



wheatbelt
natural resource
management

The 3 YEAR PLAN

2018-2021



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Approvals

This 3 Year Plan has been approved by Wheatbelt NRM Inc's Board of Management:

Version	Name	Position	Date	Signature
V1.1	Jim Sullivan	Chair	20 September 2018	

Acronyms & Abbreviations

Acronym	Description
ABN	Australian Business Number
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GIS	Geographical Information System
NLP	National Landcare Program
NRM	Natural Resource Management
MERI	Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvement
SNRM	State Natural Resources Management
SSS	Succinct Strategy Statement
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TPC	Threshold of Potential Concern
WA	Western Australia
Wheatbelt NRM	Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Incorporated



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1 Introduction

Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Incorporated (Wheatbelt NRM) is an independent community-based organisation leading natural resource management (NRM) endeavours within the Avon River Basin. The organisation operates from its Northam office in Western Australia, and is the second largest of seven NRM regional organisations in the state, with responsibility for the 12,000,000 hectares of the Avon River Basin.

This document presents a clear, three-year strategic direction that will ensure Wheatbelt NRM effectively responds to national, state and regional NRM needs while fostering productive relationships with the community to support and progress its strategic objectives. This 3 Year Plan is supported each year by an Operations Plan that sets out how resources will be allocated and utilised in progressing the strategic objectives in this document.

2 Vision and Mission Statements

Wheatbelt NRM's vision is:

A vibrant Wheatbelt community creating healthy environments and livelihoods.

This vision is supported by Wheatbelt NRM's mission to:

1. be a leader in NRM through strong governance, a dedicated team and investment in the Regional NRM Strategy;
2. build partnerships to deliver the vision;
3. advocate for NRM and the Wheatbelt to national, state and local government;
4. identify and support innovative and beneficial research;
5. promote and coordinate improvements in environmental, cultural, social and industrial practices beneficial to NRM;
6. engage with Aboriginal people and assist with the incorporation of their culture and beliefs within the Wheatbelt;
7. build capacity within the community to create healthy environments and livelihoods; and
8. advocate for the Regional NRM Strategy to be part of our partners' work.



2.1 Values of Wheatbelt NRM

The values that Wheatbelt NRM holds as important and that guide its ethical behaviour, partnerships and community engagements include:

1. **Healthy environments** – recognising the value of the natural assets of the Wheatbelt and the importance to preserve and improve natural resources for future generations;
2. **Leadership** – promoting and leading the community to progress clear and shared goals;
3. **Collaboration** – partnering and developing relationships to foster information sharing, capacity building and working in unity for the benefit of natural resources;
4. **Ethical and diverse** – being honest, trustworthy, transparent, respectful, and recognising of the value of different viewpoints;
5. **Organisational empowerment** – offering a challenging, safe and rewarding work environment that facilitates the attraction, retention, development and performance of quality people; and
6. **Outcomes focus** – delivering quality and lasting outcomes through community ownership.

3 The Strategic Theme Areas

To support its vision statement, Wheatbelt NRM has developed a series of organisation-wide strategic objectives to realise its strategic position by 2021.

To ensure a holistic and balanced scorecard approach to planning, each strategic objective has been developed in alignment with one of the following three key strategic theme areas:

1. **Our work with the community** – to protect and enhance the physical and cultural environment with a focus on biodiversity conservation, water management in the landscape, climate change adaption and Aboriginal participation in NRM; to develop and adopt sustainable (environmental, social and economic) industries that operate using best practice
2. **Our work building our relationships** – to collaborate with partners in mutually beneficial and co-operative business to achieve greater NRM outcomes; and to increase the level of community engagement and participation in NRM in the Wheatbelt.
3. **Our work building the organisation** – to focus on strong governance supported by efficient and effective business systems and processes; and ensure the sustainability of the organisation



4 Succinct Strategy Statement

The Wheatbelt NRM succinct strategy statement for 2018-2021 is:

Deliver a program of works designed to get the community of the Wheatbelt active in improving their environment, now and into the future.

The focus of the organisation on growing the portion of the Wheatbelt community who actively participate in NRM projects is because we acknowledge that the size of the catchment and the degree to which the landscape has been altered is so large that significant positive system wide environment impact will only be achieved by enabling the resources of the wider community.

