

# Regional NRM working together in WA

*There's a lot happening in our backyard!*





By working in partnership with other community groups, state agencies, supporting farmers and industry and investing government funds, the regions have helped to **protect, revegetate and restore** more than **4 million hectares** of land across the state - that's a big backyard!

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CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY



This work has been funded by the Australian Government and the Government of Western Australia for the benefit of all Western Australian and visitors to our unique and diverse

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April 2012  
Designed by Chris David, Wheatbelt NRM  
Created by the WA NRM RLG



On behalf of Western Australia's NRM Regional Leaders Group, it is with a pleasure that I provide an insight into the fantastic work of the six Regional NRM Organisations across the state.

Natural Resource Management (NRM) is the sustainable management of Australia's natural resources (our land, water, marine and biological systems). NRM is vital to ensure our ongoing social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

The projects and achievements outlined in the document demonstrate that the six Regional NRM Organisations, with their unique structures and operational models, are providing significant benefits to government, landholders and the community.

The successful planning and delivery of natural resource management in WA requires a united effort between the six Regional NRM Organisations; Australian, State and Local Government; the corporate sector; local communities; indigenous groups and landholders.

The aim of the NRM Regional Leaders Group is to increase the overall collaboration between all NRM stakeholders to better coordinate, deliver, and communicate our initiatives. Greater transparency and the sharing of knowledge along with a renewed commitment to monitoring and evaluating NRM investment are key parts of this strategy.

There's a lot happening in our backyard. I hope you agree.

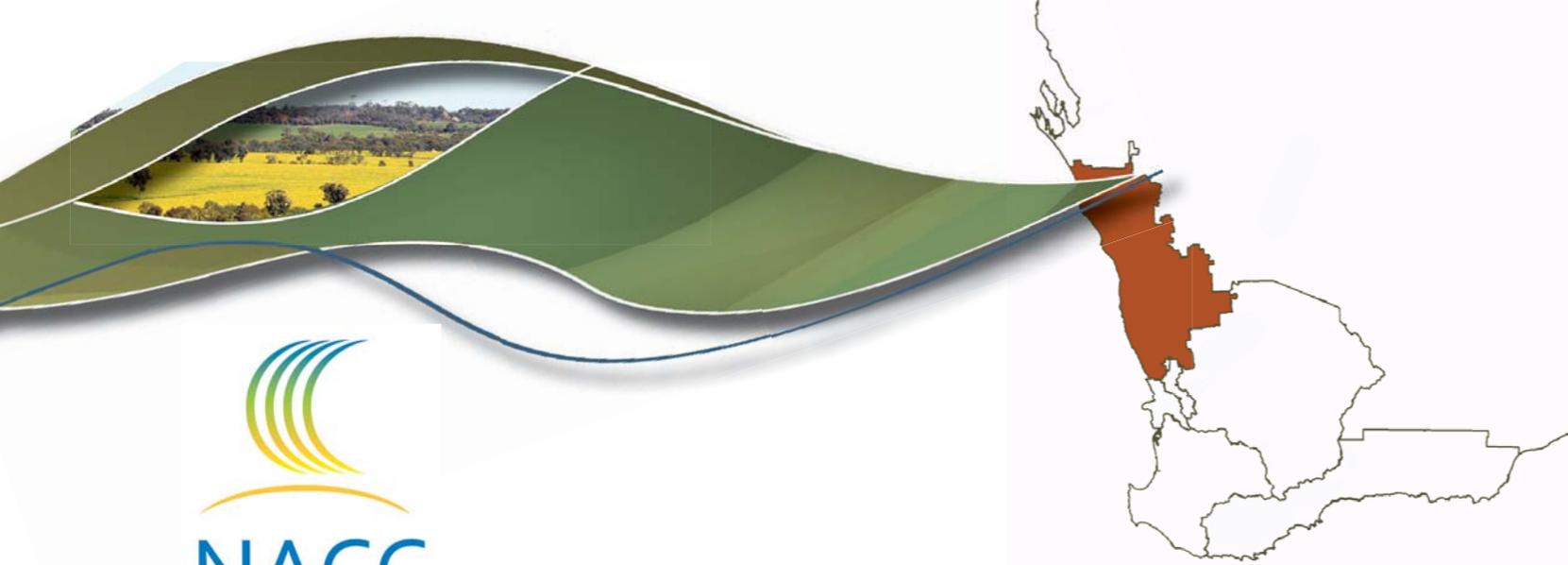
**Across Western Australia in 2009-10, together they:**

**Engaged 8,801 Individuals**

**Involved 683 groups**

**Improved 4,785,913 hectares of land**

**Mr David Gardner**  
 Chairman  
 Regional Leaders Group  
 March 2012



The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) has clear vision to develop and support a community committed to environmental stewardship.

NACC covers the Northern Agricultural Region (NAR) of WA: 7.5million hectares from Kalbarri in the north to Gingin in the south and from the Abrolhos Islands in the west to the clearing line in the east.

Broadacre agriculture is the predominant industry, but fishing, mining and tourism contribute strongly to the economy.

### Delivery mechanisms

Community groups established NACC and communities remain at the foundation and heart of our work. Throughout the 10 years of its existence NACC has worked in close partnership with catchment management and farm improvement groups throughout the region to deliver its projects, ensuring equitable coverage and a 'local bloke' approach for every constituent in the NAR. With the assistance of WA State Government funding, NACC has supported the employment of a network of local natural resource management officers (NRMOs) in sub-regional groups to deliver important outcomes for the protection of WA's natural assets through program funding from both State and Australian government programs.

### Summary of achievements 2002-2012 Sustainable farming program

Broadacre agriculture is a key industry in the NAR: at about \$1000m annually it accounts for around 35 per cent of the regional economy. Most of the region's natural assets are located on more than 2000 farm enterprises. Working from the premise that sustainability of this sector equates to sustainability of the region, NACC's largest programs have,

to date, been focussed on sustainable farming outcomes. NACC has worked closely with the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA), research organisations and farming associations to deliver a range of programs addressing soil condition affected by wind and surface water run-off, salinity rehabilitation, and new cropping practices that deliver both a biodiversity and an economic benefit.

In delivering these projects, the NACC team has worked one on one with almost 1000 individual farmers, each of which has signed a 10 year agreement for the implementation and maintenance of on-ground works including the new practices. In addition, hundreds more have attended workshops and field days to keep abreast of best practice across a range of areas.

**848 land managers** have signed 10-year agreements to implement and maintain on-ground works and new practices

**10,466ha of perennial pastures** planted to protect soil from wind erosion

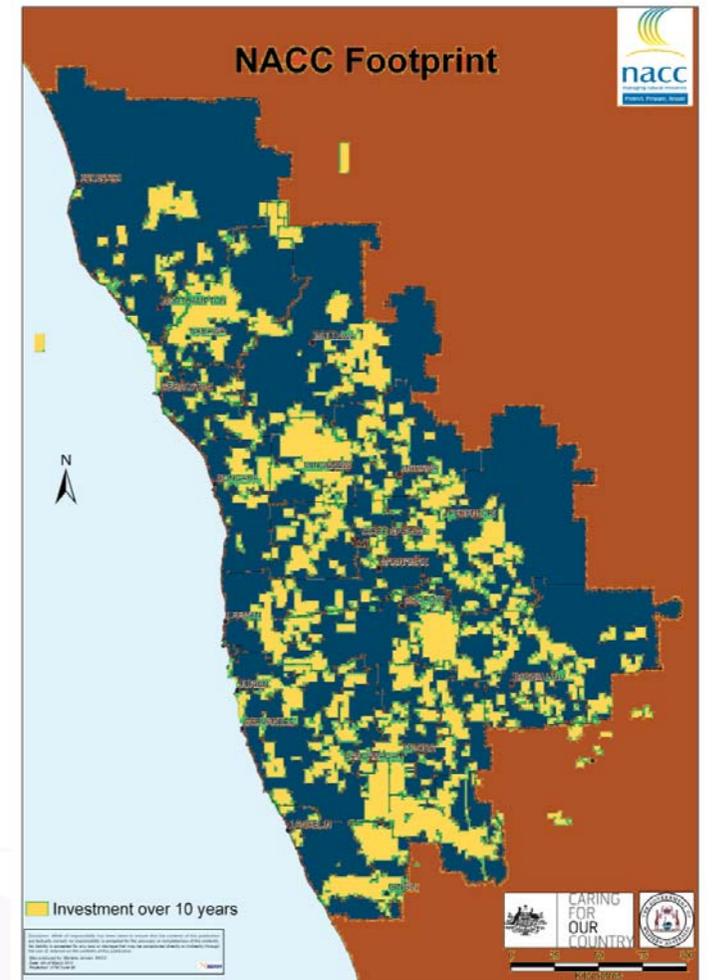
**12,470ha of saltland pastures** planted to alleviate salinity

**3,793ha of oil mallees** and brushwood planted for wind breaks to alleviate soil erosion, also providing alternative cash crops

**17,522ha of native vegetation** (biodiverse plantings) planted for wind breaks to alleviate soil erosion.

### Biodiversity protection and restoration

The Northern Agricultural Region has approximately 24 per cent of its pre-european vegetation – well below the 30 per cent threshold at which severe ecosystem perturbation has been assessed to occur. More than 450 plants and



NACC has undertaken a variety of farming, biodiversity and coastal rehabilitation work with landmanagers across all localities of the Northern Agricultural Region.

