

The seventh meeting of the Vasse Taskforce was held in Busselton on 16 September 2016. Ms Libby Mettam (MLA Vasse) Vasse Taskforce chair, encouraged the community to look out for the new branding for the Vasse Taskforce and *Revitalising Geographe Waterways*. The Vasse Taskforce is the driving force behind *Revitalising Geographe Waterways*, providing overall coordination, supporting project partners and reporting back to the community. Ms Mettam encouraged everyone in the community to play their part in *Revitalising Geographe Waterways*.



### Bay OK workshops

GeoCatch has kicked off the Bay OK project with two highly popular *Low Nutrient Gardening Workshops* in Dunsborough and Gelorup. Over 180 people attended the two workshops and feedback from participants is their knowledge and understanding is greatly improved including the important role home gardeners have in reducing fertiliser use and runoff.

For more information [www.geocatch.asn.au](http://www.geocatch.asn.au)

### Science and monitoring plan finalised

Another milestone has been completed. *The Catchment to Coast science, monitoring and modelling plan 2016-2019 (Science Plan)* brings together all the science, monitoring and modelling that will be undertaken over the next three years in the Geographe catchment either directly through *Revitalising Geographe Waterways* or through complementary programs undertaken by Taskforce partners.

It has been prepared by the Department of Water with the support of the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands Science Advisory Group and brings together all aspects of our science and monitoring that is occurring in the catchment and waterways which is contributing to *Revitalising Geographe Waterways*.

Results will be used to inform our decision making, develop hydrological models, monitor the health of our waterways and evaluate our success. It will also be used to provide information to the community about the science and monitoring taking place in the catchment and waterways. The plan is designed to be adaptive and will be adjusted as required.

The document will now be readied for publishing and sharing with the community and other potential partners.

## June 2016 rainfall event

The Taskforce received a briefing on the Busselton District drainage infrastructure and how it responded to the rainfall event between 14 -18 July 2016.

Rainfall over the 72 hour period rained from 90-190 mm resulting in significant flow in local waterways and some minor flooding in low lying areas affecting sub-catchments. The rainfall event ranged from ~ 1 in 2 AEP (50% probability in any one year) (coastal flats) to 1 in 200 AEP (0.5% probability in any one year) (uplands of Abba, Sabina and Ludlow) for the 72 hour rainfall. Peak flows for the Ludlow and Abba were (1 in 20 AEP) and (1 in 40 AEP). The peak flows for the remaining catchments (including the Vasse River) are thought to be more frequent than 1 in 5 AEP. River flows in town had around 20% probability of occurring in any one year.

During the event the sandbar on the Vasse-Wonnerup was open enabling river outflows and pressure from downstream flows forced the surge barriers to open fully over this period. When the rivers rose and started to back up the three detention basins at Doyle Road, Chapman Road and Vasse Hwy commenced filling from about midnight on the 15 July. The system responded as expected with the detention basins playing a significant role in detaining the water and then releasing it slowly as river levels dropped.

Flood response in July 2016 was a combination of good monitoring, robust infrastructure and an effective response by the Water Corporation, Department of Water, Department of Fire and Emergency Services and City of Busselton.

Community interest was significant but it is important to get the message across that the event was not unusual and flood risk needs to be part of our decision making around reconnecting rivers.

## Better information for the community

GeoCatch will lead the development of an improved website and social media for *Revitalising Geographe Waterways* providing a one-stop shop for information for the community and project partners. It is anticipated that this will be available in the New Year but until then for more information [www.geocatch.asn.au](http://www.geocatch.asn.au).

## Reconnecting rivers – where to next?

Stage 1 of Reconnecting Rivers has been completed and a key finding is that no single option will solve the collective problems of algal blooms, nutrients and sedimentation.

The next step is to develop management objectives for the Lower Vasse River, Vasse Wonnerup wetlands and Toby Inlet. The community will have the opportunity to determine the values and management objectives for these important water assets.

Development of the management objectives will give a collective picture of what we are trying to achieve which will then be used to further evaluate the various options, including the engineering options from reconnecting rivers.

Because of the strong physical and hydraulic link it will be necessary for the Lower Vasse River and the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands management plans to be developed together.

Taskforce partners are developing a package of materials to explain the way forward and opportunities for community involvement.

## Sustainable agriculture

Mr Brian Piesse from Western Dairy will chair the Sustainable Agriculture Project Reference Group which was established in July 2016 to support sustainable agriculture projects under *Revitalising Geographie Waterways* and Regional Estuaries Initiative. The group includes representatives from Western Dairy, Dairy Australia, Fertilizer Australia, Departments of Water and Agriculture and Food WA, the six Regional Estuaries Initiative catchment groups and a dairy and beef farmer.

The Reference Group will be responsible for providing oversight and coordination of the sustainable agriculture projects including developing funding criteria, endorsing dairy effluent plans and funding, assessing innovative approaches to sustainable agriculture projects and reporting to the sustainable agriculture stakeholder group and broader community.

In August 2016 the Reference group established funding subsidies for farmers involved in the soil testing program under the fertiliser management project.

For more information [www.geocatch.asn.au](http://www.geocatch.asn.au)

## Community update 1 September 2016

GeoCatch hosted a community update with over 60 people attending. Vasse Taskforce Chair Ms Libby Mettam (MLA Vasse), Dr Kath Lynch and Dr Kiern Kilminster from the Department of Water provided an overview of Revitalising Geographie Waterways and the science supporting it. Another community presentation is scheduled for November.

For more information contact [geocatch@water.wa.gov.au](mailto:geocatch@water.wa.gov.au).

### *More information*

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