The organisation will facilitate this community activity towards achieving the Strategic Objectives of this plan.



5 Strategic Objectives for 2018-2021

There are 14 strategic objectives for the 2018-2021 period categorised by Strategic Theme. These are the Strategic Objectives of the Regional NRM strategy and additional objectives to meet the organisations governance and partnership needs.

Only a subset of the Strategic Priorities for each of the Regional NRM Plans Strategic Objectives are included as some of the work (e.g. protect environmental flows) logically rests with partner organisations.

Our Work with the community	S0 01	Increase Perennial Vegetation Cover
	S0 02	Support Agricultural innovation in efficient chemical use and soil health
	S0 03	Promote 'fit for purpose' land use
	S0 04	Adapt to a Changing Climate
	S0 05	Coordinate fire and invasive species management
Our work building our relationships	S0 06	Be a community led organisation
	S0 07	Employ a mutually beneficial partnership approach to project delivery
	S0 08	Explore traditional Aboriginal knowledge
	S0 09	Actively input into the government policies that shape natural resource management, for the benefit of the Wheatbelt
	S0 10	Strengthen partnerships in the understanding and management of our social-ecological systems
	S0 11	Encourage community action for environmentally sustainable lifestyles
Our work building our organisation	S0 12	Ensure Wheatbelt NRM has a strong governance framework that is supported by efficient and effective business systems and processes
	S0 13	Secure funding and new business opportunities for delivering environmental solutions to the Wheatbelt



	S0 14	Develop a strategic adaptive management approach and embed systems thinking into NRM
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6 Strategic Priorities and Strategic Outcomes

The Strategic Priorities tables that follow expand on each Strategic Objective and provide SMART Strategic Outcomes statements that will be measured to evidence progress.

The Outcomes expand on each Strategic Objective by defining what the organisation is working to achieve by pursuing each of them. Outcomes have been designed to be measured, but this will only occur if there are funded projects delivering the Outcome. In this way project resources will be used to deliver the MERI and no duplicate, organisational efforts will be required. Outcomes may be funded by equity; this requires approval of Board and a project management plan will be required that includes MERI.

Each Project will have a monitoring plan that reports to Board annually on the contributions made to progressing the Strategic Outcome. Quarterly reporting of funded projects per Strategic Outcome will be included in Board's quarterly report to ensure they are aware of effort.

Quarterly Board reports will include percentage complete, and noting whether or not projects are on track

Strategic Theme: Our Work with the Community		
Strategic Objective (long term)	Strategic Priority (long term)	Strategic Outcomes (2018 – 2021)
SO 01: Increase Perennial Vegetation Cover	Improve the connectivity of perennial vegetation	Increase the number of perennial vegetation patches (10ha or greater in size) that are functionally linked to other patches
	Develop opportunities for perennial vegetation based enterprises	5000 ha of commercial revegetation, creating an opportunity for economic return
	Maintain an increased area of native vegetation	Deliver 2500 ha of native vegetation with improved condition
SO 02: Support Agricultural innovation in efficient chemical use and soil health	Maintain ground cover of agricultural land	50 landholders implement practices that reduce the amount of exposed ground (target greater than 50% groundcover over 80% of the area of interest in the summer)
	Optimise management of soil pH	Influence 200 -farmers to improve knowledge of innovative options to manage pH
	Improve nutrient use efficiency	50 Farmers adopt nutrient budgeting techniques
	Improve the use of soil testing data for land management	200 farmers have increased knowledge that maximises the value of their soil testing data
SO 03: Promote 'fit for purpose' land use	Fence and re-vegetate waterways	Additional 20 ha of riparian zone managed for waterways protection
	Develop viable economic systems on saline land	1000 ha of saline land is contributing to business bottom lines through adoption of appropriate land use.
	Diversify agriculture to take advantage of landscape	1000 people use Wheatbelt NRM as a knowledge hub for diversification options
SO 04: Adapt to a Changing Climate	Promote and implement farming systems resilient to seasonal variability	200 farmers in the Avon River Basin have adopted practices which build soil health (pH, organic carbon, respiration, nutrient bank)
SO 05: Coordinate fire and invasive species management	Increase targeted feral animal control	150 landholders have increased knowledge to undertake feral animal control action for biodiversity and production outcomes
	Implement appropriate fire management regimes	Increased local government knowledge on fire regime that creates dual outcome for fire protection and biodiversity conservation
	Control weeds in native vegetation	500 ha area of remnant vegetation has a reduced weed burden through weed control and competition (Revegetation)
	Implement sophisticated invasive species management that considered predator-prey interaction	Trial innovative species management with 30 landholders

