



24 September 2012

MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Department of Primary Industries Ramps up Waratah Sustainable Hydropower Research Program

Today, the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries announced the enhancement of aquatic ecology research capabilities at Narrandera through the addition of new international research staff in order to further the Waratah Power sustainable hydropower research program.

The text from the DPI Media Release is extracted and copied below.

Multicultural Injection for Narrandera Fisheries Centre

Two international scientists, Dr Anna Navarro Cuenca from Spain and Dr Phousavanh Phouvin from Lao PDR, will be temporarily assisting with freshwater fish research at NSW Department of Primary Industries' (NSW DPI) Narrandera Fisheries Centre.

NSW DPI Freshwater Fish Ecologist, Dr Lee Baumgartner, said both scientists would be working on experiments assisting with the development of fish-friendly hydro plants for potential application in the Murray-Darling Basin.

"The aim of the experiments will be to determine the critical tolerances of fish to passage through hydro electric facilities," he said.

"Fish are known to be injured during passage through turbines and the work being done at Narrandera (and also at Port Stephens) will be trying to find a solution to help fish pass safely.

"Hydro electricity is the fastest growing renewable energy industry in the world with more than 1500 per cent growth in the past year alone.

"There are plans to develop mini hydro electric systems for wider application in the Murray-Darling Basin, but researchers, managers and developers want to ensure it is done with minimal impact on fish."

Dr Baumgartner said the work was jointly funded by NSW DPI, Office of Environment and Heritage and the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy as a joint collaboration between NSW DPI, Charles Sturt University and Waratah Power.

He said Dr Navarro Cuenca was being employed by Charles Sturt University as a post-doctoral scientist to help run the project and has previous experience determining critical tolerances of fish in her home country of Spain.

"A lot of her work focused on critical levels of toxicants on fish, but her experience can be directly transferred to hydro plant passage as the experimental design is similar," Dr Baumgartner said.

"Anna comes from Barcelona, and the posting will be her first trip to Australia."

Dr Phouvin is from the National University of Lao where he is responsible for implementing the Fish Research curriculum and participating in fish research.

"Hydro development is a major issue in the Mekong River catchment and Dr Phouvin hopes his time at Narrandera will help him to work on techniques that can be applied in his home country," Dr Baumgartner said.

"Dr Phouvin was awarded the prestigious Crawford Fund Fellowship, which is an annual award to provide further training of an agricultural scientist whose work has shown significant potential. He is the first fisheries scientist to have been awarded that honour.



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"His fellowship application was assessed favourably because of the importance of fish as a source of income and food in the Lower Mekong Basin.

"The issues influencing fish in the Murray-Darling Basin are similar to those in the Mekong River basin, so Dr Phouvin's time at Narrandera will be very productive and relevant.

"Narrandera fisheries' staff are looking forward to these international additions to the team and are hoping for some cultural exchange in the near future."

Dr Navarro Cuenca will be at Narrandera for 15 months while Dr Phousavanh Phouvin will be there for three months.

Waratah Power is currently working in Australia, Laos, and Indonesia.

The full statement can be found here:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/news/all/2012/multicultural-injection>

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