

Vasse Taskforce

March 2024 | Meeting 30

The thirtieth Vasse Taskforce meeting was held in Busselton on 22 March 2024 Chaired by Hon. Pierre Yang (MLC).

1. Summer management of Vasse Wonnerup wetlands

The Vasse Taskforce discussed the seasonal conditions that influenced management of the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands over the summer months, including:

- A dry spring in 2023 created lower water levels in the Vasse estuary, resulting in earlier than usual odour issues for adjacent residents due to smell from exposed sediments.
- In response to water quality triggers for dissolved oxygen being reached, the gates on the Vasse surge barrier were opened on 24 December 2023 to allow seawater into the Vasse estuary.
- Two-way flow into and out of the estuary from this date resulted in improved water quality with reasonable dissolved oxygen and phytoplankton levels over the 2024 summer/autumn period.
- Water Corporation and City of Busselton installed sandbags along Ford Road to maintain a hydraulic barrier between the Vasse estuary and Lower Vasse River to prevent salty water getting into the river.

2. Sediment removal in the Vasse Estuary

- DWER and the Water Corporation have developed a revised methodology to remove sediment adjacent to Estuary View Drive.
- The planned method will use a vacuum sucker truck to remove sediment from the edge of the estuary.
- Officers from DWER, Water Corporation and the City of Busselton briefed Wonnerup residents at two separate events on the proposed works with residents supportive of the project.
- The Taskforce thanked the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Water Corporation for their perseverance in finding a solution to remove sediment from this area to improve liveability of residents.
- Work is due to commence on 15 April 2024.

Revitalising Geographie
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3. Lower Vasse River sediment removal – stage 3 update

- Sediment removal in the Lower Vasse River is being undertaken in a staged approach.
- The City has completed the first two stages of dredging (Old Butter Factory to the Boat Ramp) and will shortly go out to tender for Stage 3.
- Stage 3 will remove sediment from upstream of the Strelly Street bridge.
- The City will be calling for contractors to develop a methodology and undertake sediment removal for Stage 3.

4. Phoslock® application in the Lower Vasse River

- Phoslock works by binding phosphate and removing it from the water column, making it unavailable for algal growth.
- Phoslock was applied in the Vasse River in both a dredged (Stage 1) and undredged area on 28 November 2023 and 19 December 2023.
- Scientists monitored water quality and phytoplankton levels throughout the trial in both treated and untreated areas.
- Phosphate reduced quickly in both sites within the first 24 hours and stayed low for over 100 days, however phytoplankton levels were still high and the river remained green.
- Scientists suspect there are still nutrients entering the treatment site from downstream and via groundwater.
- Controlling algal blooms in the Lower Vasse will require a multi-pronged approach by managing nutrients from septic tanks, the catchment, and sediments.