Strategic Theme: Our Work Building Our Relationships		
Strategic Objective (long term)	Strategic Priority (long term)	Strategic Outcomes (2018 – 2021)
SO 06: Be a community led organisation	Wheatbelt NRMs program development is driven by community needs	25% of community grant rounds recipients are new to working with Wheatbelt NRM
	Wheatbelt NRM programs create a legacy of community-driven activity	70 % of community grant rounds recipients move one step along the consumer adoption model
SO 07: Employ a mutually beneficial partnership approach to project delivery	Wheatbelt NRM us ab attractive project partner	50% of projects have external partner organisations 50% of partnership projects where Wheatbelt NRM is the supporting partner (i.e. not the applicant)
SO 08: Explore traditional Aboriginal knowledge	Our work is influenced and improved by using Traditional Aboriginal knowledge	Wheatbelt NRM operates with cultural competency, supporting by the Noongar Elders Advisory Group
	The Aboriginal Community is working in partnership with Wheatbelt NRM of projects celebrating culture and connection to country	Wheatbelt NRM works in collaboration with the community delivering priorities in the Noongar Boodja Strategic Plan by attracting \$400k of investment annually
SO 09: Actively input into the government policies that shape natural resource management, for the benefit of the Wheatbelt	Appropriate levels of government funding is available for community-led NRM	Increase the dollars invested in the Wheatbelt community from the state NRM grants processes
SO 10: Strengthen partnerships in the understanding and management of our social-ecological systems	Regional NRM strategy provides value to partners	5 strategic community plans reference regional NRM Strategy
		10 incidents of regional strategy influencing policy decisions at state and/or national level
SO11 Encourage community action for Environmentally sustainable lifestyles	Maximise water harvesting, re-use and recycling	3 projects that increase water harvesting, re-use or recycling
	Encourage household implementation of sustainable living, practices	300 people access practical sustainability resources for their homes from Wheatbelt NRM 300 people linked with green suppliers

Strategic Theme: Our Work Building the Organisation		
Strategic Objective (long term)	Strategic Priority (long term)	Strategic Outcomes (2018 – 2021)
SO 12: Ensure Wheatbelt NRM has a strong governance framework that is supported by efficient and effective business systems and processes	Deliver a continuous improvement plan for governance/business systems developed from evaluations that include external input	Demonstrate improvement in the business excellence framework for NRM
SO 13: Secure funding and new business opportunities for delivering environmental solutions to the Wheatbelt	Increase funds available to deliver organisational and regional strategies	Revenue of 4 million per year Equity growth of 250K per year
SO 14: Develop a strategic adaptive management approach and embed systems thinking into NRM	Develop an adaptive management tool	Internal MERI processes to deliver organizational improvement plan (lessons learnt report)
	Plan at a sub-regional scale	Regional strategy is informed by appropriate data provided through an actively managed Dashboard
	Develop a spatial planning tool	Analyse change in TPC's at subregional scale as an informational input into regional plan review Increase use of Wheatbelt NRM planning data by partners

7 About Wheatbelt NRM

7.1 Our History

Wheatbelt NRM began in 1994 as the Avon Working Group that formed part of the Swan-Avon Integrated Catchment Management (the first regional group initiative in the state). At that time it was a partnership between the Western Australian and Australian Governments, and the community of the Avon River Basin. It was charged with overseeing projects, setting priorities, planning, and advocacy of community issues.

During the Decade of Landcare and Natural Heritage Trust, the organisation undertook a wide range of activities, particularly under the Dryland Salinity Program. One key program was the development of the first NRM Strategic Plan (2001) that resulted from extensive consultation with the Avon Community and the Australian Government. This period also saw the organisation become incorporated and undergo a name change to Avon Catchment Council.