400 animal species in WA's agricultural zone are at risk of extinction. NACC's Biodiversity program is focussed on rehabilitating and revegetating critical habitat and on removing threats to habitat.

Through extensive research of maps, species Action Plans, Recovery Plans and other reference materials NACC 'ground truthed' the presence or absence of listed threatened or endangered flora and fauna in the NAR. This information coupled with knowledge of remnant vegetation in the region has helped us work towards the development of wildlife corridors in some areas.

Key achievements under this program which have been undertaken by NACC with assistance from the WA Department of Environment and Conservation and include:

- Discovery of new flora species, *Tetratheca* sp New Norcia
- 116 Threatened, Endangered or Declared Rare species in the NAR mapped
- **7289ha of priority habitat protected** and managed through 10-year management agreements including 1421ha of habitat for threatened species
- 20 recovery management plans completed
- **3,581ha of wetlands and streambanks protected** by livestock exclusion fencing including 175ha along the Moore River
- **253kms of streambanks rehabilitated** and stabilised and 1,239ha of streambanks revegetated with native riparian plants
- **545ha of high value biodiversity assets protected** through baiting of feral pigs
- **240ha of Weeds of National Significance removed**, including 140ha located along creeks and rivers
- More than 140km of bait trails laid and 300 bait stations deployed to control the impact of rabbits on EPBC listed threatened species, and 25km of rabbit proof fencing erected to protect over 4,000ha of remnant vegetation containing at least five declared rare flora species.

## Coastal and Marine

Coastal and marine ecosystems provide important recreational and commercial opportunities to communities of the NAR but are under increasing pressure from urban development, population growth, tourism and a changing climate.

NACC encourages a community based approach to the improved management



Department of Transport's Senior Coastal Engineer Charlie Bicknell presents 'Understanding the Science of Climate Change' to a full audience at NACC's 2011 Coastal Conversations Series in Geraldton. Photo: A Robb



NACC worked in partnership with Wila Gutharra Aboriginal Corporation and Durack TAFE to develop a Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management aimed at 'working on country'.

of coastal resources by working with land managers, community groups, government agencies and research institutes to develop strategies, site plans, skills and knowledge building events, on ground works, and data collection and monitoring activities.

Key outcomes include:

- **Boardwalks and interpretative signage** erected at Lake Thetis (Cervantes), Green Head, Sandy Cape (Jurien Bay), and Kalbarri, to protect high value coastal biodiversity and rare stromatolites. 11ha of bushland rehabilitated and 50 truckloads of weed and rubbish removed at Lake Thetis. 20ha of coastal bushland rehabilitated and protected at Kalbarri. 16km of track rationalisation and 12ha of bush protected between Lancelin and Green Head.
- **7 new Coastcare groups with a total of 13 groups supported region wide.** Increased community awareness and stewardship of local areas through beach clean-up days, tree planting days, rehabilitation workshops and beach walks.

## Working on Country: Indigenous Participation program

Broadly speaking the NAR is home to the Yued (Noongar) people in the south and the Yamatji people in the north. NACC seeks to involve Indigenous land managers in all of

its programs but it also seeks to increase the knowledge and skills, environmental stewardship and employment opportunities for individuals and communities of the region.

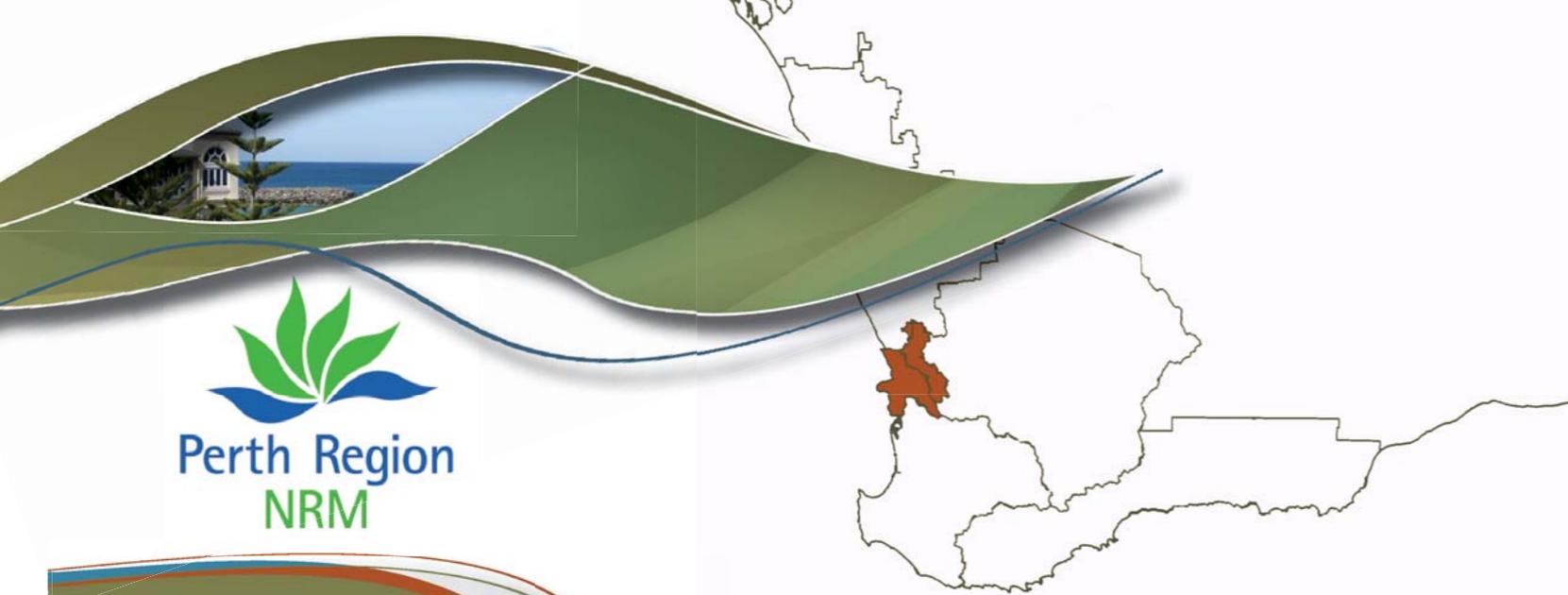
To encourage people back to 'working on country' NACC has instituted several Indigenous-specific projects that meld increasing cultural knowledge with natural resource management outcomes.

In the south of the region priority sites of the Yued people have been audited and mapped and, from those, six comprehensive management plans have been developed for works on cultural heritage sites.

In the north, on Yamatji country, 145 cultural sites were surveyed and mapped and 18 management plans developed.

A Training for Country project was designed to train Aboriginal people to undertake conservation work for either employment opportunities or for work on the sites identified in the previous projects. The training involved modifying the existing TAFE Certificate II Conservation and Land Management course to include relevant cultural information and recording of information about country, and was delivered with an emphasis on field learning over classroom learning.

Eleven out of the twelve participants graduated and one participant left the training before graduation because of an employment opportunity that arose from the training.



Perth Region NRM is a community-led regional group with responsibility for coordinating and delivering natural resource management (NRM) in the Perth Region. The Board is a nineteen member group drawn from the community, State Government and

The natural resources of the Perth Region are protected and managed sustainably in their own right and for the enhancement of the quality of life for present and future generations

The Perth Region has five Sub-regional areas defined by their natural resource characteristics. The regions are North, North-East, East, South and Coastal.

