

E-document incentive helps reforestation

In an applaudable initiative, investor services and stakeholder communications company Computershare has conceived a scheme to save costs and encourage the redirection of mountains of documentation into nationally significant reforestation projects. By choosing to receive company documents electronically, Australian shareholders will now have trees planted on their behalf by Landcare.

Computershare and scheme partner Landcare Australia recently unveiled *eTree* – the country's first environmental incentive scheme to link shareholders from multiple companies with specific Landcare reforestation projects across Australia.

Every time a shareholder registers for *eTree*, a donation of \$2, paid by participating listed companies, will be made to Landcare to go towards specified landscape change reforestation projects in the shareholder's State or Territory. Computershare, which manages the share registers of some 60 per cent of Australia's listed entities, will collect the donated funds and pass them on to Landcare to help reforestation

of selected sites.

Computershare's Chief Executive Officer, Chris Morris, said the company was in a unique position to help facilitate this important environmental initiative. 'The cost to companies in producing and mailing large quantities of



John Coppin/CSIRO Land and Water

Revegetation of native trees by Landcare groups in areas affected by salinity near Mount Torrens, South Australia.

paper documents, such as annual reports and statements, is significant from a financial perspective and considerable in environmental terms,' he said.

'The *eTree* initiative gives Australian companies a way to contribute to a more sustainable way of doing business,

while offering a significant environmental incentive to shareholders.'

According to Computershare, its Australian-listed clients alone churn through a minimum of 180 million sheets of paper per year based solely on essential shareholder mailings.

Landcare Australia Chief Executive, Brian Scarsbrick, said 'I congratulate Computershare for bringing together some of Australia's biggest companies to co-operate in large-scale environmental improvements.'

'For every \$2 donation, using direct seeding innovations, local project management methods and the assistance of volunteers, landowners, technologists and practitioners, four trees could be established in major landscape projects across Australia,' Mr Scarsbrick said.

'If only 10 per cent of all Australian shareholders were registered for the *eTree* program, that could equate to some 13 million trees or nearly 22 000 hectares of forest.'

Some of the initial projects earmarked for funding under the *eTree* initiative include the nationally significant Murray-Darling Basin box-ironbark belt in Queensland, New South

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Wales, ACT and South Australia; Grow West at Bacchus March in Victoria; parts of rural and coastal Tasmania and; the salinity affected parts of south-western Western Australia. Funding will also go to wetlands projects, such as the McKenzie Biosphere Reserve in Western Australia, and, provisionally, some New Zealand projects.

The *eTree* initiative is backed by 14 foundation members, representing 5.5 million shareholders. These include telecommunications giant Telstra; financial services companies AMP and its UK associate HHG; ANZ; AXA; E*TRADE; Macquarie Bank; retailers Coles Myer and Woolworths; transport infrastructure group Transurban; grain industry and agribusiness leader AWB; resources groups BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto, and Computershare.

The *eTree* incentive scheme is open to all listed companies and information is available at www.eTree.com.au

Shark decline caught on camera

A study by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), using Baited Remote Underwater Video Stations (BRUVS), suggests severe overfishing is behind a rapid decline in dwindling shark populations in parts of northern Australia.

The Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry enlisted AIMS to survey shark abundance in and around the MOU 1974 box, a region Australia has allowed traditional Indonesian fishermen in unmotorised boats to work.

Concern has risen over a

spiralling number of foreign boats targeting sharks for their lucrative fins in sections off the north coast.

Scientists compared the numbers of sharks found around Scott Reef inside the MOU box with those around Mermaid Reef in the Rowley Shoals, a Commonwealth Marine Protected Area. Compared with data from 1999, the survey revealed a rapid decline in shark numbers at Scott Reef.

Project Leader, Dr Mark Meekan said 'The shark stocks

in the MOU box are extremely low and it is essential we take a closer look at the situation. There are certainly indications that foreign fishing pressure may be impacting shark numbers.'

BRUVS designer and researcher, Mike Coppo, said remedial measures must include an alternative source of income for the poor artisanal fishermen who rely on the fishery.

The scientists called for wider surveys in the north to help authorities remedy the disturbing findings of the report.



Shark fins drying. The rest of the animal is usually discarded.