

NEWS RELEASE



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International conservation expert to headline conference

Striking a balance between tourism and environmental protection will be the theme of the next Critical Horizons event in Bunbury on October 19.

International ecotourism expert Francisco Dousdebés is the commercial manager for the Galapagos Marine Reserve's largest tour operator and will discuss the challenges of ensuring that tourism operations are developed in harmony with the environment.

He will be joined by a diverse range of speakers who will share their ideas about the future of nature-based tourism and discuss whether today's society is getting it right.

Mr Dousdebés has become a world-wide advocate for sustainable and responsible tourism, developing innovative solutions to protect the environment in which Metropolitan Touring Ecuador's tours operates.

"Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries," Mr Dousdebés said. "It is also a source of increasing stress on fragile ecosystems.

"It's social, economic and environmental impacts are immense and complex, not least because tourism concentrates on vulnerable natural and cultural sites.

"Tourism employs around 76 million people worldwide and involves all together about 220 million people. If these individuals all become advocates of responsible tourism, it could be the greatest educational campaign ever."

The conference will also feature presentations on the effectiveness of two purpose-built artificial reefs within Geographe Bay, the latest research on Bunbury's dolphins, the Munda Biddi Trail, balancing tourism and conservation on Rottnest Island, the WOW Wilderness Ecotourism Model in Walpole and ecotourism marketing.

It will be held at Casellas Function Centre during the Dolphin City Festival in Bunbury which runs from October 19-21.

The Critical Horizons Regional Futures Series is an initiative of the South West Development Commission and examines emerging global trends and how they might affect regional communities in the South West of Western Australia.

To register for the event, visit www.criticalhorizons.com.au.

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For more information contact:

Julie Wade
Communications Officer
South West Development Commission
Telephone: 9792 2000
Email: julie.wade@swdc.wa.gov.au

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Notes to Editors

Speakers at the Critical Horizons Series: Ecotourism - Future Challenges and Innovations include:

- Francisco Dousdebés:** Commercial Manager CA-AU-NZ | Metropolitan Touring Ecuador (the Galapagos Marine Reserve's largest tour operator).
- Kate Sprogis:** Murdoch University PHD student.
- Oliver Manlik:** Murdoch University PHD student.
- Phil Coulthard:** Operations Manager, Dolphin Discovery Centre.
Jointly presenting research on predictive habitat modelling and population dynamics of the bottlenose dolphins around Bunbury.
- Mark Pagano:** Department of Fisheries.
- Andrew Rowland:** CEO, Recfishwest.
Jointly presenting on the South West Recreational Fishing Enhancement Pilot Project to trial the effectiveness of two purpose-built artificial reefs within Geographe Bay.
- Alan Birrell:** Executive Officer, Munda Biddi Trail Foundation.
Cycle tourists - they're coming, drawn by the soon to be completed Munda Biddi Trail, providing sustainable cycle tourism through nature's pathways, the way of the future.
- Paolo Amaranti:** CEO, Rottnest Island Authority
Case study – how the island manages the balance of tourism and conservation.
- Gary Muir:** Manager of WOW Wilderness in Walpole
Case study on the WOW Wilderness Ecotourism Model – enhancing environmental and social values while maintaining economic sustainability.
- Scott Robinson:** Director, Jack in the Box – local marketing, advertising and creative design agency.
Marketing and how it relates to eco-tourism

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