

Vasse Taskforce

The Vasse Taskforce has continued to provide leadership and high level oversight of the program during 2016 and has provided the framework for successful partnerships.

Partnerships are critical to the success of the Revitalising Geographe Waterways program and 2016 has seen strengthening of those partnerships.

"The formation of the Vasse Taskforce was the result of cooperative effort between State and local government, and our community, which has been further strengthened over the last year in a spirit of cooperation and common purpose".

"Due to the scale and complexity of the challenges we face in improving water quality we will need to continue to work together into the future".

The City looks forward to continuing to work proactively and collaboratively with State Government, industry and our community to improve and protect our waterways." Coralie Tarbotton - City of Busselton Taskforce Representative.

"The Vasse Taskforce has represented a significant first step in addressing the challenges of a drying climate, a flat flood-prone catchment and a growing population in revitalising our important waterways."

"Never before have we seen this level of investment by Government, collaboration amongst agencies, consultation within the community and research amongst scientists about the Geographe Catchment going forward. I look forward to the next chapter." Libby Mettam - 2016 Vasse Taskforce Chair.

Where to next

2017 will be an exciting year for the Revitalising Geographe Waterways program consolidating the work completed to date. The community has developed a vision for the future of Geographe waterways and our science investigations are providing the tools to achieve that vision.

2017 will also see the roll out of new projects using innovative products including soil amendments and phosphorus binding clays to improve water quality. Upgrading the lower section of the Vasse Diversion Drain will improve the quality of water entering Geographe Bay and improve the liveability and visual amenity of the drain. Case study farms showcasing upgraded and well managed dairy effluent systems and smart nutrient management will provide the benchmark for Geographe farmers, and low nutrient and water wise demonstration gardens will provide inspiration to gardeners.

The community will continue to play a critical role in the Revitalising Geographe Waterways program and will be engaged through participation in on-ground works, workshops, and a broad community survey.

We look forward to working with our project partners and community in 2017 to continue to Revitalise Geographe Waterways.



Department of Water
Department of Regional Development



Revitalising Geographe Waterways Report to the Community 2016

Revitalising Geographe Waterways is a collaborative program of coordinated projects that aims to improve water quality, waterway health and management of Geographe waterways. The program is delivered through an innovative combination of science, management, on-ground works and partnerships.

Projects and activities focus on the five key water assets – Vasse Wonnerup wetlands, Lower Vasse River, Toby Inlet, catchment waterways and the rural drainage network.

The program is overseen by the Vasse Taskforce, an interagency committee with

representatives from the City of Busselton, Shire of Capel, GeoCatch, the Departments of Water, Fisheries, Parks and Wildlife, Agriculture and Food, and Planning, Water Corporation, Busselton Water, South West Development Commission and the South West Catchments Council.

The 2016 Report to the Community provides a snapshot of some of the highlights from the first eighteen months of the Revitalising Geographe Waterways program.

For more information, please visit the GeoCatch website www.geocatch.asn.au



More information is available at www.geocatch.asn.au

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Key focus areas in 2016

Collaboration

Facilitating opportunities for collaboration has been a major focus in 2016 with the establishment of the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands Collaboration and Sustainable Agriculture Project Team. Community members, scientists, managers, farmers and industry groups have supported these initiatives by attending workshops designed to foster collaboration, build trust and find solutions together.

"Being involved in the collaboration process has given me a positive feeling of how we will manage the wetlands into the future". **Ron Vincent** - Community member.

"Collaboration leads to better, more sustainable outcomes and seeing things from other people's view has been enlightening and broadened my perspective."

Dr James Tweedley - Murdoch University.

Science for management

Science investigations and the development of models to support decision making have been a focus in 2016. Models allow us to test "what if" questions that are often asked by the community. As a direct result of modelling, the Water Corporation will install additional culverts in the Vasse Diversion Drain upgrade in 2018 to increase winter flows into the Lower Vasse River.

Science investigations in the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands over the last few years are greatly enhancing our knowledge of this complex system.

"Understanding what happens when we let seawater into the estuaries and how the oxygenation plant improves dissolved oxygen allows us to make informed decisions to improve water quality and reduce the risk of fish kills."

Dr Kath Lynch - Department of Water.

Reducing nutrients

Working with farmers and gardeners to minimise nutrients entering Geographe waterways is a major goal of the program. Improved fertiliser management through soil testing programs, low nutrient gardening workshops and technical advice has been well received.

"I can now confidently interpret my whole farm nutrient maps and I will be engaging with an agronomist through the project to get some one-on-one advice for this year's fertiliser regime." **Syd Dunstall** - Geographe farmer.

"The workshop was absolutely fantastic! Thank you – you have started me on a new life mission... this is how I will help effect change." **Vicki Pretorius**, after attending the Gardening for Healthy Soils workshop.

2016 also saw the completion of the Geographe dairy effluent review. The review benchmarked current dairy effluent management and identified opportunities for improvements.

"We appreciated the effluent review and along with the incentive funds on offer, it has motivated us to upgrade our system to align with our current herd size."

Ian McGregor - Dairy farmer.

Community engagement

Community engagement is central to the program with over 200 community members providing valuable input in setting future directions for Geographe waterways at nine community workshops. GeoCatch has also kept the community informed in 2016, with 3 community update information sessions, 27 local media releases, 41 GeoCatch website news articles and Facebook posts, reaching more than 18,000 people.

"Ensuring the community gets its say on the future management of Geographe waterways and is kept up-to-date with the program is a critical part of our role."

Will Hosken - Chair of GeoCatch.



Key actions in 2016

