

River restoration projects compete for global *Riverprize* 15 July 2006

Four large river restoration projects – Kissimmee River (USA), Lake Macquarie (Australia), South Saskatchewan River (Canada) and Sha River (China) – are finalists for the 2006 International Thies *Riverprize* award for excellence in river and waterway management.

The prestigious International Thies *Riverprize* is a global award presented annually for outstanding achievements in river repair and management. Projects usually demonstrate a combination of successful restoration, education, management and scientific initiatives.

The prize of AUD 225,000 and the International Thies *Riverprize* trophy are funded by the International Riverfoundation, which was established to advocate protecting and restoring the world's rivers and waterways for future generations. Winners are honoured at a special award ceremony during the International *Riversymposium* in Brisbane.

The International *Riversymposium* is an annual forum that brings together river and catchment experts to share knowledge about how good science, community action and management can conserve world river systems and water supplies.

The symposium is an integral part of Brisbane's annual environmental and artistic celebration — the *Riverfestival*.

Past international prize winners include river management organisations in England, Canada, United States, Israel, South-East Asia, Australia and France.

The 2006 winner will be announced at a gala award ceremony on 5 September attended by delegates from over 30 countries. The finalists are:

- **South Florida Water Management District** – Kissimmee River, USA
- **Office of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Co-ordinator** – Lake Macquarie, Australia
- **Meewasin Valley Authority** – South Saskatchewan River, Canada
- **Chengdu Municiple Government** – Sha River, China

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2006 INTERNATIONAL THIESS RIVERPRIZE FINALISTS

South Florida Water Management District

The Kissimmee River and floodplain form the headwaters of the greater Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades. The Kissimmee River Restoration Project involves a series of partnerships between several U.S. federal and local organizations, and stakeholder groups. The South Florida Water Management District manages water resources in the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. The project is restoring more than 60 sq km of river and floodplain ecosystems including 70 km of meandering river channel and 11,000 hectares of wetlands. The government-community partnership has filled in drainage canals, removed dams and navigation lock structures, and reconnected historic river channels.

<http://www.sfwmd.gov/site/index.php?id=15>

Office of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Co-ordinator

Lake Macquarie is part of a large estuary system in northern New South Wales, Australia. The Lake Macquarie Improvement Project began as a joint initiative of Lake Macquarie City Council, Wyong Shire Council and the New South Wales government. Developed by the NSW Premier's Task Force in 1998 to improve the health of Lake Macquarie, the waterway restoration project is managed by the Office of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Co-ordinator. The project has developed a successful integrated catchment and estuary management program with a strong emphasis on community involvement.

<http://www.livinglakemacquarie.org>

Meewasin Valley Authority

The South Saskatchewan River near Saskatoon, Canada, runs for over 60 km and is managed by the Meewasin Valley Authority. Since 1979, Meewasin has directed many conservation projects which have enhanced the river valley, beginning with a major clean-up of the river valley. This was followed by the development of the Meewasin Valley Trail which extends for 40 km along the east and west banks of the river. Former rubble sites have been transformed into parks, damaged areas restored, conservation areas protected, and interpretive centres built.

<http://www.meewasin.com/>

Chengdu Municipality Government

The Sha River is part of the Minjiang Tributary system in China, a primary catchment for the western reaches of the Yangtze River which eventually discharges into the East China Sea. Years of rapid population growth and industrial development saw the river suffer from the combined impacts of city waste, raw sewage, deforestation, coal silt and rural garbage. By 1999, scientists rated the river as virtually 'dead' and a severe public health hazard. The Sha River Restoration Project has improved water quality, controlled flooding, cleaned up pollution, landscaped parks, constructed drainage systems, and enhanced public use and understanding of the catchment. Partners in the project include the Chengdu Artery Construction Authority, Jinniu District, Chenghua District and Jinjiang District of Chengdu City.

<http://www.chengdu.gov.cn/echengdu/index.jsp>