### Swan River Trust & Alcoa Landcare Program

The Swan River Trust & Alcoa Landcare Program (SALP), affectionately known as SALP, provides funds for community groups, or local government working with community groups, involved in on-ground revegetation and rehabilitation projects in the Perth region. The Program was established in 1998 and has funded more than 882 projects worth over \$6 million across the Perth metropolitan area.

This equates to hundreds of community groups and thousands of volunteers who are directly responsible for more than **1 million plants planted, 300 kilometres of installed fencing and 200 hectares of weed removed** since the Program's inception.

Funding is made available for a wide range of activities in the Perth region addressing the following regional priorities:

- retention, restoration and management of bushland, coastal, wetland and riverine vegetation; and
- protection and enhancement of the quality of surface

water (streams, rivers, wetlands) and groundwater.

SALP is a successful example of Industry, Government and the not-for-profit sector working together to provide support for environmental community on-ground work. Alcoa of Australia Limited and the Swan River Trust have played a vital role supporting the program and its recipients. Perth Region NRM manages the program with support from staff at Alcoa and the Swan River Trust, ensuring the relationship between not-for-profit, industry and government runs efficiently.



### Coastal Program

The focus of Perth Region NRM's Coastcare Program is to engage community volunteers in the restoration of coastal reserves in the Perth Metro region, to enhance biodiversity values and improve resilience of the coastal zone to damage from erosion and human impacts.

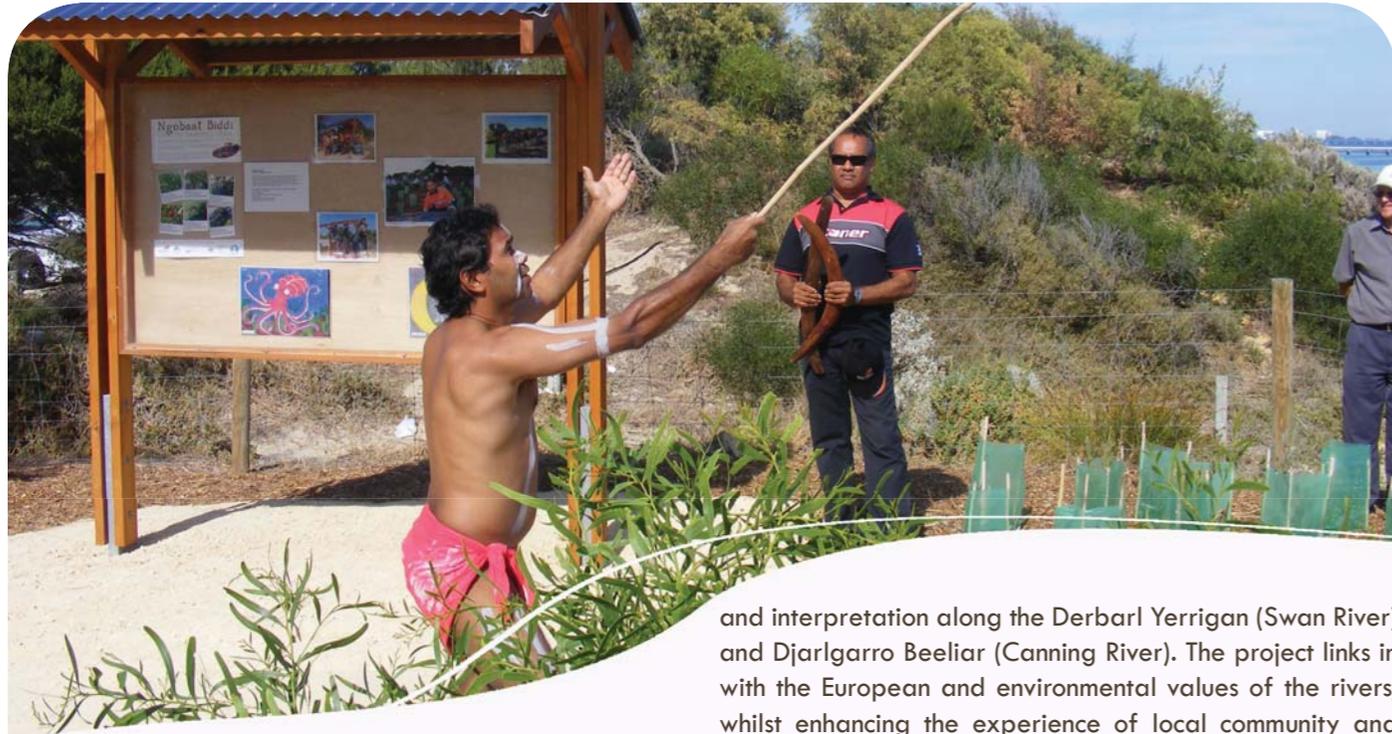
Coastcare has worked with a range of stakeholders including local Coastcare groups, Local and State Government, schools and industry to undertake on-ground rehabilitation events, educate students in coastal ecology and engage industry to leveraging additional funds and involve corporate groups in coastal rehabilitation.

From Singleton in the south to Two Rocks in the north selected sites have commenced rehabilitation through the control of invasive weeds, installation of fencing and the planting of coastal species.

Over the two year period the Coastcare Program has engaged over **2000 volunteers** and planted close to **60,000 plants** in the coastal zone. A range of industry groups including Synergy, Alcoa, BHP Billiton, Verve Energy, Kwinana Industries Council and BP have contributed funds to the program.

Photo monitoring of the rehabilitation sites has shown that a concentrated effort over a number of years does provide results. Opportunistic sightings of wildlife (reptiles, birds) in the rehabilitation areas are encouraging signs that improving habitat does contribute to successful outcomes.





and interpretation along the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and Djarlgarro Beeljar (Canning River). The project links in with the European and environmental values of the rivers, whilst enhancing the experience of local community and visitors by highlighting Noongar values.

Stage One of the project was funded by Lotterywest, with in-kind support by PRNRM and SRT. Eighteen months of consultation with the Noongar community and Elders allowed the project team to document Noongar knowledge and values, giving the Elders a voice on management practices for caring for the rivers and providing assistance and guidance on river interpretation and what key values and changes they felt needed to be documented throughout the process. An advisory group was also established to provide support and assistance to the project.

Over 100 Noongar elders and community members were consulted, strengthening the working relationships between the stakeholders and the Noongar community. The Final Report, "Noongar knowledge of the Derbarl Yerrigan and Djarlgarro Beeljar" DVD and the Noongar Consultation Protocol Guidelines were launched in early 2011 by the Mayor of South Perth, Peter Best.

The future for the Coastcare Program is to continue rehabilitation in existing locations and to identify additional sites to add to the program. It is critical that sites receive follow up investment in time and funds to ensure that environmental gains are strengthened. In the longer term it is anticipated that the mosaic of rehabilitation sites established under the program will expand to form a continuous high quality coastal reserve system.

### Swan and Canning Rivers Iconic Trails Project 2009-2011

The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) in partnership with Perth Region NRM (PRNRM) and the Swan River Trust (SRT) established the Swan and Canning Rivers Iconic Trails Project. The aim of the project was to incorporate Noongar values into the broader Swan and Canning Rivers trail network, including the development

Perth Region NRM in partnership with SWALSC is currently looking at funding opportunities for stage two of the project.

### Winery Energy Management Project

Through this project, PRNRM has assisted over 20 wineries over 12 months to optimise energy management practices, reduce energy costs and improve business profitability and sustainability. Detailed on-site audits and assessment of energy use patterns has resulted in significant outcomes for participating wineries. For example, Cape Mentelle Winery has reduced their energy use by 17% so far to achieve financial savings of \$30,000/yr, which equates to roughly 210 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e/yr, with potential for a further reduction of 10%.

A series of case studies has been produced as a result of the project and these are available on the PRNRM website.

### Light Industry Audit Project

Launched by the Minister for the Environment in April 2010, PRNRM was contracted by the Swan River Trust, with support from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program, to conduct 1,740 'SME pollution assessments' across four of Perth's well established and important light industrial areas: Welshpool, Kewdale, Maddington and Malaga. This project was requested and

funded in response to evidence that natural waterways and stormwater systems, which flow to the Swan Canning River system, were being polluted by contaminants from light industrial businesses.

