



Press Release

31 July 2008

Successful trials for ecoAlert

ecoAlert, the water testing company, spun out by PML Applications Ltd from research conducted by Plymouth Marine Laboratory, backed by Rainbow Seed Fund and supported by the South West RDA, is delighted to announce that it has successfully completed the field trials of its water quality assessment equipment, and third-party validation by a laboratory conforming to GLP (Good Laboratory Practice) standards. Field trials were conducted on a variety of water bodies, including fresh river water, raw sewage and treated wastewater.

The ecoAlert assay provides an indication of the health of water bodies by measuring the health of key natural bacteria. Bacterial response indicates whether a broad range of pollutants are present, providing a fast, sensitive and robust result. The assay is also available in an in-situ version (a passive monitor) whereby contained bacteria are suspended within the water body (river, lake..) to monitor cumulative effects of pollutants over time. The test provides early warnings for those charged with assessing water quality and can be used on spot samples to obtain results within 4 hours. Through the innovative use of naturally occurring bacteria, the ecoAlert assay provides a fast, cost-effective, solution.

Legislation such as the new European Water Framework Directive (WFD) has led to a step-change in the assessment of water bodies across Europe by imposing a requirement to achieve "Good Ecological Status". Moreover, Environmental health is strongly reflected in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals which are driving significant initiatives worldwide. The global market size for products such as the ecoAlert assay is estimated at US\$1.45bn.

Jenny Rohde, CEO of ecoAlert, commented:

"We are delighted with this important seal of approval for the ecoAlert Assay. This means that there is now a validated, easy and inexpensive way of monitoring water quality that can be used around the world to help to protect our aquatic environment."

Dr Andrew Muir, Investment Director for Rainbow said:

"Rainbow has supported the company since its formation with a first investment in ecoAlert in 2006 and we are delighted with the successful field trials and the roll out of the laboratory service."

David Robins, Head of Knowledge Transfer, Plymouth Marine Laboratory said,

"We are delighted that ecoAlert has proved its value in these trials. The science that underpins ecoAlert builds on 30 years of ground-breaking pollution studies at PML, including our understanding of how marine organisms act as sentinels of environmental health."

GEMS, partners to The United Nations Environmental Programme, expressed a strong interest in the EcoAlert kit. GEMS gather water quality data from 80 data collection points all over the world.

The consulting team at the **Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge**, who are considered to be world experts in the design and assessment of low-energy sewage treatment reed-beds, were very pleased with the value that the EcoBox provided in the assessment of reed-beds.

Mouchel are a large service organisation with a significant water quality data collection team. They provide this service for a variety of customers including the Environment Agency of England and Wales. Mouchel provide a respected and established market-reach for EcoAlert and a significant field sampling team. They are including the ecoAlert assay in their own offering to customers.

The Environment Agency of England and Wales used the ecoAlert assay in the Ribble Valley assessment for the WFD, an extensive study of freshwater rivers in the South West, and for assessment of a sewage discharge which was performing below expected levels.

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About EcoAlert

ecoAlert's technology was developed at Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML). PML has over 30 years' experience in marine and estuarine research.

The ecoAlert assay is a novel biological marker which identifies the ecological health of water bodies by measuring the health of key natural bacteria. Bacterial response indicates whether a broad range of pollutants are present, providing a fast, sensitive and robust result. The assay is also available in an in-situ version whereby contained bacteria are suspended within in the water body (river, lake..) to monitor cumulative effects of pollutants over time. The ecoAlert field kit is under development and customers will be able to purchase it in April 2009. Currently a laboratory service is provided to customers.

Driven by new legislation, difficulties with monitoring increasingly complex pollutants and requirements to minimise environmental impacts, new biological water quality monitoring technologies are needed which measure the health of water. The focus is changing from measuring individual chemical pollutants to using broad-band pollution monitoring. Current approaches are slow and expensive and have remained in the domain of the specialist ecotoxicologist. This means that there is major demand for biological monitoring technology that provides low cost, fast, reliable assessments of water health.

About Rainbow Seed Fund

The £10m Rainbow Seed Fund was established in 2001 with funding from the Office of Science and Innovation to commercialise scientific research in a leading group of the UK publicly funded institutions, our partners. The Fund, which is independently managed by Midven Ltd, made its first investment in 2002, and currently has a portfolio of 17 companies with one exit.

The Fund invests at the earliest stages of a technology's development, and helps to turn an idea into a business by actively identifying and supporting experienced management and facilitating additional coinvestment. Rainbow's partners spend over £1 billion on research and development every year giving the Fund privileged access to high quality investment propositions at the earliest stage.

About Plymouth Marine Laboratory

Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) is an independent, impartial provider of scientific research, contract services and advice for the marine environment, with a focus on understanding how marine ecosystems function and reducing uncertainty about the complex processes and structures that sustain life in the seas and their role in the Earth system. PML delivers highly innovative research and solutions for national and international marine and coastal systems, with the mission to contribute to issues concerned with understanding global change and the health and sustainability of marine ecosystems.

To help deliver its knowledge transfer most effectively PML has a wholly owned trading subsidiary, PML Applications Ltd, which facilitates the exploitation and application of PML research and its products, to provide a more appropriate interface for working with end users, industrial and commercial partners.

About the South West RDA

The South West RDA leads the development of a sustainable economy, investing to unlock the region's business potential. It works in partnership with public, private and social purpose organisations to drive up the region's productivity by giving people the skills they need, encouraging enterprise, improving infrastructure, regenerating places, and promoting the strengths of the region. For more information see www.southwestrda.org.uk