

Vasse Taskforce

August 2018 | Meeting 14

The fourteenth Vasse Taskforce meeting was held in Busselton on 31 August 2018. Dr Sally Talbot (MLC South West Region) noted that the Taskforce would be considering milestone reports from a number of key projects this meeting.

1 Water management planning

The City of Busselton and Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions provided the Taskforce with updates on water management plans for the Lower Vasse River, Toby Inlet and Vasse Wonnerup wetlands. Draft management actions and strategies were considered by the Taskforce for all three plans based on the consultation undertaken to date. The City of Busselton and Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions expect the draft plans to be available for public consultation late 2018 to early 2019. The Taskforce endorsed the process and timeline for finalisation of the water management plans for Lower Vasse River and Toby Inlet. The community is encouraged to access the Revitalising Geographe Waterways website for further information www.rgw.dwer.wa.gov.au

2 Optimising planning

The Taskforce accepted the optimising planning tools report which identified opportunities to optimise use of the planning framework to support improved water quality outcomes in the catchment. As a result of the review existing planning processes have already been adjusted with the dairy effluent upgrades projects being referred to the City of Busselton or Shire of Capel for approval prior to construction. This will ensure best management practice for dairy effluent management. Following the endorsement of the report a more detailed implementation plan will be developed to future work.

3 Lower Vasse River clay trials

Trials of Hydrotalcite clay in the Lower Vasse River over the 2016/17 and 2017/18 summers has identified the use of phosphorus binding clay as a water treatment option for the Lower Vasse River when combined with other water quality initiatives such as sediment removal and reestablishment of native aquatic plants. Treatment with HT clay reduced algae growth and improved water quality within hours of applications. Preliminary assessment of invertebrate organisms showed no impact

but laboratory toxicity tests will need to be conducted before large scale HT-clay application is used. Information from this trial will inform the development of the plans.

4 Dunsborough infill sewerage cleans up Toby Inlet

A key part of improving the water quality and health of Toby Inlet is the installation of sewerage in Quindalup to reduce the impact of nutrients from traditional septic tanks on Toby Inlet. The Water Corporation has let a contract for this work and it is due to commence mid-September and finish the end of 2018, subject to ground conditions. Property owners will receive a letter from the Water Corporation advising when works are complete and connection is available and are encouraged to connect to sewer at their earliest opportunity. It is estimated that connecting these properties to sewer will reduce the total phosphorus load entering the estuary by 33% or 157 kg/year of phosphorus and 443 kg of total nitrogen or 6.5% of the total nitrogen load.

During the summer of 17/18 a second action to reconnect Toby Inlet to the ocean by opening the sandbar was trialed resulting in improved flushing of the lower part of the Inlet.

It is estimated that implementing both these actions will effectively remove over 90% of the septic contribution entering Toby Inlet.

5 Revitalising Geographe Waterways Investment Plan 2019-2024

The Taskforce has endorsed an investment plan for the next five years of priority actions. Taskforce Chair Dr Sally Talbot will begin discussions with Hon. Dave Kelly Minister for Water to determine the next steps to secure funding in 2019/20. This is sought to continue the investment that has been made to date.

6 Evaluating Revitalising Geographe Waterways 2015-2019

The Taskforce is developing a process to fully evaluate the achievements of Revitalising Geographe Waterways over the four years from June 2015 to June 2019. The purpose of the evaluation report is to review past projects and develop the best way forward to achieve improved water quality outcomes. The Taskforce agreed that the evaluation should be available for all project partners and the community.

7 Upcoming events for the community

October	Update Vasse Wonnerup wetland plan
4-5 October	Busselton Wildflower exhibition display
13 October	Bay OK gardening with Lisa Passmore – healthy soils and plants
27 October	Bay OK gardening with Bee Winfield – making a wicking garden bed
2-3 November	Information display Busselton Agriculture show
November	Community update – focusing on future governance

More information www.rgw.dwer.wa.gov.au

For more information www.geocatch.asn.au