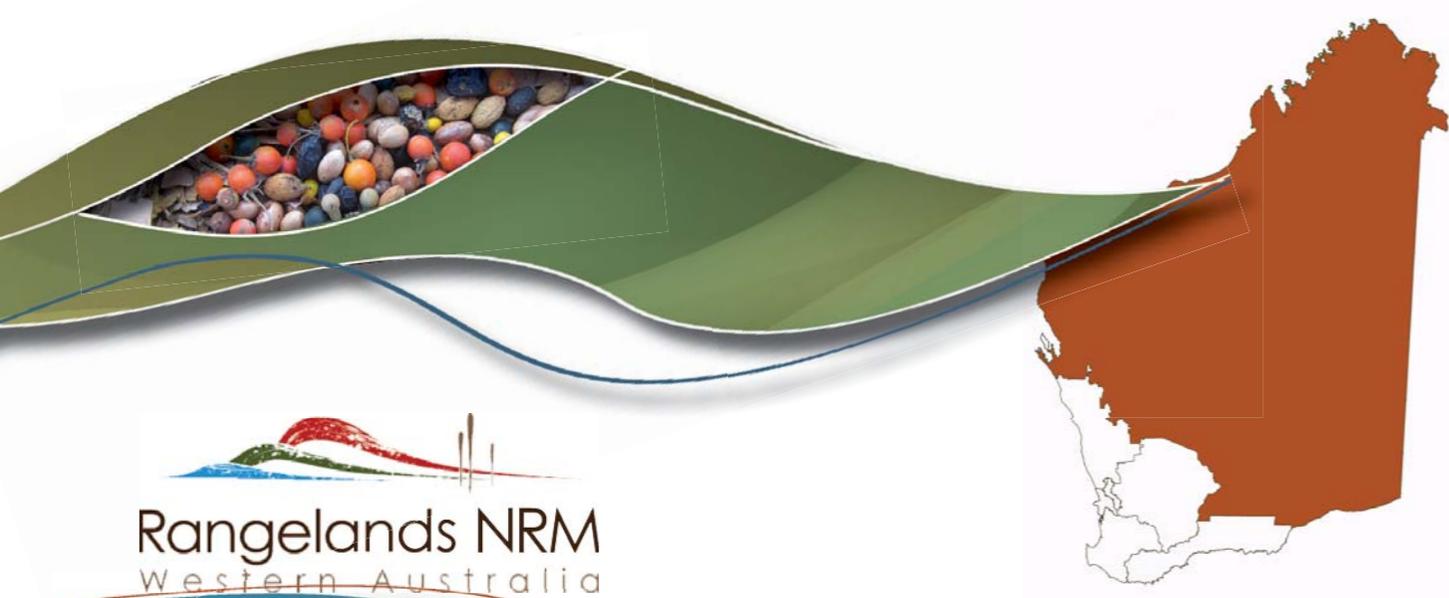
- Detailed on-site assessments of potentially polluting businesses were conducted to examine:
- Specific industrial use and on-site operations.
- Storage provisions for hazardous liquids and liquid waste.
- Availability of spill containment equipment and material safety data information.
- Wastewater and liquid waste disposal practices.
- Compliance with relevant environmental legislation, including the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and the Environmental Protection (Unauthorised Discharges) Regulations 2004 and Local Laws pertinent to each Local Government.

Collaborative partnerships with the Cities of Canning, Gosnells, Belmont and Swan, and the Department of Environment and Conservation were a key to the success of this project.

The following table provides a summary of the number of audits completed and compliance rates before and after PRNRM intervention:

Industrial area	No of audits completed	Initial rate of non-compliance	Rate of non-compliance at June 2011
Welshpool	651	32.39%	4.37%
Kewdale	192	29.20%	5.11%
Maddington	494	42.62%	9.73%
Malaga	509	42.81%	15.75%
	<b>1,846 (total)</b>	<b>37.46% (average)</b>	<b>8.87% (average)</b>

At the completion of the project in June 2011, PRNRM had completed over 1,800 audits.



## Rangelands NRM Western Australia

The Western Australian Rangelands NRM region covers more than 2.3 million square kilometres - approximately 87% of the State's land mass and 75% of the coastline.

The region has vast areas with limited human use and incredibly rich biodiversity values, including many rare and threatened species, and 4 Ramsar sites (Eighty Mile Beach, Lake Kununurra, Ord River Floodplain, and Roebuck Bay).

The region is rich in minerals, pastoralism, horticulture, fishing, and tourism. More than 88% of Western Australia's mining activities lie within this region.

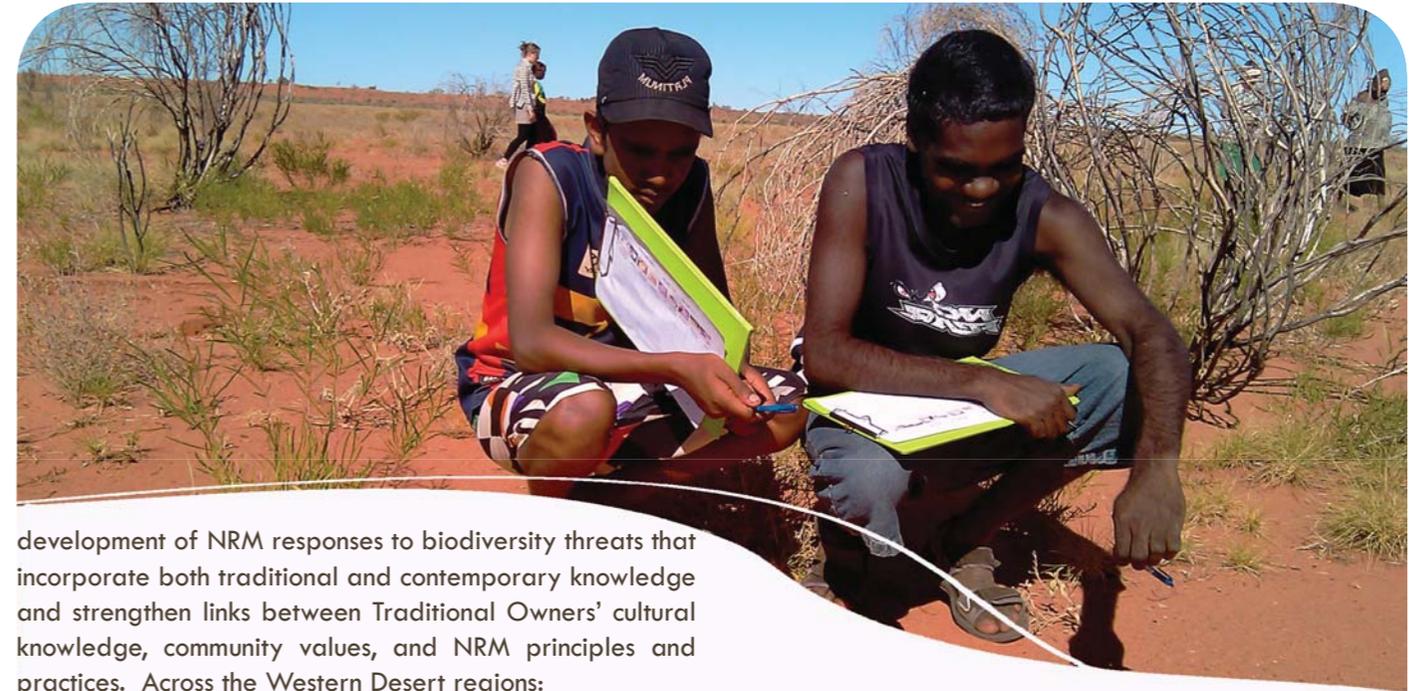
### Indigenous Outcomes

Community centred outcomes have been achieved within:

- 20 million ha of arid zone landscape in the Western Desert - an area with significant and relatively intact biodiversity values and important cultural heritage value to the Martu, who continue to use their traditional knowledge and skills in their day to day life; and
- Lower Fortescue River - the Ngurawaana lease area, an area important for the ongoing supply of water to Karratha.

A key long term objective for these projects is to support Traditional Owners to return to their communities with the capability to independently manage and maintain their country, and ultimately, the capacity to deliver on-ground activities to surrounding land managers.

