

The third meeting of the Vasse Taskforce was held in Busselton on 4 August 2015. The Taskforce, chaired by Deputy Chair Ms Libby Mettam MLA Member for Vasse, formally endorsed the Vasse Geographe Strategy as the action plan for work in the Geographe Catchment over the next four years.

Outcomes from the meeting

Vasse Geographe Strategy endorsed

The Vasse Geographe Strategy was officially endorsed by the Vasse Taskforce and provides the direction for work targeting water quality in the Geographe Catchment over the next four years. The Strategy incorporates projects already commenced by Taskforce partners and identifies a range of new projects subject to securing funding. The Strategy will improve water quality and the management of key water assets through five key actions – **Reduce nutrients, Rethink drainage, Revitalise waterways, Work together** and **Sustain momentum**.

An overview of the Strategy and the projects that will be undertaken is available on the GeoCatch website < www.geocatch.asn.au >

Evaluation shows water quality improvements

The Taskforce heard the results from the five year evaluation of the *Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands and Geographe Bay water quality improvement plan* (WQIP) which shows that declines in water quality have slowed, and in some cases, halted or improved, in response to government and community interventions.

Strong industry and community involvement in the implementation of best management practices have contributed to improvements in water quality in a number of sub-catchments. Nearly half the grazing land in the Geographe catchment has been soil water tested to help farmers make better fertiliser decisions and nearly a quarter of the large dairy farms have undertaken substantial upgrades to dairy effluent systems.

The Taskforce congratulated catchment and industry groups, the community and government agencies for their contribution in implementing the WQIP.

Community helps to develop management objectives for water assets

Three projects under the Vasse Geographe Strategy will see management plans developed for key water assets – the Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands, Toby Inlet and Lower Vasse River.

Taskforce partners have started working with community to identify key management issues and values of the water assets. The City of Busselton hosted a meeting with Dunsborough residents on 30 June 2015 to discuss Toby Inlet and GeoCatch and the Vasse Estuary Technical Working Group held a field trip on to the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands with key stakeholders from Busselton 30 July 2015. A series of factsheets have also been developed to provide the community with an overview of the ranges of uses and values of the wetlands. Input from the Dunsborough and Busselton community will contribute to the development of management objectives for the Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands and Toby Inlet. The factsheets are available from the GeoCatch website.

Rethinking drainage modelling work advances

Water, flood and drainage modelling work by the Department of Water is well advanced. Dunsborough residents saw an early version of the Toby Inlet hydrodynamic model at the community meeting in June, and local feedback will be used to help finalise the model. The completed model will be used to help assess whether reconnecting rivers or changing the way water moves in the catchment may improve water quality. Busselton Water held a forum in July for key stakeholders in the Buayanyup sub-catchment to workshop key issues and ideas for rural drainage management. This workshop is part of a trial being undertaken by Busselton Water to investigate practical opportunities to change drainage management with an aim to achieve water quality outcomes.

New initiatives for the dairy industry

Taskforce partners GeoCatch and Department of Water are working closely with Western Dairy and Dairy Australia to help local dairy farmers to improve fertiliser decision making and improve dairy effluent management. The rollout of the national Fert\$mart program was kicked off in June 2015 with a Farmer Focus Group which was well attended by local dairy farmers. A review of dairy effluent systems is planned for August 2015 and will involve industry experts from Victoria visiting local dairies.

More information

Keep up to date on news from the Vasse Taskforce and progress on work at GeoCatch website < www.geocatch.asn.au > or on [Facebook/GeoCatch](https://www.facebook.com/GeoCatch)