

Snowy Mountains field trip

By Iva Quarisa
YIN member NSW Agriculture

In late February, a number of Murrumbidgee and Murray Valley Young Irrigation Network members made their way to the Snowy Mountains for a tour of the area.

First stop of the day was at Tumut to learn more about the "Tumut River choke" and problems faced by those farmers with river frontage. The main concern of these farmers is the erosion caused by flows greater than 6000 ML/day.

During the irrigation season, flows for the Murrumbidgee can be as high as 9300 ML/day. These high flows have been attributed to the widening of the river of up to 20 metres on each side.

The Tumut Landholders Group would like to see a steady summer flow of 6000ML/day maintained, but understand that demands in the Murrumbidgee exceed this.

A number of solutions have been put forward to address this problem including on-route storages, running water from Tantangra through Burrinjuck, piping supply, straightening the flow of the river, purchase of the land or paying some form of compensation.

From Tumut we made our way to Blowering dam (which can hold 1,128 GL and has an earthen wall 807 metres long and 112 metres high), then on to Tumut 3 Power Station.

Tumut 3 Power Station is the largest power station in the Snowy Mountains



On tour . . . Young Irrigation Network members at the Tumut 3 Power Station.

Scheme and is situated on the Tumut River.

Its most distinguishing feature is the six BIG white pipes feeding water out of the dam into the power station. These pipes are big enough to fit a double decker bus in and carry a lot of water.

Another feature of Tumut 3 is its ability to use these pipes to pump water back up into the reservoir for reuse to make more power.

After spending the night in Cooma (I am sure the owners of 'The Australian Hotel' are keen for us to visit again), we kicked off the second day with a visit to the Snowy Mountains Information Centre.

Here we learned more about Snowy Hydro and how the whole Snowy Hydro Electric Scheme is managed. From Cooma we

travelled to Canberra, for the last official stop of the day, to hear Scott Keyworth from MDBC give a summary of "The Living Murray" document.

The Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council is charged with the role of determining the volume of water required to improve the health of the whole Murray River system. Three volume reference points being debated are 350GL, 750GL and 1500GL per year.

"The Living Murray" document and its outcomes will impact on all irrigators and residents in the Murray Darling Basin. For this reason it is important that the whole community has a say.

Over all, the Snowy Tour was both enjoyable and informative.

Tales of fish, earthquakes and flooding

By Catherine Norwood
YIN member Murray Irrigation Ltd

There were tales of giant fish, earthquakes, dam walls moving and farms flooding during a tour along the Murray River in May. A group of 20 YIN members from the Murray and Murrumbidgee toured the Murray River and its key storages visiting Lake Mulwala, Hume Dam and Dartmouth Dam.

The fishway, or elevator, on the wall of the Lake Mulwala weir was the most popular stop, with the prospect of seeing a 100lb cod fuelling enthusiasm. But with river levels so low there were few fish on the move.

Goulburn Murray Water's senior reservoir operator Colin Fitzpatrick said the fishway was providing a valuable opportunity to study the movement of fish to upstream waters, and several groups were

involved in research at the site. His own observation was that the number of native fish travelling upstream had increased in recent years, with the development of the Torrumbarry fish ladder, while carp numbers had declined.

At Albury the group visited Hume Dam where major maintenance work has been undertaken in the past five years to ensure it can withstand an earthquake. This was triggered by movement of the dam wall in 1996. Similar work has also been carried out on the weir at Mulwala, following an earthquake near Swan Hill.

Hume Dam had risen to nine per cent of capacity during the visit in May, and it was still possible to see trees on the floor of the dam which were usually well below the water line.

State Water officer Graham Hind said that while snow in the mountains often seemed

to promise good inflows into Hume, only a small percentage of the dam's water actually came from snow. There was little connection between a good snow season and good inflows, he said.

However, given good rain, Hume could fill quickly in about three months, but Dartmouth could take up to six years to refill, because of its much smaller catchment area.

"Hume often fills, is drawn down, then refills over 12 months, and it's where most of the water for irrigation comes from. Dartmouth is really a dam of last resort, Mr Hind said."