Under the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and Natural Heritage Trust 2, an initiative by the Australian and State Governments, the Avon Catchment Council was designated as a regional group. This major initiative supported 56 groups across Australia to develop Regional NRM Strategic Plans through consultation. These NRM Strategies were accredited by the Australian Government to guide investment in each region. The period (2004-2007) saw a focus on large-scale strategic projects that targeted high value public assets, such as the Avon River and its pools.

The Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program began in 2008. This program used a business planning model to deliver Australian Government priorities. Wheatbelt NRM's challenge was to understand the context of its own Organisational strategy within the higher level initiatives of the Australian and State Governments. This period saw the organisation undergo major governance reform that included establishment of a skills-based Board of Management. The organisation changed its name to Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Incorporated (2009) to reflect the geographical location, common interests and land uses of the community within the Avon River Basin region.

The 2012-15 Strategic Plan took further steps to cement the independence of the organisation in terms of community driven NRM, income and the business decisions that follow. This plan saw the introduction of a Succinct Strategy Statement (SSS) to provide a community focus to all of the work of the organisation. The SSS was developed from the rational that environmental impact in the large and altered landscape of the Wheatbelt could not be achieved by Government resources alone, and would require a community wide response. The SS was:

By 2015 have 3,500(10%) members of the Wheatbelt community actively engaged in improving the environment of the Wheatbelt through our regionally-focused, multi-disciplinary, high quality strategies and programs.

It was delivered with a great deal of success, with 79% of the plan's targets achieved by June 2015 and the internal measurement of the SSS showing 17.5% of the community as active. During this period, the Regional NRM Strategy for the Avon River Basin (the Regional NRM Strategy) underwent an extensive review and was rewritten using a systems-based approach. The Regional NRM strategy was published in 2014 and presents a 'state of the environment' report for the Wheatbelt along with five-year strategic priorities that will require whole-of-community action to achieve.

The 2015 – 2018 regional strategy was retitled the 3 Year Plan to clearly differentiate it from the Regional NRM Strategy. The 2015-2018 3 Year Plan for Wheatbelt NRM identified the environmental work the organisation would pursue to contribute to the delivery of the Regional NRM Strategy, as well as the work needed to maintain and build relationships, business processes and revenue. The SSS was expanded to:

By 2018, have 25% (8,750) of the Wheatbelt community actively improving the Wheatbelt environment through our multi-disciplinary strategies and programs.

This target was not reached, and updated demographic data proved that 25% of the community was 11,000 people. Approximately 6000 people, or 14% of the community were actively involved. This was a decrease on the previous strategy.

From 2012 to 2018 the governance systems of the organisation were developed through a continuous improvement approach. This saw the development of plans that complimented the 3 Year Plan, for example, the Partnership Strategy and the Revenue Development Plan.

In 2107, the Australian Government launched a competitive tender process for the delivery of the National Heritage Trust 2 (NHT2). The new program would focus on outcomes rather than the output level that had been in previous programs, and was mirrored into the 3 Year Plan.

The planning approach for the 3 Year Plan 2018 -2021 has been updated to reflect the need to reduce the reporting burden and refocus on the outcomes achieved by our work.

7.2 Our Key Strength Areas

This 3 Year Plan aims to build upon the key recognised strengths of Wheatbelt NRM that include:

1. **Membership base** – our member organisations bring the input of the wider community into our planning and strategic endeavours;
2. **Strong governance** – the skills-based Board of Management ensures governance obligations are met, and pursues continuous improvement by participating in the NRM Organisational Excellence Performance Framework;
3. **Community engagement** – a plan for communications, engagement and marketing is in place. This supports information and communication channels between the organisation and the community, including individual residents and landholders;
4. **Operational frameworks** – to ensure consistent performance with a focus on continuous improvement, Wheatbelt NRM has a series of good practice frameworks in program management, project management, contract management and performance management;
5. **Committed team** – the NRM industry attracts committed staff and Board Directors who wish to protect, nurture and improve natural resources. Wheatbelt NRM enjoys a strong staff structure of experienced and dedicated NRM professionals and equally dedicated directors with a diversity of knowledge and experience;
6. **Cross disciplinary** – the organisation prevails as the only independent, cross-disciplinary entity that can bring together diverse organisations and communities for positive NRM outcomes in the Wheatbelt; and
7. **Local knowledge** – the organisation has a breadth and depth of information, data, expertise and knowledge on community engagement, local natural assets and natural resource management practices.

