



WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

2010 Wheatbelt NRM Community Forums

Three Sub-catchment community forums were hosted by Wheatbelt NRM in Wongan Hills, Hyden and Merredin in April 2010. Each event included a workshop session where attendees were asked to share their views, comments, questions and concerns.

The notes of the workshops have now been compiled. Every effort has been made to represent the views of community accurately. However, if you feel that some points have been missed, represented inaccurately or you have fresh ideas or comments please do not hesitate to contact us.

A response to some of the comments and questions has been included in *olive green and italicized* to provide additional clarity where possible. Some of the issues are complex, however if you would like to seek out additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

These comments have been reviewed and will be considered in future planning wherever possible. Updates will be communicated via the Wheatbelt NRM E-News, Newsletter, website and through future local sub catchment reference group meetings.

SUB CATCHMENT REFERENCE GROUPS

Discussion also took place around how and when the sub catchment reference group meetings should take place.

The Wheatbelt NRM Constitution states that two meetings must be held each year in order to comply with the terms of reference. At the Wongan Hills Forum it was suggested that it would be appropriate to hold one meeting focussing on emerging issues or current NRM issues yet to be addressed, and one meeting focussing on project identification and development, successes and lessons learnt.

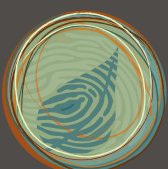
We are currently investigating timeframes and opportunities to hold these meetings later in the year.

CONTACT US

If you would like more information on any of the points in this document, or have any alterations we should be aware of, please contact us:

In person: Lot 12, York Road, Northam

By phone: 9690 2250



wheatbelt
natural resource
management



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY

WONGAN HILLS FORUM 12 April 2010

Comments included:

- There was general support for the Regional Strategy being updated.
- Publications required for project-based lessons learnt.
- Community capacity has crashed in the Eastern Wheatbelt - suggestion to decentralise Wheatbelt NRM staff.
- We need a large scale of funding to do the revegetation work to get the ball rolling for new industries.
- Concerns about ongoing Ecoscape funding.
- Wheatbelt NRM should investigate biofuels species and work with power and related companies.
- Research into Biodiversity (surveys) needed.

Biodiversity surveys have been undertaken through Wheatbelt NRM's 'Getting started: baselining the regions natural diversity' project which ran from 2005-2009, delivering significant information on the regions biodiversity. In addition, the 'Ecoscapes' project resulted in conservation plans for various Ecoscape areas including Wongan Hills.

The new Wheatbelt NRM funded Wongan Hills National Reserve System project (delivered through the Department of Environment and Conservation) will also undertake some survey and research work.

As part of the continuing Wheatbelt NRM biodiversity project we are continuing work on Wheatbelt vegetation communities. This includes benchmarking the community types (i.e. various York Gum woodland types), which will result in a greater understanding of the various compositions of vegetation communities and reference sites. This in turn will provide information on how those communities should look and therefore what we need to do to improve other areas to meet that benchmark.

- Research into biodiversity values of different tree crops (e.g. sandalwood and brushwood) needed.
Grain and Graze funded the CSIRO to research the biodiversity values of oil mallees. An article is available on the Wheatbelt NRM website at <http://www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/reports-publications/sustainable-agriculture/tree-crops>. Sandalwood and brushwood are considered more 'natural' crops as they are native to the area. Sandalwood relies on host plants, and the prevailing thought is that when considering sandalwood, planting a diverse range of host plants will be better for biodiversity.
- Subsidies required for Oil Mallee crop establishment.
Since 2005, over three million oil mallee seedlings have been subsidised and planted through funding delivered by Wheatbelt NRM. Wheatbelt NRM has supported groups such as the Oil Mallee Association and NEWROC to deliver this work on ground.

- Wheatbelt NRM website should include:
 - ◊ Baseline information on best species to plant where, what you'll find on granite outcrops to help the community make good decisions.
 - ◊ Habitats
 - ◊ Carbon effects

The new Wheatbelt NRM website is now available and in the process of being updated. We look forward to adding resources such as these as we continually improve the site, and welcome your suggestions for how it can continue to be improved in the future.

- Wheatbelt NRM should look at marketing food grown on healthy soils. We need to start recording the data and relate carbon offsets to soil indicators.
- Wheatbelt NRM needs to develop a process to talk about what projects have been successful.

Wheatbelt NRM recognises that it is important to celebrate the achievements of our community, and will endeavour to promote these where possible. To share your success stories and lessons learned with the community through our newsletters and website, contact Chris David, Communications Facilitator via email at: c david@wheatbeltnrm.org.au.

It is anticipated that project successes as well as lessons learned can also be shared in future sub-catchment reference group meetings.

Questions and Answers:

- Q. How do community members get in touch- i.e. what/who is the first point of contact?
- A. Contact Wheatbelt NRM on 9690 2250 or via email at info@wheatbeltnrm.org.au. We will direct your call to the most appropriate person to answer your enquiry.
- Q. What is the Program/Project development methodology? Who chooses projects/programs?
- A. All projects are developed with reference to the Avon Regional Strategy, Government targets and guidelines for funding and emerging issues which also achieve the strategic objectives set by the Board. When new opportunities arise a new initiative is recommended for Boards approval before funding is sought. It should be noted that project's which do not align with the funders guidelines are unable to proceed.
- Q. Mortlock River Study and Avon Waterways program - will they continue?
- A. Wheatbelt NRM has water specific Strategic Objectives (SO02 - Avon River, SO04- Water security) which are key focus areas for the future. Recently, there have been limited projects addressing water and salinity due to changes in government funding. However, Wheatbelt NRM has currently won State

Government funding for two water projects:

- ◇ Riparian improvement of priority Avon River Pools - Gwambygine, and
- ◇ Water management planning for Avon Arc towns.

