

Sha River wins International Thuess Riverprize

Strictly Embargoed until 9.00 pm, 5 September 2006

(BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA) China's Sha River restoration project has won the 2006 International Thuess Riverprize for excellence in river management.

The AUD \$225,000 International Thuess Riverprize recipient was announced at the annual International Riversymposium's gala award ceremony on 5 September, attended by delegates from over 40 countries.

The Sha River plays a major role in the flood management control for Chengdu City, after years of rapid population and industrial growth saw the river suffer from the combined impacts of city waste, raw sewage, deforestation, coal silt and rural garbage.

The Sha River Restoration Project is a US \$411 million integrated project that has improved water quality, controlled flood flows, cleaned up pollution, landscaped parks and drainage systems and enhanced public use and understanding of the catchment.

"It has been a huge clean up project on a scale much larger than many other rivers and the reduction of pollution to the Sha River is a substantial achievement," said Professor Paul Greenfield, chair of the Thuess Riverprize judging panel. "We encourage the Sha River Project to continue in the direction they are heading in terms of pollution abatement, sustainable water supplies, shoreline reforestation and redevelopment, amenity values and linking the river culturally to urban populations."

Locally known as the 'River of Life', the Sha River begins in the mountains of Chengdu and runs through Chengdu city, which has a population of 10,597,000. The 22km long Sha River is a primary water catchment system for the western reaches of the Yangtze River, which eventually discharges into the East China Sea at Shanghai, 1,770km to the east.

Rapid expansion of industry and population in the Chengdu region resulted in waste loads far beyond the river's natural ability to cope – and its capacity to treat sewage. By 1999, the river was virtually dead and had become a severe health hazard, predisposing the surrounding community to disease and illness.

A large-scale restoration project was established in 2001 with over a dozen government organisations and investment agencies, including KEC (Japan), Harvard University (USA) and the Bank of China.

Other finalists for the International Thuess Riverprize were the Kissimmee River (USA), the Messawin River (Canada) and Lake Macquarie (Australia).

For information contact:

Ms. Beibei Si, phone: +86 28 8663 6501

Email: rosesbb@tom.com

Website: www.cdfao.chengdu.gov.cn

For media assistance contact:

Sarah Bartlett + 61 404 504 258 email: sarah@econnect.com.au

Don Alcock +61 418 882 063 email: don@keytext.com.au

Website: www.riversymposium.com