

INTERESTED IN A CAREER IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE?

Meet Ed Capapas – Wannon Water's Aquaculture Technician

Ed Capapas holds strong cultural and sentimental values when it comes to sustainable aquaculture. His Filipino background and family links to fishing meant it was an easy career choice.

"My dad grew up in a coastal village in the Philippines and he would tell me about how they survived through subsistence fishing for food or trade," Ed explains.

"My grandfather was also one of those fishermen. He used to tell us about the size and numbers of fish they caught and how they have declined. He said that the decline was due to over-fishing, but mainly through habitat destruction with the use of home-made dynamite which had turned reef into rubble. My dad would dive and collect the stunned fish as a result of this.

"My father and grandfather had seen their local reef structures dramatically change by the hands of fishermen, but also their own, and although the demand for fish as a main food source grew, the supply was dwindling."

Ed says aquaculture in the region was one obvious way to tackle the food shortage problem. It also provided a form of sustainable income for the locals and there was a decline in the reliance on wild caught fish in the area.

Ed joined Wannon Water in 2012 during his mid-year break and in his final year of completing the Bachelor of Environmental Science (Honours) in which he focused on sustainable aquaculture.

"Before studying and working I knew I had a keen interest in Environmental Science. However, I didn't know which part of the industry I wanted to pursue," he says. "Gaining an insight into various environmental science industries through Deakin's theoretical and practical teachings and working for Wannon Water, which has integrated sustainable aquaculture within its business, has given me a better idea of what my purpose is. So it is safe to say it has had a positive impact on my career and life."

His greatest career highlight? "Landing the job at Wannon Water where I am part of an organisation pioneering an innovative and sustainable project by utilising aquaculture as a tool for sustainability."

Ed says Wannon Water has allowed him to put theory into practice and network with fellow employees and other water industry members. He has also benefitted from professional development opportunities specifically relating to the water industry.

He lists his greatest career challenge to date as trying to achieve a good work/life balance. "Sometimes I forget to take a break from my career development and 'smell the roses'. I have recently adopted a 'learning mentality' in regards to myself and my own regulation of my own 'emotional intelligence'.

"Part of this requires me to take a break from my career development for a certain period of time each day and designate days within the week in which I am not focused on my career," he explains. "This has given me the opportunity to experience the outside world and dedicate time to my family, but it is also the time I come up with the most creative ideas."



Ed has two pieces of advice for people starting out in their careers:

- Your degree is “not the golden ticket”, but it is a key which opens doors to exciting opportunities.
- Figure out what’s most important to you and base your career goals around it. This will give you some direction as a start, but remember what’s most important to you today may not be important to you in a few years’ time. So you need to reflect on that importance regularly to see what adjustments you need to make within your career to achieve your desired goals.

As to the future, he hopes there will be an increase in science funding.

“With today’s rapid global population growth, the need to intensify food production is vital for our survival. Stronger investment in aquaculture and agriculture research will ensure that we can keep up with the demands of food production and find alternate pathways to reduce the strain and pressure from our natural environment.”

And the personal philosophy Ed brings to work each day?

Every day in life is training and the adversity you deal with today will build your resilience for tomorrow (adapted from Vinh Giang’s inspirational video and from the sayings of a Seon Ozeki, a Buddhist monk in Japan).



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