8 About the Planning Process

8.1 Five-Tier Planning Methodology

Wheatbelt NRM planning framework is a five-tier methodology, comprising of:

- a Regional NRM Strategy for the Avon River Basin
- the vision and mission statements;
- the strategic objectives that are defined by the 3 Year Plan;
- the portfolio-based annual initiatives that are aligned to the strategic objectives and stated in the annual Operations Plan; and
- any further program and project based documentation that defines the actual implementation works in detail.



Figure 2 Five-Tier Planning Model

This provides a comprehensive framework that facilitates strategy through to implementation, and enables performance measurement at all levels of the process. The framework also integrates the financial management, risk management, variation management, project and program management, and monitoring and reporting processes and systems.

8.2 Regional NRM Strategy

The Avon Natural Resource Management Strategy was first published in 2005 using an asset/threat approach and traditional community engagement processes of stakeholder meetings to review progress. The next generation plan, The Regional NRM Strategy for the Avon River Basin, was published in 2014 used a resilience assessment of the Wheatbelt as a social-ecological system to understand the regional environment's current state. Natural resource management priorities have been identified that influence natural resource change.

Priorities identified in the Regional NRM Strategy have influenced Wheatbelt NRM's past 3 Year Plans, however the Governance Improvement plan identified the need to make this connection stronger. The Regional Strategy identifies 12 Thresholds of Potential Concern (TPC) for the socio-ecological system. These are monitored on a Dashboard that compiles current data and notes progress towards the TCPs. This change in condition forms an adaptive management framework to ensure that natural resource change is monitored and priorities are adapted with the aim of keeping the Avon River Basin within safe environmental thresholds.

The full NRM Strategy review can be located on the Wheatbelt NRM website at www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/nrmstrategy

8.3 Vision and Mission

Wheatbelt NRM's vision sets the aspirational position that the organisation strives toward, while the mission outlines the organisation's key purpose. These are used to set the context for the development of all plans and are stated in the 3 Year Plan document.

8.4 Organisational 3 Year Plan

This Organisational 3 Year Plan presents an organisation-wide strategy for a three-year period. It establishes a measurable strategic result for Wheatbelt NRM that will lead all planning activities below it. For each year of its life cycle, the plan's relevance and validity is reaffirmed by the Board of Management. In addition, the progress of the strategic objectives is measured and reported to track the organisation's overall strategic performance.

Strategic Objectives each have measureable strategic Outcomes determined. Project work for the organisation is sort to deliver on these Strategic Outcomes, and each project includes a MERI plan to evidence progress on the Strategic Outcome.

The work of the 3 Year Plan is aspirational and will not progress without securing funding. Only when a funded project is secured will annual measurement of the Strategic Outcome be undertaken. Designing projects to deliver and report on the Strategic Outcomes of the 3 Year plan will reduce the reporting burden of the organisation. There will be no reporting to Board at the output or activity level, however Board will receive quarterly reports of the level of funding being applied to each Strategic Outcome.

A high level Succinct Strategy statement is included to guide the organisation's work across several strategic theme areas. The Succinct Strategy statement is designed so that staff and directors can concisely communicate the organisation's work to the wider community.

8.5 Annual Operations Plans

Each year, an Operations Plan is created that sets out annual initiatives based on progressing the strategic objectives. The Operations Plan also covers ongoing operational key performance indicators and includes the annual budget that covers both core funding and special funding. This plan becomes a key tool for performance evaluations.

8.6 Program and Project Plans

Program and project plans provide detailed information on how the annual initiatives will be progressed, including the detailed human resource allocations, budget, schedules and quality-based deliverables that results in the overall Organisational strategy being implemented.

8.7 Annual Initiatives and the Budget Process

Each year, new annual initiatives (delivered as programs or projects) are developed, prioritised and funded in alignment with, and to progress, the agreed strategic objectives stated in this plan. The funding required for progressing these annual initiatives, together with the ongoing core operational management financial requirements, define the annual budget.

The overall methodology reflects the strategic objectives set for the organisation by the Board of Management, and the annual operational initiatives overseen by the Chief Executive Officer. It is expected that by the end of 2021, the sum of all the annual initiatives from each Operations Plan will have realised the full completion of this plan's strategic objectives.