Mitta Valley landholder Andrew Bowran also joined the tour in the Dartmouth area, explaining how high flows out of Dartmouth created problems for landholders in the valley. The water fills the soil profile and seeps to the surface, as much as it flows out of the Mitta River's banks.



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"Our Future Together"

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Thursday 7th August and Friday 8th August will mark the national launch of the Young Irrigation Network when it hosts its inaugural conference in Griffith.

The conference program includes some well known speakers as well as featuring young people involved in different aspects of the irrigation industry. The venue for the conference is the Griffith Regional Theatre.

Topics for the guest speakers include international water issues, the Australian environmental perspective, regional issues, innovation and a vision for our industry.

The conference will be open to all members of the irrigation and associated industries Australiawide, who are aged 18 to 35 years.

The Young Irrigation Network, to date, has been largely based in the Murrumbidgee and Murray regions.

The national conference will provide an opportunity to initiate discussion on the extension of the network to other irrigation regions.

The theme of day one is "Water - The Debate" and will look at some of the current issues affecting the industry, including the Murray Darling Basin Commission's Living Murray initiative, and a global perspective on water issues.

Delegates from irrigation districts around Australia will have the opportunity to briefly profile their own areas. A variety of field trips has been organised for Thursday and Friday afternoon.

There is a choice of seven field tours, including a visit to McWilliams Wines, a salinity research site, feedlot, packing house, district properties, Colleambally's total channel control system, Sun Rice facilities and local fruit and vegetable juice processing operations.

The theme for Friday's session is "Water - The Future". Award winning documentary maker Jeff McMullen will speak about resolving the debate

Keynote speakers

The Hon. Warren Truss MP
Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Jeff McMullen
An ABC foreign correspondent for almost two decades, a prize winning Four Corners documentary maker, the longest serving 60 Minutes reporter and best selling author

Jenny Goldie
National Director of Sustainable Population Australia

Jean Kittson
(Conference Dinner Speaker)
A multi-talented comedienne and writer, recently in Channel 9's "Flat Chat", a regular guest on "Good News Week" earning national fame through ABC TV's "The Big Gig"

and creating a vision for the future of irrigation.

John Blackwell from CSIRO's division of Land and Water will speak about the opportunities for young people and the issues which need to be resolved.

Several young farmers will speak about their involvement in a range of innovative industry programs and becoming involved in industry decision making processes.

Full registration is \$130, which includes all sessions, field trips, lunches, morning and afternoon tea and the official conference dinner which will be held at the Griffith Ex-Servicemen's Club, Jondaryan Ave on 7th August,

Single day registration is also available for \$75, which includes meals and field trips on the day specified, and the official conference dinner.



What is the young Irrigation Network?

Young people involved in the irrigation and associated industry in southern NSW are benefiting significantly from a new initiative known as the Young Irrigation Network.

The Young Irrigation Network was established in late 2001 in recognition of the need to identify, develop and network the next generation of industry and community leaders for the irrigation industry.

A management committee was established in response to a public workshop held in Griffith, which aimed to identify the barriers and opportunities for young people to become more involved in decision-making roles.

The network focuses on young irrigators and young people involved in associated industries such as, government departments, rural finance organisations, irrigation suppliers, research, extension, agri-business and environment.

The age group targeted by the network is 18-35 years.

The initial geographical focus of the network was in the Riverina region of NSW but due to high levels of interest from other areas, it is developing a national focus.

It is hoped that the network will develop a national committee with member groups in the various irrigation regions around the country as well as forming strategic links with networks of young people.

This expansion will be facilitated through a Young People in Rural Industry Networks Grant provided through Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Australia program.

YIN assists in leadership skill development, peer support, enhanced understanding of relevant issues, networking and informal mentoring.

It is a broad scale program and it's initiatives include such things as regional discussion groups, social activities, field days, education and training and industry forums, depending upon the needs identified by the young people themselves.

These initiatives will be carried out on a regional basis with a national conference held annually to bring together young industry participants from around the country.