Projects initiated by Rangelands NRM WA have resulted in a high level of Indigenous engagement in contemporary NRM - leading to identification of local priorities and project planning, and collection of baseline data on the condition of the country through fauna monitoring and environmental assessments. This has provided the foundation for the



development of NRM responses to biodiversity threats that incorporate both traditional and contemporary knowledge and strengthen links between Traditional Owners' cultural knowledge, community values, and NRM principles and practices. Across the Western Desert regions:

Approximately 230 Martu from 4 communities have taken part in over 1200 days of on ground activities.

Capacity of Indigenous communities built through provision of specialist training and TAFE level education in flora identification, herbarium creation, pest plant identification and control methods, water hole assessment, GPS use, 4WD programs, and Bilby management.

- Implementation of ongoing fire and invasive species management plans by the communities and over **36,000 ha of managed burns undertaken.**
- Almost **765,000 ha in the Western Desert surveyed** or monitored for **threatened and other fauna species.**
- Almost **300 environmental assessments of water sources undertaken.**

- **Implementation of a 'Fee for service' model for Indigenous rangers.**

Maintenance of cultural integrity and appropriateness through collection and incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

- **Development of management systems for tourism within risk areas, and improving cultural and environmental protection of these areas.**
- **Protection of, and reduction in threats to, 750,000 ha of the aquatic ecosystem of the Lower Fortescue River catchment.**

### Biodiversity protection and restoration

Rangelands NRM WA has supported establishment of projects with land managers to protect the unique character of important sites such as:

- Ord River Floodplain Ramsar wetland;
- Lake Macleod;
- West Kimberley;

and sustainably protect the biodiversity values of these areas through community management of invasive species. The work undertaken will develop the long-term capacity of communities and land managers to assess and manage invasive plants and animals to protect and enhance the key biodiversity values.

The community uptake of projects across the central rangelands has resulted in an accurate and detailed overview of the magnitude of invasive species issues, a comprehensive understanding of WoNS, and knowledge of feral animal movements, distribution, and impacts. This allows land managers and support agencies to plan strategic and coordinated spread-management and on ground control programs on a local and landscape scale, with programs costed accurately, and with confidence of achieving maximum return on investment. Examples include: **Pilbara**

A mapping program for WoNS in the Pilbara has been completed, with every current and historical location of Mesquite and Parkinsonia surveyed for presence, size, and density of infestations; leading to control of satellite infestations in the Pilbara river systems. As a result:

- The impact of invasive species has been reduced across **80,000 ha and a further 15,000 ha of critical aquatic habitats**, such as Millstream Ponds and Fortescue Marshes, have been **protected**.
- On ground works to control Parkinsonia have been implemented across 12 pastoral stations and 620 km of river system.
- Control of Mesquite is in place across 75,000 ha, with kill rates of 85% or better.

## Ord River Floodplain Ramsar Area

- Protection from Bellyache Bush, Parkinsonia, and Noogoora Burr has been provided across almost 150 ha of the floodplain.
- 20 land managers are delivering targeted control programs for mapping or control of feral pigs across more than 3,000 ha of the Ord buffer zone.
- **66 farmers and 53 properties** have management plans in place to co-ordinate and **improve invasive species practices in the floodplain**.
- Acacia nilotica has been reduced by 90% across 5,000 ha and core infestation of Mimosa has been controlled across 4,500 ha of the floodplain.
- Closure of tracks into sensitive areas and descriptive educational signage has been implemented across 7 stations or land management agency controlled regions within the Ord floodplain.
- 40 km of tracks have been closed to prevent impacts from stock and 70 km of track has been improved for management purposes.

## West Kimberley

- Protection of Monsoon Vine Thickets (TECs) and wetlands in West Kimberley through the strategic use of fire and invasive species management.
- The profile of Dampier Peninsula Monsoon Vine Thickets has been raised and is a major component of Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) management planning in the region. The Monsoon Vine Thickets have now also been placed on the EPBC Act (1999) Finalised Priority Assessment List.
- Scientific understanding of Monsoon Vine Thickets has been advanced and monitoring protocols developed to aid planning and review.



- Successful management of critical threats to native habitat has been demonstrated across almost 1,200 ha of West Kimberley region.
- Discovery of Parkinsonia dieback, a naturally occurring disease, has the potential to assist in control in areas inaccessible to other control methods.
- Development of new partnerships with mining companies that have active mining and exploration tenements with Mesquite and Parkinsonia infestations.
- Sustainable land management

The Rangelands NRM WA supported flag-ship EcoFire project is demonstrating significant improvements in fire patterns across the central Kimberley and spin-off effects of protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

- Satellite monitoring is showing that mid-to-late dry season fires are a much smaller proportion of all fires than in previous years; unplanned fires were much smaller in size; and there were many more small patches of burnt and unburnt vegetation and they were spread more evenly throughout the project area. This reduction in the extent of intense fires is expected to benefit the abundance and richness of mammals, birds, and plants, improve pastoral production, and limit damage to cultural sites.
- There is increased engagement in fire management from a variety of community members and development of effective partnerships with Indigenous communities.

- EcoFire was the winner of both the overall Environment Award and Community Group Achievement Award at the 2008 WA Environment Awards for the planning and implementation of managed, cool-season burning programs in the Kimberley. The model is now replicated by other projects.

The Ecologically Sustainable Rangelands Management (ESRM) project has worked with more than 40 pastoral land managers to develop Property Management Plans which demonstrate how production and environmental outcomes can be achieved.

- Knowledge and skills of these land managers have been significantly improved through education and training.
- In the last year the ESRM team worked with 14 committed pastoral properties, covering an area of 24,624 km<sup>2</sup>, in the Lake MacLeod catchment to develop management plans.
- **66 km of riparian fencing** has been put in place to reduce erosive impacts in sensitive land systems.
- 2 watering points have been relocated (including 8 km of water network pipelines) to assist in the preservation of sensitive, seasonally productive sites.
- **ESRM (expand) plans are in place** for 5 properties in the Pilbara, totalling **800,000 ha**.



The South Coast Region covers an area of 8 million ha, or 3 per cent of Western Australia.

The region is divided into six sub-regions on the basis of climate, drainage, soil landform and conservation values. It is the unique biological and landscape features and significant cultural and pioneering heritage, that make the South Coast region one of the most spectacular in Australia.

South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc. is the leading not-for-profit environmental services provider in the South Coast region of Western Australia. We work with community, government and business to improve the environment by preserving and protecting biodiversity, managing land and waterways sustainably, and sharing knowledge and skills in NRM.

## PROTECTING SOUTHERN SHORES

South Coast beaches and waterways are facing increasing pressures from recreational use and climate change which is impacting on the flora and fauna species that call them home.

South Coast NRM's Southern Shores program has engaged community organisations in coastal rehabilitation, restoration and conservation projects through its devolved grants for over three years.

The Southern Shores program aims to increase community knowledge, skills and participation in NRM and implement activities in line with Southern Shores 2009-2030: a strategy to guide coastal zone planning and management in the South Coast region of Western Australia.

Activities to date have ranged from managing 4WD access to beaches, installing infrastructure such as viewing platforms and signage highlighting sustainable snorkelling and recreation opportunities, and rehabilitating dune systems with endemic species, to high school students monitoring the diversity and abundance of invertebrates, fish and seagrass and traditional owners mapping cultural sites of significance along the coast.

Southern Shores has also funded ongoing bird surveys and the installation of temporary fencing and signage to protect beach nests and raise awareness of migratory birds. Shorebirds such as the rare Hooded Plover face many challenges, with some sensitive species easily disturbed and stressed by recreational activities.

Educating the coastal community about conservation is a big focus for Southern Shores and momentum is building through regular community workshops, field days, school holiday programs, guided beachcombing walks, fishing and wetland displays, bird walks, and the uptake of classroom information kits.