Wheatbelt NRM remains hopeful that funding bodies recognise the importance of our waterways and provides assistance to the community into the future.

MERREDIN FORUM 13 April 2010

Comments included:

Salinity was raised as an ongoing issue that farmers needed to manage. Some of the comments raised include:

- Need research using salt water as a resource.
- WNRN and the Government are not funding salinity which was the “only thing we could hang our hat on” to attract funding.
- Salinity is really a water balance problem. It can be managed throughout landscape.
- Water tables will continue to rise as sure as the sun comes up. We need to help farmers to use the water that falls, e.g. Perennials

Salinity management options have previously been funded by Wheatbelt NRM through projects such as the Salinity Tender. Salinity remains a focus as a key Strategic Objective (see SO03 - soil quality, acidity and salinity) for Wheatbelt NRM.

This year, there have been limited projects addressing salinity due to changes in government funding. However, funding opportunities will be sought in the future to address these objectives where possible.

Wheatbelt NRM will continue to ensure that salinity remains a focus and that funding bodies recognise the importance of managing salinity and provides assistance to the community into the future.

A range of resources for managing salinity is currently being compiled on the Wheatbelt NRM website at <http://www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/reports-publications/water>.

- Consistency of funding needed to encourage support for on-ground work.
- Communicate with, include and encourage community.
- Community were disengaged through Regional Strategy development process.
- Wheatbelt NRM needs to be creative about community engagement activities.
- Associates should be called “FRIENDS of Wheatbelt NRM”.
- Can’t quantify carbon system.
- Farmers are accustomed to dry times.
- Costs of living will impact on region.
- Climate change is about making the best use of the land.
- Lots of politics but not one tree planted for \$30m.

Since 2005, approximately 5 million tree seedlings have been planted through funding delivered by Wheatbelt NRM. These trees have been delivered through organisations such as the Oil Mallee Association, Australian Sandalwood Network, Greening Australia and Avongro. In addition, 253 land managers across the Avon River Basin received 2,211,000 seedlings covering 3,109 ha of salt affected land.

Currently, there are 500,000 new seedlings committed for planting this season.

- Promote good work done in the region by community and production groups.
Wheatbelt NRM recognises that it is important to celebrate the achievements of our community, and will endeavour to promote those where possible. To help get these messages out to the community, please let us know about your local NRM achievements by contacting Chris David, Communications Facilitator via email at cdavid@wheatbeltnrm.org.au.

HYDEN FORUM 14 April 2010

Comments included:

Salinity was raised as a key issue in the community, with a number of comments being received:

- Salinity is still the number one issue!!
- Salinity is a bigger problem in WA and the Government needs to understand this.
- The community requested that salinity be discussed at the next sub catchment reference group meeting.
- Water in valley floors could be considered an asset and can have benefits if managed properly.
- Should look at saline valley floor as a resource and where integrated management should occur.


As per the response addressing Merredin's comments on salinity, Wheatbelt NRM remains focused on salinity as a key strategic objective.

- Be careful how you deliver messages to farmers - you lose them with too much bureaucratic talk.
- When local projects can line up with regional and government targets they are more likely to be successful.

Ensuring that funding applications address the funder's desired outcomes increases the chances of success.

Wheatbelt NRM currently have a range of Strategic Objectives (targets) as key focus areas for the region. These are included in the Strategic Plan which is available on the Wheatbelt NRM website. Links to State, Australian Government and other funding bodies can be found on the Wheatbelt NRM website at:

<http://www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/links>.



Wheatbelt NRM are available to provide advice and assistance to the community when seeking funding opportunities, preparing submissions or for general advice on project planning.

- So Wheatbelt NRM doesn't have lots of money and community groups should be making decisions on what they want to do and sourcing funding? We can't rely on Wheatbelt NRM to do this for us, so need to decide what we want and get community more active and find other sources of funding?

Ideally, we would do this together. Wheatbelt NRM are currently working with many community and production groups in the Wheatbelt region. We look to continue working with groups where the community interest aligns with funding requirements as this increases the chances for successful funding opportunities. However, work is currently underway to seek out new sources of funding to assist the community to address a broader range of local NRM issues.

- Wheatbelt NRM will need to listen to the community.

Questions and Answers:

Q. Camm River project has applied for funding twice and been refused. How will Wheatbelt NRM changes help now?

A. *Wheatbelt NRM is available to assist the community with funding submissions to ensure they focus on achieving the outcomes of funders and thereby increasing their chances of success. By continuing to provide this type of service, it is hope that the community's capacity to prepare, submit and attract funds will increase. A current example of this is the Camm River Paleo-Valley Rehabilitation Project, which has been successful in obtaining current State government funds. Congratulations!*

Q. Is there anybody who can package up a suite of information on how to manage salinity on a whole property?

A. *The Saltland Genie was developed through the National Sustainable Grazing on Saline Lands initiative and is available at <http://www.saltlandgenie.org.au> There is also a suite of information from the Wallatin and O'Brien Catchment Demonstration Initiative (CDI) which is currently available on the Shire of Kellerberrin website at <http://www.kellerberrin.wa.gov.au/default.aspx?WebPageID=115> . Wheatbelt NRM also has information about tree cropping options available on the website at <http://www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/reports-publications/sustainable-agriculture/tree-crops>.*

We are in the process of updating the website with a range of resources, including those for salinity now and will continue to do so in the future.