A website has been developed which will enable sharing of relevant information and provide a communication tool, linking young people from the various irrigation

Our vision:
“A highly skilled, motivated, connected and confident generation of young rural leaders who participate in all levels of decision making and leadership, and who strive to develop a secure and sustainable future for themselves and for their industry.”

regions. The network has been involved in several initiatives so far.

A launch dinner was held in Griffith in August 2002 where Federal Member for Riverina Kay Hull officially launched the program.

There has been a water industries workshop in Griffith, a field tour to Hillston visiting Twynam's cotton enterprise, Rennie's Potato farm and Bassano Olive Plantation (over 90 young people participated in the day) and a two day tour to view the Snowy Hydro system (almost 50 young people benefited from the experience).

A smaller group of 20 toured the Murray

River and its key storages during May.

The management committee is finalising plans for the inaugural national Young Irrigation Network Annual Conference to be held in Griffith on Thursday August 7 and Friday August 8, 2003.

An exciting agenda of speakers, technical presentations and networking opportunities will allow delegates to review and discuss the issues so important to our industry.

The network currently has 450 members registered. Registration is free and forms may be obtained by contacting Belinda Wilkes on (02) 6964 2420 or e-mail: bwilkes@murrumbidgeehort.org.au.



YIN members listen to the concerns of landholders about the operation of the Tumut River.

To market, to market: Sydney field trip July 3rd, 4th, 5th, 2003 (3 days)

The trip to Sydney encompassed a visit to the Sydney fruit/vegetable/flower markets at Flemington, presentations from Horticulture Australia Limited, a Macquarie Bank commodity trader and AQIS.

The group then travelled to Kiama to view container loading at the wharves as well as the steel melting plant. Lunch and a tour of Burrinjuck Dam capped off the trip on the way back to Griffith on Saturday.

Hillston field trip

In November 2002 the YIN organised its first field trip which took in Bassano Olive plantation at Gunbar, Twynam's Merrowie Cotton enterprise and Rennie's cherry and potato production and packaging business, both at Hillston.

Over 90 young people from the network braved a very hot and windy day which was really worthwhile for all concerned.

Comments from those taking part were positive, an excellent experience, seeing new crops and irrigation technology, while meeting and sharing ideas with other young people in the industry.



The best part of the day was . . .



Justin Wittakers
Agronomist, Elders Denilquin

The best part of the day was probably visiting Twynam's and looking at systems. I don't have much experience with, the tape irrigation system. I would also have liked to have seen some smaller farms – more realistic.



Michael Hughes
Irrigator Morago

I had great day. I found it quite hard to grasp how big things are. The Rennie potato farm was quite an impressive operation, over 10,000 tonnes of potatoes in storage ~ that's a lot of chips.



Michael Napier
Finley Murray Irrigation

The best part of the day was getting to meet people my own, or in a similar age group, all involved in agriculture and to hear about their ideas, and also to see some pretty large scale projects.



Jim Macdonald
Irrigator, Denilquin

The best part of the day was finding out a bit more about drip irrigation, I haven't seen any of that before.



Bill Furnes
Irrigator Goolgowie

It was all good, interesting to see the centre pivots, lateral moves, the polytape under the ground.

Sam Armytage
Irrigator

Coleambally and Conargo The best part of the day was looking at the lateral moves and centre pivots and meeting other people and finding out their ideas about the way irrigation is going.

Russell Anthony
Irrigator, Moulamein

The whole day was pretty good, the drip irrigation was good, at Merrowie. It was warm, but the beers made up for that.

Alex Thompson
Farm overseer

Finley – Tocumwal area The best part of the day was having a look around Rennies, and their understanding of why electric is better than hydraulic. (to power pivots)

Trisha Eckermann
Horticultural Council Griffith

I'm from an irrigation family (in Griffith) and I'm married to a dryland farmer. I've had a great time. I loved today. It's been great looking at all the different irrigation systems.

Ian D'Ath
Exchange worker England

The best part of the day was Twynam's where they grow the cotton. It was interesting to see the sub-surface irrigation and you obviously have to ask yourself "how good are these systems?"



Andrew Chesworth
Dairy farmer

Finley-Tocumwal district. Apart from the places we've seen the best part of the day was getting together, having a great time—the socialising.