



**Media Release
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World Wetlands Day, 2nd February Gold Coast students the winners

Gold Coast students are the winners when it comes to finding out about coastal environments, wetlands and their catchments thanks to a \$45,000 Coastcare grant, announced in time for World Wetlands Day, 2nd February.

Gecko – Gold Coast & Hinterland Environment Council, recipient of the grant, will be using the funds to develop a “Catchment to Coast” education program based on the Tallebudgera and Currumbin Creek catchments.

Lois Levy, spokesperson for Gecko Ed, the environmental education arm of Gecko, said that the theme for 2009 World Wetlands Day is “Upstream – downstream: we are all connected” and that this is the message of the Gecko “Catchment to Coast” program.

“Our educators have been working in both the Currumbin and Tallebudgera catchments for many years,” said Ms Levy. “We will use this funding to develop exciting hands-on experiences to inform, involve and inspire students on field trips and in the classroom.”

“World Wetlands Day is the perfect time to announce our new program as the protection of coastal wetlands and coastal environments is a major objective of the educational work that Gecko does.”

GeckoEd has provided a number of schools with interesting field experience learning about the Currumbin Estuary wetlands in the past year. These programs have demonstrated that what happens upstream in the catchment of the Currumbin Creek impacts on the downstream Estuary.

“This is very evident at times after heavy rains when mud, floating vegetation and rubbish are swept downstream and become entangled in the mangroves of the estuary or continue out to sea to endanger marine life,” said Ms Levy. “Healthy wetlands are essential to the continuation of aquatic and marine life as well of the thousands of species of birds, both local and migratory, that depend on them for food and shelter.”

“Humans need healthy wetlands to ensure adequate fishing stocks and tourism amenity as much as other creatures,” said Ms Levy. “And every generation needs to learn how to care for them.”

Teachers are invited to visit Gecko’s website www.gecko.org.au/educators to book a field trip or classroom visit for the study of wetlands, estuaries and catchments.

For further information about this important issue, please contact the following at Gecko on 5534-1412 or directly: Lois Levy 5534-3706 or 0412-724-222