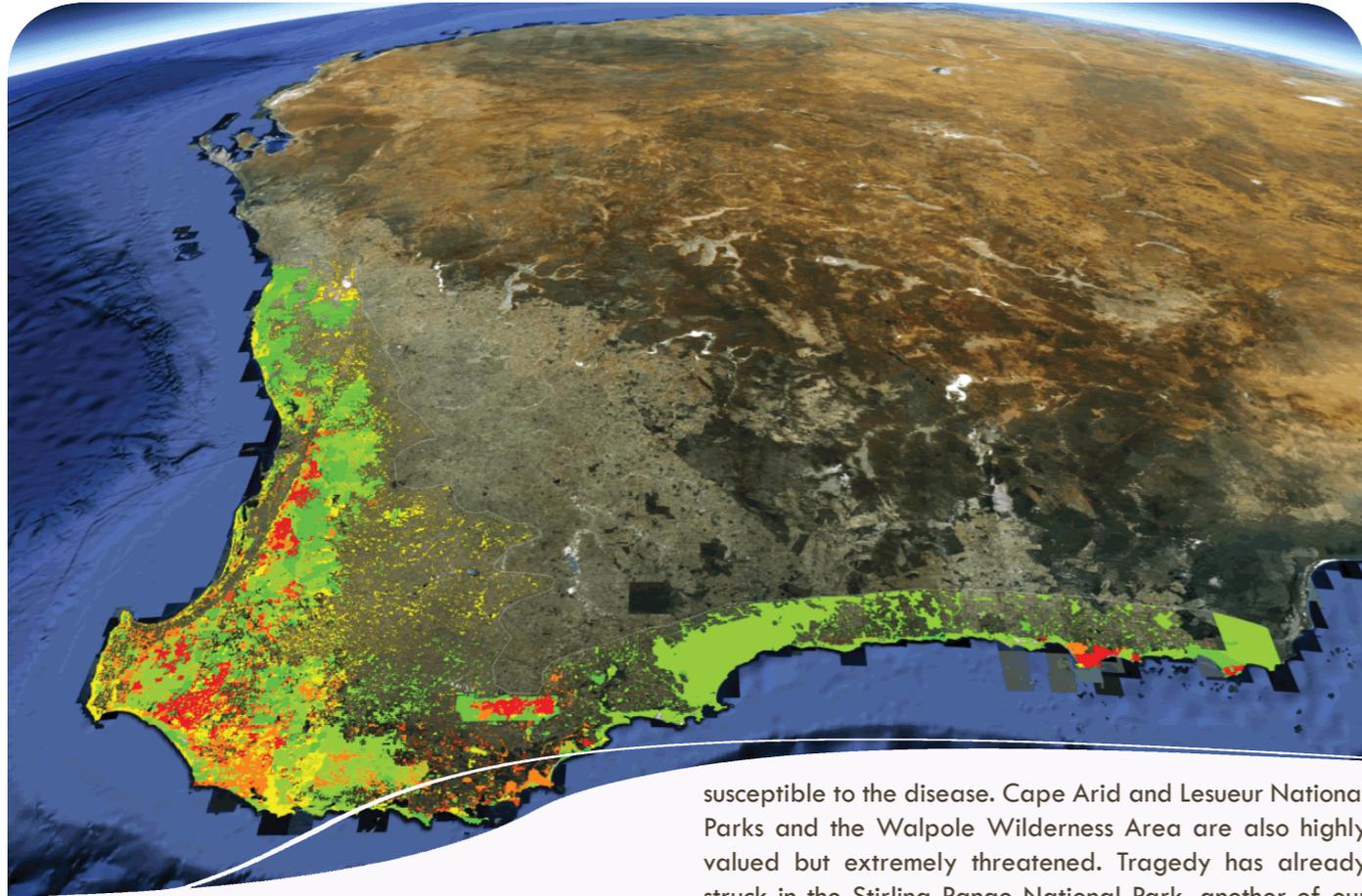
**“Educating the coastal community about conservation is a big focus for Southern Shores and momentum is building”**

Ensuring Southern Shores remains a strong regional partnership is the community-based South Coast Management Group (SCMG), established in the mid 1990's and consisting of representatives from the five coastal local governments (Denmark, Albany, Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe and Esperance) and 10 community members. SCMG also has strong support from working partnerships with South Coast NRM, government agencies, schools, universities, development organisations, businesses and community groups between Denmark and Esperance.

## PROJECT DIEBACK

Project Dieback is a cross-regional initiative coordinated by South Coast NRM to protect environmental, social and economic values from the introduced plant pathogen *Phytophthora Dieback*.





Dieback is caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, a microbe of the soil which kills plants by destroying their root system. This “biological bulldozer” has infested over one million hectares of the South West leaving few precious large tracts of natural bushland areas disease-free.

Project Dieback’s main objectives are to increase awareness of the impact and future threat of dieback; identify and protect biodiversity and high-valued areas in partnership with government, community and industry; and build regional and community capacity to manage the pathogen.

The UNESCO-listed Fitzgerald River National Park is a biodiversity hotspot of global significance which is highly

susceptible to the disease. Cape Arid and Lesueur National Parks and the Walpole Wilderness Area are also highly valued but extremely threatened. Tragedy has already struck in the Stirling Range National Park, another of our biodiversity hotspots, with up to 80% now infested.

**“The UNESCO-listed Fitzgerald River National Park is a biodiversity hotspot of global significance which is highly susceptible to the disease.”**

Initially funded through the Natural Heritage Trust, Project Dieback has been highly successful in bringing key stakeholders together in the fight against dieback over its six years of operation. Specific achievements include;



- Targeted *Phytophthora* dieback risk reduction strategies and community engagement activities focused around the Fitzgerald River, Cape Arid, Lesueur and Stokes National Parks, as well as the Walpole Wilderness Area
- Completion of high-level strategy and strategic dieback mapping across the South Coast NRM Region for targeting appropriate actions directed at both recovery and protection (*funded by the National Heritage Trust*).
- Gathering of baseline information across land tenure for planning strategies and operations at a number of different scales.
- Implementation of the South Coast *Phytophthora* Dieback Strategic Plan under the sub-programs of change practice, diagnosis and planning, priority area management and spatial analysis.
- Community and staff education activities including production and distribution of a DVD, posters, booklets, signage, staff and community workshops.

### CULTURAL CONNECTIONS TEAM

The Cultural Connections team consists of highly-skilled Aboriginal people coordinated by South Coast NRM to provide labour and expertise in conservation and land management to the public and private sectors.

Services include revegetation, fencing and landscaping, weed identification and control, tree planting and lopping, tree pruning and stump grinding (domestic), grounds maintenance and native seed collection.

Building on previous work by the Restoring Connections program, the team also work on the identification and protection of cultural heritage sites at risk of degradation across the South Coast.

During cultural mapping work at Quaranup (Cape Vancouver Peninsula) in 2011, the team identified several sites and items of significance including ancient Gnamma (carved rock pools), stone tools and lizard traps, with assistance from elders and an archaeologist.



*Donate to the Southern Fund and support environmental conservation across the South Coast region. Contributions above \$2 are tax deductible and can be made online at [www.southcoastnrm.com.au](http://www.southcoastnrm.com.au) or at the Albany, Mt Barker or Cranbrook/Tambellup Community Bank ® branches. The Southern Fund is an initiative of South Coast NRM, Bendigo Bank and Community Sector Banking.*



*Working together to make a difference today and develop a sustainable environment for tomorrow.*

*The South West Catchments Council (SWCC) is the recognised regional NRM body for the South West Region, stretching from Serpentine-Jarrahdale in the north to Dumbleyung in the east and as far south as Walpole.*

*SWCC's approach to NRM is a highly collaborative one, aiming to form productive partnerships with the south west community in delivering high quality on-ground outcomes for our environment. SWCC's integrated programs are coordinated through four main program areas. The project highlights from each program area that follow, demonstrate SWCC's commitment to strengthening partnerships with the south west community in caring for our region into the future.*

### Biodiversity

SWCC's Biodiversity Team is working with the south west community to ensure our natural biological diversity is protected by reducing threats and maintaining the natural values of our environmental assets for present and future generations.

