

Vasse Taskforce

November 2023 | Meeting 29

The twenty-ninth Vasse Taskforce meeting was held in Busselton on 24 November 2023 Chaired by Hon. Pierre Yang (MLC).

1. Phoslock® application in the Lower Vasse River

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) will be undertaking a Phoslock® application in the Lower Vasse River between November 2023 and January 2024. The aim of the Phoslock® application is to evaluate if the product is a cost-effective treatment to control algal blooms in the river over summer months. Phoslock has been used successfully in waterways worldwide and is tested and safe to use in natural waters. A community fact sheet has been prepared to support the application and will be shared with the broader community via the Revitalising Geographe Waterways website (<https://rqw.dwer.wa.gov.au>)

2. Summer management of Vasse Wonnerup wetlands

The Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands Partnership met in October to discuss summer management requirements for 2023/24. Key issues for the Partnership this summer include:

- Investigating options to remove sediment along Estuary View drive to improve liveability for local residents impacted by odours. Several options to remove and treat sediment are being explored.
- Short and long-term options for hydrological separation of the Lower Vasse River and the Vasse Estuary to stop seawater inflows into the river. A sand barrier installed in 2022 between the Vasse estuary and Lower Vasse River will be refurbished in early summer to maintain the integrity of the barrier.
- Improving water quality in the Vasse and Wonnerup estuaries and Wonnerup Inlet. The Wonnerup Inlet sandbar was opened on 24 November to improve water quality in the Wonnerup Inlet. The Partnership have submitted a Section 40 application under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 to allow seawater into the Vasse estuary over summer/autumn to improve water quality. Once the application has been approved seawater will be allowed into the Vasse estuary to address declines in water quality.
- Ecological and water quality monitoring. Black bream, macroinvertebrate and aquatic plant spring monitoring in the wetlands has recently been completed by Murdoch University. This data will compliment monthly water bird data collected by the

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and water quality data collected by DWER and will be made available to the public through the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands report card.

3. Vasse Wonnerup wetlands report card

DWER have been developing an annual report card for the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands to report to the community on the health of the wetlands. Water quality, water bird, black bream, macroinvertebrate, and aquatic plant indicators will be included in the report card. The aim of the report card is to provide timely results of monitoring data to the community in an easy manner to understand. The report card will be launched in early 2024 and will be accessible through the Revitalising Geographe Waterways website (<https://rgw.dwer.wa.gov.au>)

4. Lower Vasse River sediment removal –update

The City of Busselton have completed Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Lower Vasse sediment removal project. Sediment from Stage 2 of the project, upstream of Causeway bridge, is dry and is currently being removed off site. An estimated 700 tonnes of dry sediment was removed from the river. The City of Busselton and DWER are undertaking an evaluation of Stage 1 and Stage 2 sediment removal and will report back to the Taskforce in March 2024. The City of Busselton will release a tender to undertake Stage 3 of the sediment removal program, upstream of Strelly Street Bridge, in March 2024 with expected commencement of works in May/June 2024.

5. Water quality management Decision Support Framework

The Taskforce endorsed a Decision Support Framework to assist Taskforce partners in assessing options to improve water quality in Geographe waterways. The framework provides a consistent approach for assessing different treatments and techniques to improve water quality. The Decision Support Framework will be accessible through the Revitalising Geographe Waterways website (<https://rgw.dwer.wa.gov.au>)