Letters to the Editor
(E-mail jan@wrc.org.za)

WRC RESEARCH REPORTS

Arend Hoogervorst of Hillcrest, Editor: Eagle Bulletin, writes:

I used the predecessor of "*The Water Wheel*" (*SA Water-bulletin*) to keep track of WRC Research Reports, review and summarise them and inform my readers appropriately.

You seem to have stopped the publication of information (in a summary form) to enable me to order the reports and review them. Is this temporary or has the flow of finalised reports slowed? My readers indicate to me that they find my service of tracking WRC reports valuable. If you are stopping this source, is there an alternate way I can get the information so that I can order the copies for review?

(New WRC Reports are announced on the Water Research Commission's website – www.wrc.org.za – and also in the WRC newsletter Amanzi. However, if there are other readers who share Mr Hoogervorst's sentiments please give us your comments on the Feedback Postcard in this issue. See p. 16 - Ed)

WETLANDS OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Professor Jenny Day, Director of the Freshwater Research Unit, Department of Zoology, University of Cape Town, writes:

DR STEVE MITCHELL, Director: Water-Linked Ecosystems, at the Water Research Commission suggested that I should ask if it would be possible to put the following announcement in the 'Water Wheel'L

> *For sale:* 'A field classification system for the wetlands of the Western Cape' by Genevieve Jones & Jenny Day, produced by the Freshwater Research Unit at UCT, in conjunction with WWF(SA). Price: R80 including postage. Contact Ms C April at ccoulsen@botzoo.uct.ac.za or write to the Freshwater Research Unit, Zoology Dept, University of Cape Town, 7701 Rondebosch, W. Cape.

For more information visit the Zoology Dept's website at http://www.zoology.uct.ac.za and the FRU website at http://www.zoology.uct.ac.za/docs/fresh.html

WETLAND PLANTS

Roy Dick from Cape Town writes:

The report by Edith Webster (*Wetland Plants – Dr Jekyll or Mr Hyde? – The Water Wheel Nov/Dec 2003*) contains elements which are both disturbing and misleading. It is unfortunate that apart from *Typha* and *Aponogeton*, the only other genus referred to is *Potamogeton*, whose species are also used in photographs as examples of aquatic "weeds". It is even more disturbing to read that *Potamogeton's* prime relevance would appear to be that of an indicator of good fishing areas of an exotic sportfish, bass. It is hard to believe that there is no mention of the work of Professor Brian Allanson on the fundamental role of *Potamogeton* species in South African coastal lake ecosystems (Zandvlei – Muizenberg, Zeekoevlei, Swartvlei, Lake Sibaya, etc.).

The use of the term "weed" is unfortunate and open to misconstrual. One wonders why known noxious aquatic weeds (*Eichhornia, Myriophyllum, Pistia, Salvinia*) which are also prevalent in wetlands were not mentioned at all.

It would be appreciated if the topic were discussed more fully in a future issue of the magazine and the genera placed in their true roles.

WORLD WATER DAY

Dick de Jong, Information and Communica-tion Officer, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, the Netherlands, writes:

THIS YEAR'S WORLD water day 2004 on 22 March focuses on the theme: Water and Disasters.

Natural disasters (weather, climate and water resources) can have a devastating impact on socio-economic development and on the well-being of humankind. According to the World Meteorological Organisation weather and climate-related extreme events, such as tornadoes, thunderstorms, storms, cyclones, floods and drought, account for nearly 75% of all disasters in the world. They lead to an enormous toll of human suffering, loss of life and economic damage. Monitoring these events, predicting their movements and issuing timely warnings are essential to mitigate the disastrous impact of such events on population and economy.

Despite globalisation, we often do not hear about thousands of local disasters which devastate or destroy communities. Other local crises only become internationally known because of one dramatic picture published in the world's media. Everybody remembers the remarkable pictures of the little girl in the mud during Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, in October 1998. Or the image of the young mother who gave birth to a baby while trapped in a tree in Mozambique. Both mother and baby were saved by a helicopter during the floods that swept also through Botswana, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe in 2000.

HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is another disaster but its impact on water, sanitation and related hygiene provision and organisations is not widely known. Infection rates can be as high as 30% in some high prevalence countries, according to authors Evelien Kamminga and Madeleen Wegelin-Schuringa in their thematic overview paper *HIV/AIDS and water, sanitation and hygiene* (published by IRC, see http://www.irc.nl/content/view/full/3462).

HIV/AIDS damages the sustainability of water and sanitation systems in a number of ways. In particular HIV/AIDS:

- reduces the ability of water users to pay water fees;
- reduces the ability of water users to spend time and energy on management activities;
- erodes management capacities due to loss of knowledge and skills (social capital);
- damages the ability of households to participate in planning and decision-making, so risking the possibility that their specific needs may not be taken into account.

The IRC's *World Water Day website for 2004* is now updated. Please submit your event or contribution online at http://www.worldwaterday.org

FELLOWSHIPS: UNESCO

Willie Lötz, CEO of the Water Institute of Southern Africa (WISA), writes:

The UNESCO Institute for Water Education - newly reorganised entity – has informed WISA about some new programmes they will be offering for which fellowships are available.

Further details about the programs available as well as the Fellowships can be found at http://www.ihe.nl/education/masters.htm

Alternatively you can also contact the following address;
UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, P.O. Box 3015, 2601 DA DELFT, THE NETHERLANDS,
tel. +31 15 2151896, fax +31 15 2122921

CALL FOR PAPERS: *WATER SA* SPECIAL ISSUE

Rashid M. Hassan, Guest Editor of a special issue of Water SA 2005 on Irrigated and Rain-fed Agriculture for Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan and North Africa - Past Performance and Future Challenges – writes:

Water SA is a multidisciplinary journal funded and published by the Water Research Commission (WRC) of South Africa. The journal publishes refereed, original work in all branches of water science, technology and engineering.

Water SA is introducing a series of special editions on various interdisciplinary themes on water resource management in Africa. The first of these editions is planned in collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy Analysis in Africa (CEEPA), to publish original research work on the contribution of irrigated and rain-fed agriculture to poverty reduction in sub-Saharan and North Africa. Contributions are invited for this special issue from all branches of scientific water research and policy on approaches to measurement and evaluation of experiences in technological, institutional and policy innovations for managing water resources in support of irrigation and rain-fed agricultural production systems for poverty reduction. Please note that the particular emphasis of this special issue is on the role of various aspects of water resource management, and not the contributions of other forces of agricultural change to poverty reduction such as breeding and improved crop management innovations in isolation of associated water management problems and challenges.

The special issue will be peer-reviewed by a panel of renowned international experts in the relevant disciplines from Africa and the rest of the world. The final date for submission of manuscripts for this special issue, which will be printed by March 2005, is June 30, 2004.

Submission of work solely authored by or co-authored with Africans is especially encouraged.

Please send manuscripts to: Rashid M. Hassan, Guest Editor - Special Issue of Water SA 2005. Room 2-6, Agricultural Annex CEEPA, University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0002.
E-mail: duplessisd@postino.up.ac.za
Fax: (27-12) 4204958

FOG HARVESTING

Rosemary Smythe from Cape Town writes:

I am fascinated with the concept of water from clouds/fog. I heard about the Water Research Commission's project at the Tshanowa Junior school in Limpopo Province on the radio and it then took me ages to find out the details. Eventually I tracked it down on the internet.

I have a cottage on Langebaan Lagoon and have observed how much condensation is evident after a heavy overnight mist. I am now going to experiment with your collection scheme and see how much water can be collected to fill a pond!! I will only be using 2m poles in order not to be unsightly! The only part of the plan causing a headache is how to bend the gutter round the middle pole? but I'm working on it. I will also be combining it with collecting rain run off which at present is causing erosion!

We store our rainwater in 4 x 2 500 l tanks for the house and have access to a well with slightly brackish water for the toilet. We use solar energy for the lights and pumps and gas for heating and the fridge so we are self-sufficient.

And whilst this is not for our own consumption, yet, it will be a fun experiment.

(This is a great story! Please send us a few pictures of the experiment – Ed)