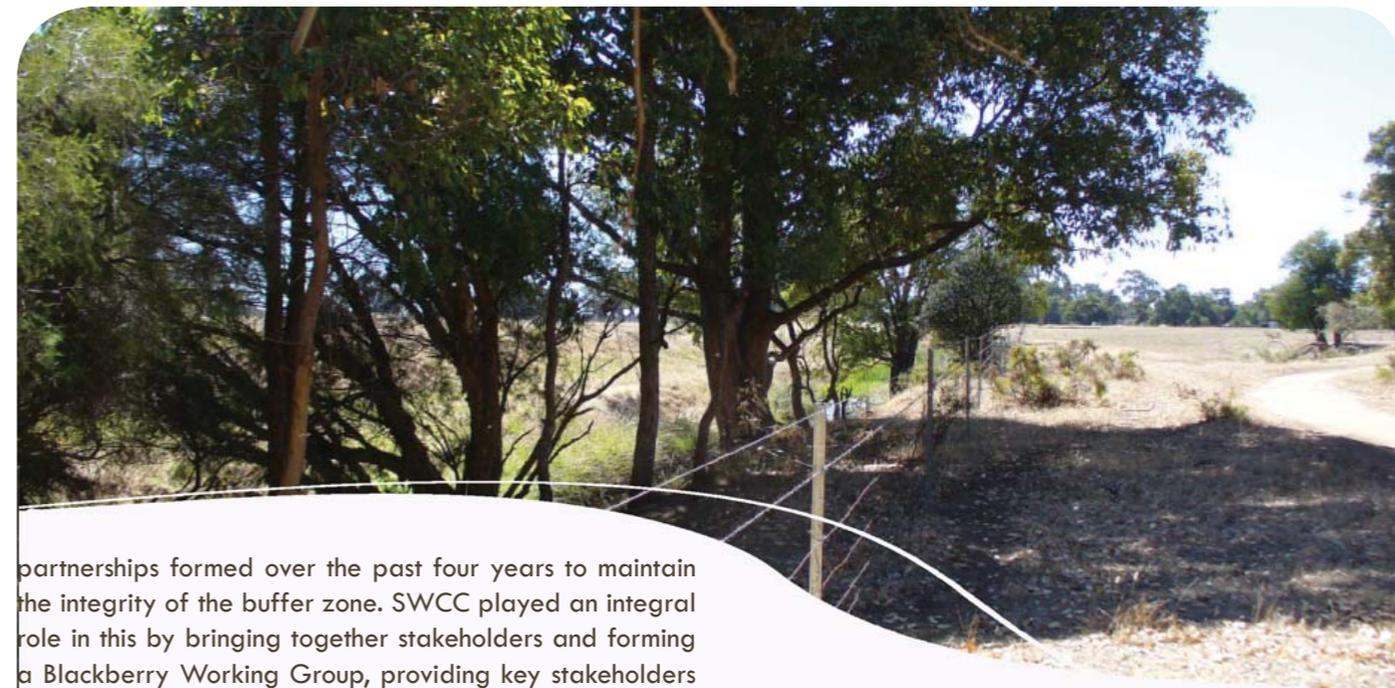
### Maintaining the Blackberry Buffer Zone

Blackberry is a declared Weed of National Significance (WoNS). It is considered to be one of Australia's worst weed species, found in temperate zones in all states, including the South West NRM Region of WA.

**The Blackberry Buffer Zone is a 6 km wide buffer** that was established to act as a barrier to stop the American blackberry in the north from becoming established south of the zone where it currently exists in very few isolated patches.

This is important as the American blackberry is not susceptible to the biological controls that are assisting in keeping the European blackberry in check.

The success of this project lies in the strength of the



partnerships formed over the past four years to maintain the integrity of the buffer zone. SWCC played an integral role in this by bringing together stakeholders and forming a Blackberry Working Group, providing key stakeholders with an opportunity to exchange ideas and plan works.

### Community Engagement

SWCC's Community Engagement Team is committed to genuine, transparent and ongoing stakeholder engagement to increase community involvement, capacity and access to skills and knowledge, in order to manage our natural resources sustainably and protect the natural environment.

### Cultural mapping in the south west

As part of SWCC's commitment to working with Traditional Owners in caring for Country in the South West NRM Region, it is important to find out the natural areas that are of particular cultural significance to local Aboriginal people and incorporate this cultural dimension into environmental management. To facilitate this, SWCC commissioned the Dowark Foundation to assist with the consultation and cultural mapping process for the two target areas; Vasse-Wonnerup and the Preston. Dowark worked with Applied Archaeology to investigate the Archaeological and Anthropological values of the target areas.

Through this partnership between SWCC, the Aboriginal Groups and the Dowark Foundation, the important historical, spiritual, wild resource use and archaeological elements of the river and the broader surrounding landscape were identified.

***“the important historical, spiritual, wild resource use and archaeological elements of the river and the broader surrounding landscape were identified.”***

A film crew captured the cultural mapping process and produced a short video documentary, 'We are Wardandi' highlighting the connection between environmental and cultural protection. Visit the SWCC website, cultural mapping page for more information about this project and

to view the video. This involvement with local Aboriginal communities and sharing of knowledge assists SWCC in prioritising future on-ground works.

### Sustainable Agriculture

SWCC's Sustainable Agriculture Team is focused on increasing the skills and knowledge of land managers in natural resource management and supporting the adoption of sustainable farming practices to encourage a productive and resilient farming industry.

#### Sharing the journey of an oil mallee grower

As part of the Sustainable Agriculture Team's efforts to protect soils from the impact of wind erosion in the broadacre agriculture region, a partnership has been formed with the Upper Great Southern Oil Mallee Grower's Group to assist farmers to incorporate oil mallees into their farming system.

This program has been highly successful, with over 215,000 seedlings planted in 2010 and 2011.

SWCC has developed two Oil Mallee Grower's Stories case studies to share the journey taken by two farming families in incorporating oil mallees into their properties.

Visit the Oil Mallee Planting Program page on the SWCC website to download the Oil Mallee Grower's Stories.

### Coastal Environments

SWCC's Coastal Environments Team is working with the south west community to reduce threats and protect the integrity of our water resources, coastal, marine, estuaries, wetlands and waterways to maintain the natural values and functions of these environmental ecosystems for present and future generations.

*These projects are supported by the South West Catchments Council, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country and the Government of Western Australia.*

*But it's not just the on-ground delivery partnerships that count, it's also those partnerships SWCC has worked hard to develop and will continue to strengthen with funding bodies, government agencies, corporate bodies and the wider community that achieve the shared goal – a healthy and resilient environment for the south west.*



#### Improving water quality in the Gynudup Brook

Located within the Geographe catchment priority coastal hotspot, Gynudup Brook runs for approximately 29km starting just north of Capel and flows into Geographe Bay. Being surrounded by agricultural land for many years has taken its toll on the brook affecting water quality.

SWCC staff are often delighted by the willingness and enthusiasm shown by landholders in undertaking these works on their properties to protect their local waterways and ultimately Geographe Bay. Without these valuable partnerships, these outcomes could never be achieved.

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But it's not just the on-ground delivery partnerships that count, it's also those partnerships SWCC has worked hard to develop and will continue to strengthen with funding bodies, government agencies, corporate bodies and the wider community that achieve the shared goal – a healthy and resilient environment for the south west.



Wheatbelt NRM Inc is an independent community-based group providing community leadership for natural resource management with a focus on promoting and coordinating improvements in environmental, social and industry practices relating to natural resources outcomes in the Avon River Basin.

The Avon River Basin is 11.8 million ha of which 62.7% has been released for agriculture and associated land uses. Extensive clearing of natural vegetation for agriculture and current land practices have caused broad degradation problems in areas used for agriculture.

### Healthy Bushland - Protecting Wheatbelt bush for future generations.

This region is part of an internationally recognised 'Biodiversity Hotpot' and contains many unique and amazing plant and animal species, many of which are not found anywhere else in the world.

