

EXCHANGE PROGRAM - UNITED STATES AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Statement by Minister for the Environment

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah - Minister for the Environment) [12.10 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house of an exchange program between the United States and Western Australia that will contribute significantly to the conservation of our natural assets such as our national parks and nature reserves. The initiative aims to provide opportunities for Department of Environment and Conservation staff to expand their professional experience and expertise as well as bring new ideas, approaches and work methods home. The program is now in its second year and it is proving to be an invaluable tool for knowledge exchange and career development. Last year, five exchangees from the United States worked in various roles with DEC. This month, four Department of Environment and Conservation employees have gone to the United States for five months as part of the program, which is an initiative of DEC and the US Department of Interior, particularly that agency's Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service.

The four DEC staff have been chosen to spend five months, from April to August, living in the United States and working in a diverse range of projects in varied locations. I am particularly pleased that the four staff are all from DEC's regional areas. They are Beverley Gardiner, a national park ranger at Collie, who will work on the West Eugene Wetlands Project in Oregon; Daniel Cock, a reserves officer at Katanning, who will work with the Carson City Field Office in Nevada; Kym Pearce, an operations officer from Dwellingup, who will be placed at the Arizona Strip Field Office in Utah; and Adam Rayner, a natural resource management officer from Kalgoorlie, who will join the Bureau of Land Management's Phoenix state office and the University of Arizona in Arizona. In return, DEC will be hosting five US representatives in positions around the state. The five chosen have expressed interest in a variety of locations and diverse projects. One has specifically shown interest in working with the Western Australian Herbarium.

Members will be aware that in the past six years, Western Australia has sent specialist fire management officers to the United States as part of the Australia-New Zealand contingent that helps out the US in times of need. Initiatives such as this are an excellent way to foster international cooperation and the sharing of knowledge, and reflect the Carpenter government's commitment to continuous learning opportunities in the field of conservation and environmental protection.

The US team will be welcomed to Western Australia at a function at DEC's Crawley offices on Friday.