websites: <http://www.wildlife.cdu.edu.au> and <http://www.lwa.gov.au>

## LEAD YOUNG LEADERS PROGRAM 2005

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Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) International has launched its newest venture: the Young Leaders project 2005. This provides up to 70 students and young professionals the opportunity to work with—and be mentored by—a LEAD Fellow in Brazil, India, Indonesia, or Mexico, on solutions-based work-placements. Young Leaders will enable young people (generally in their 20s) to spend 3 months in their selected country, participating in a training program and working alongside a LEAD Fellow addressing sustainable development issues. At the end of this experience, each Young Leader will become a member of the global LEAD network of influential high-flyers in more than 80 countries.

LEAD Fellows are a global network of more than 1500 talented individuals who have been through the LEAD training program in leadership and sustainable development. All these chosen mentors are in positions of influence in their communities and are contributing to sustainable development in a variety of different ways.

The program is designed to attract talented young people from all parts of the world with an interest in sustainable development and learning about other cultures. The project combines practical on-the-ground work experience with cross-cultural leadership training and the opportunity to meet and learn from peers.

More details are available at: <http://www.lead.org/youngleaders> or by contacting the Young Leaders team at LEAD International, e-mail: [youngleaders@lead.org](mailto:youngleaders@lead.org).

## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

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From March 9–11, 2005, around 60 international participants from 11 countries contributed to a working meeting on “Emerging Infectious Diseases and Socio-ecological Systems: An Interdisciplinary Meeting Integrating Social Science Methods and Ecosystem Approaches to Improve Infectious Diseases Research in the Asia-Pacific Region.” The working meeting was co-hosted by the Asia-Pacific Institute for Emerging Infectious Diseases at the University of Hawaii and the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, and was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health for methodological innovation in interdisciplinary health research. The aims of the meeting were to:

- expand dialogue and contextual understanding of EIDs beyond disciplinary constraints;
- advance methodologies based on integration of methods that address the combined social and ecological context of emerging infectious disease; and
- identify bridges and barriers to innovating, integrating, and sustaining prevention and control efforts.

To achieve these aims, the meeting focused on three diseases that reasonably cover the range of social-ecological dimensions requiring consideration in the Asia: dengue fever, HIV/AIDS, and leptospirosis, although discussion included EID's generally. Five working groups were convened, addressing social-ecological dimensions of each of the three disease foci, as well as the applications of “transdisciplinary approaches” and “geoinformatics.” Outcomes from the meeting will include a special thematic issue of *EcoHealth*, and collaborative projects to improve research, prevention, and control of EID's in the Asia-Pacific Region.

For more information, visit the website for the Asia-Pacific Institute for Infectious Disease (APT MID), and/or contact Dr. Bruce Wilcox, the director of the Institute's Center for Infectious Disease Ecology, at: [bwilcox@hawaii.edu](mailto:bwilcox@hawaii.edu)

## YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES TO JOIN EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH COMMITTEE

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Following the European Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Budapest in June 2004, Pan-European governments are putting processes in place to implement their commitments made on health and environment, in particular the Children's Environmental Health Action Plan. A key development is the formation of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC). This process is being facilitated by WHO Europe, with input from various stakeholders including environmental and health NGOs like the European Eco-Forum and the European Public Health Alliance, Trade Unions and Business. The EEHC also includes input from nine governments, the European Commission, and five other international government organizations.

Following a proposal by the Irish government, the committee will be joined by two youth representatives, to increase involvement of youth and children in implementing the Children's Environmental Health Action Plan,

and highlight the unique vulnerabilities of youth and children.

The EEHC will play an important role in increasing participation of the c. 50 European member states in actively implementing their Budapest commitments. The biannual EEHC meetings will include a thematic day open to a larger group of interested countries, specifically looking at the four Regional Priority Goals of the Budapest action plan. Furthermore, a task force comprising some 30 member states will focus on implementing the action plan (CEHAPE), and Austria will host the first meeting in May 2005. NGOs and other stakeholders are encouraged to contribute.

For further information about the Budapest Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment and its follow-up, see: <http://www.euro.who.int/budapest2004>

## **INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY SCIENCE FOR HUMAN WELL-BEING: DIVERSITAS OPEN SCIENCE CONFERENCE**

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The first open science conference organized by DIVERSITAS will be held November 9–12, 2005 in Oaxaca,

Mexico, and will address the theme of integrating biodiversity science for human well-being. DIVERSITAS: OSC1 will bring together experts from biological, ecological, and social disciplines. A roundtable on future trends will complement plenary, parallel, and poster sessions, as well as field trips that highlight biodiversity in the Oaxaca region.

Abstracts are invited on the following topics: Strengthening Biodiversity Science (inventorying biodiversity; bioinformatics; monitoring biodiversity; drivers of biodiversity changes; biodiversity and ecosystem functioning; linking ecosystem functioning to ecosystem services), Supporting the Science-Policy Interface (assessing conservation measures; decision making under uncertainty; economic incentives; traditional knowledge and culture), Integrated Approaches to Topical Issues (urban biodiversity; agrobiodiversity; biodiversity changes and human health; mountain biodiversity; freshwater biodiversity; marine biodiversity; invasive species).

For more information, see: <http://www.diversitas-osc1.org/> or contact the DIVERSITAS Secretariat at: [info@diversitas-osc1.org](mailto:info@diversitas-osc1.org)

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