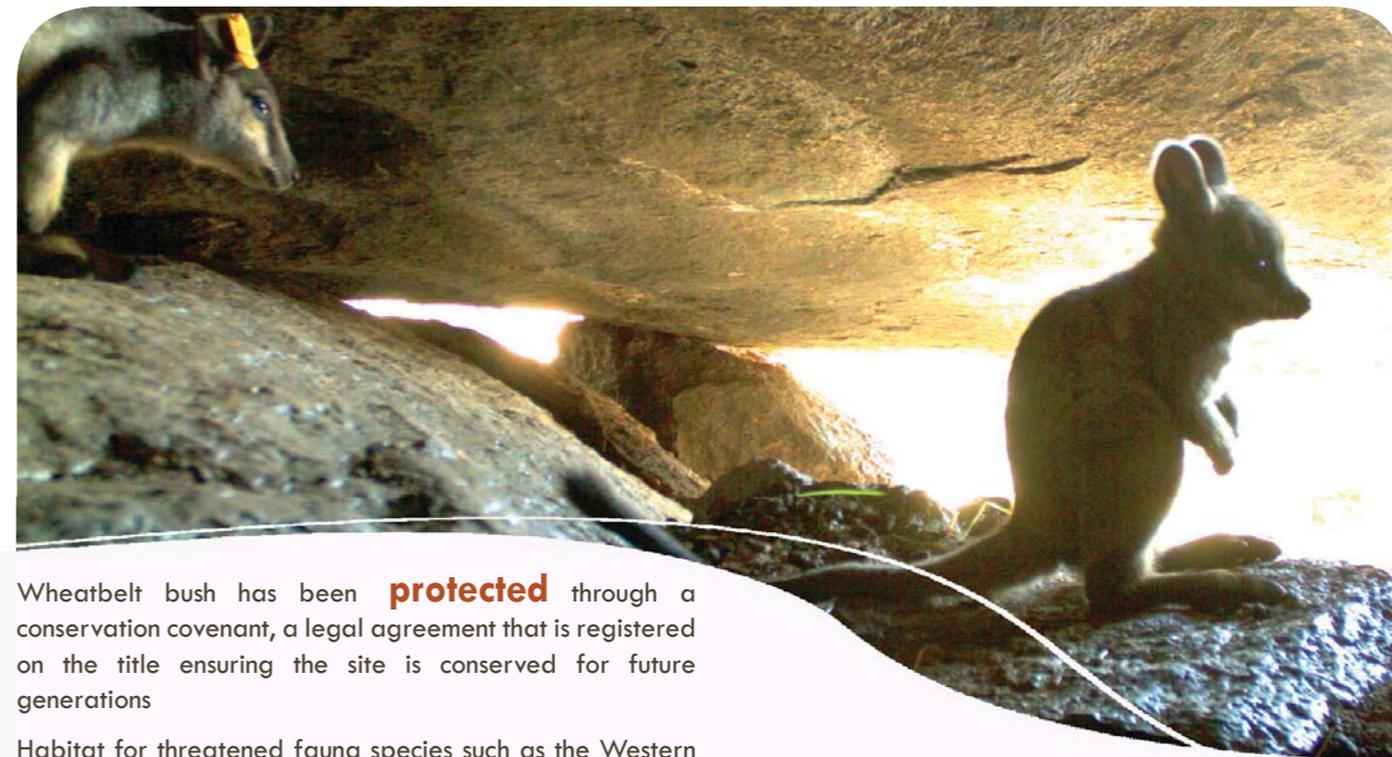
These unique species are under threat due to issues such as salinity, fragmentation and habitat loss.

Much of the remaining biodiversity in the region is found on patches of native vegetation located on farms.

Wheatbelt NRM and our partners, WWF Australia and Greening Australia WA, are working with land holders to protect these special places.

Through a range of conservation options including conservation covenants as well as 15 year management agreements land holders across the region are undertaking conservation actions such as fencing to restrict stock access, weed and feral animal control as well as revegetation of strategic areas.

Over the last three years **over 4500ha** of important



Wheatbelt bush has been **protected** through a conservation covenant, a legal agreement that is registered on the title ensuring the site is conserved for future generations

Habitat for threatened fauna species such as the Western Spiny Tailed Skink and the Black Flanked Rock Wallaby are being improved to provide for the long term conservation of these rare species.

### The Soil Conservation Incentives Program (SCIP)

SCIP supports activities across the Avon River Basin aimed at reducing wind erosion and improving soil health. The program is working with the community to support projects distributed throughout the region demonstrating sustainable practices in cropping management, pasture management, integration of trees and soil amelioration.

#### Cropping management practices

The Sustainable Agriculture Program in Wheatbelt NRM has implemented a range of cropping projects with the aim of increasing the number of land managers that adopt management practices leading to increased ground cover

and retention of crop residues to increase soil organic matter, carbon content and retain top soil.

#### Integrating trees into agricultural systems

The Sustainable Agriculture Program in Wheatbelt NRM has supported projects aimed at integrating a range of perennial species into agricultural systems for improving soil conservation, reducing water logging and providing a resource for future income. Over 50 projects focusing on the integration of perennials were supported by the Sustainable Agriculture Program in 2010/2011.

Collectively these have results in;

- **700,000 Oil Mallee seedlings** allocated to reduce wind speed (and improve soil conservation), provide shelter for livestock, provide biodiversity value and green the environment in which we live.

- **220,000 Sandalwood hosts** assisting farmers to maintain a productive and environmentally sustainable agricultural industry. Seedlings allocated to support sandalwood plantations to provide income from their heartwood and seeds as well as providing a bio-diverse revegetated area for our native wildlife.
- **130,000 Brushwood seedlings** allocated to protect areas affected by wind and water erosion and provide potential income when harvested as brushwood fencing material.

### Water Management

Working in partnership with Avon Arc Shires, Wheatbelt NRM has reviewed how these Local Government Authorities could improve stormwater quality flows into the Avon River, as well as mitigate flood-risk to the town sites during peak flow events through improvements to town water management infrastructure. This has been an insightful investigation of just how much the Avon River towns contribute to the water quality of the river and has already assisted in designing water management for future town developments.

**“an insightful investigation ... and has already assisted in designing water management for future town developments.”**

### Community Small Grants

Community small grants worth up to \$15,000 each make a huge contribution to local groups with the enthusiasm but not the financial means to manage their local environment. Wheatbelt NRM Community Small Grants has invested in a range of educational, promotional and on-ground management. This funding remains competitive and demand always exceeds what we have available, which reflects a keen interest from our community to volunteer their time towards improving their natural environment.



### KENNEDY BUSHLAND A PRECIOUS RESERVE

Rex and Wendy Kennedy from Cunderdin are farmers who have protected their important bush land. When they sold the farm, Rex and Wendy decided to hold onto one 35ha patch of bush important to them and their family. Over the years Rex and Wendy have come to realize just how special this bit of bush is.

As Rex recalls “Over the years different people have come to see the bush and found all sorts of interesting things there. The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) have found rare plants and it is unusual to have so many different plant types together in the one area. You can walk a short distance and it is completely different.”

‘I started thinking that it was pretty special and it should be protected so that in the future people can see what used to be here’ said Rex.

Conservation covenants are a vital tool in protecting the fragmented Wheatbelt landscape and the diverse and unique flora and fauna it supports and Wheatbelt NRM will continue to promote and support their uptake in the region.

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In 2003 when Rex and wife Wendy retired from farming they decided that they really wanted to keep the bush and make sure it was looked after. They subdivided off the arable land and sold the farm but kept the bush for themselves. As part of that process they put a Department of Agriculture soil conservation covenant on the bush. However Rex wasn’t convinced that this was enough.

Rex and Wendy realised that a conservation covenant would fully protect the flora and fauna into the future. This covenant will legally protect this important bushland oasis and its rich biodiversity for generations to come. The Healthy Bushland team is planning some necessary management activities that will improve the condition of the bush.

These works and the conservation covenant will ensure the future protection of what is now known as the Kennedy Reserve.

## WA REGIONAL LEADERS GROUP



The NRM Regional Leaders Group (NRMRLG) operates as an independent, non-government body representing the six regional NRM organisations in Western Australia. The collaborative partnering approach of the NRMRLG clearly demonstrates a strong alliance and robust governance framework for NRM in WA and provides a single platform for joint initiatives between regional NRM organisations and interfacing with Government.

Formal meetings of the NRMRLG are held regularly which provide a forum for productive collaboration between the six regional NRM organisations to share knowledge and discuss NRM initiatives, issues and approaches that can improve regional outcomes for NRM.

Quarterly meetings are held with NRM-related State Ministers providing an effective two-way communication channel between Members of Parliament, Australian, State and Local Governments and the NRM regional organisations (and their communities) for strategy development and review, strategic advice, and related information distribution.

The group continues to promote relevant research outcomes and encourage regional NRM organisations to adopt

organisational performance benchmarks. As part of the broader vision for Western Australia, the NRMRLG is currently creating an overarching “WA NRM Regional Framework” by combining the six existing regional strategies to create a Western Australia-wide vision that incorporates the commitments from all six regional NRM plans.

At the same time, the NRM Regional Leaders Group is playing an active role in supporting the development of a sustainable carbon industry in WA and identifying opportunities for community, government and corporate partnerships with NRM.

**Like to know more? Contact the Executive Officer:**

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*There's a lot happening in our backyard!*

