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Alley and Block Plantings Stabilise Wheatbelt Soils



Project Snapshot

Land Manager Names:	Ron, Jeanette and Ryan Lego
Property Size:	4,543 ha
Location:	Cadoux
Annual Rainfall (mm):	325 mm
Enterprise Mix:	Cropping and livestock (sheep)
Soil Types/Vegetation Types:	Sand over gravel, some clay, tammar, wodgil & mallee

Key Messages

- **Perennials are an option for stabilising wind prone landscapes all year round.**
- **Conditions at time of planting have a direct impact on seedling survival rates.**
- **A community focus can bring about greater change, then an activity experienced alone.**

This project is supported by Wheatbelt NRM, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.

Landcare: a sense of giving back

Long time farmers Ron and Jean Lego, along with their son Ryan, run 'Glenvale', a mixed farming enterprise at Cadoux. The town which is approximately 180 km northeast of Perth was first settled by a Frenchman back in about 1915. Not long after, other parcels of land opened up. Jean's grandfather was actually one of those early pioneers. Unbeknown to these first generation farmers, however, mass clearing would transform the ancient landscape. Over time wind and water have 'left their mark'. Instead of watching further degradation the Lego's recognised the need to look after the land now. The need to stabilise areas of soil on the property, as well as improve productivity drove the Lego's to look for landcare options.

Having worked as Secretary for the local Land Conservation District Committee many years ago, Jean was aware that funding could become available to help them buy the seedlings they needed. When she heard about the Soil Conservation Incentives Program through Wheatbelt NRM she was quick to submit an Expression of Interest. "We have a gully running through our property that is prone to wind and water erosion", Jean said. "This area of degradation was not only becoming worse, but it was also getting bigger".

Project implementation

Several hectares were selected along the drainage line after detailed consultation with industry representatives to discuss various research solutions for restoring the eroded landscape. It was determined that the most suitable option for the drainage line was to plant a mixture of perennials (~26,000 Sheaok (*Casuarina obesa*), ~8,000 Eucalyptus *sargentii* and 10,000 oil mallees) in alleys and blocks. River saltbush (*Atriplex amnicola*) was also planted in a lower lying saline and waterlogged area (1.5 ha).



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Community Engagement

In May 2012 the Lego's organised a bus tour to encapsulate all the revegetation projects in the area. In addition to their project, the tour bus showcased the successful reclamation of once problem areas at Kokardine Trees, Duncan and Betty Avery's, Kalajzic Farms and Tom and Donna Henning's properties. "It was inspirational to see what dedicated landholders could achieve with the funding they had received through grants", Jean mentioned. "We would love to hold further bus tours to track improvements at the sites over time".

The second event the Lego's organised was an innovative activity called the 'Rabbit Control Field Day' in September of 2012. The field day was facilitated by Ross and Robyn Lane and demonstrated how ferrets can be used to control rabbits. Jean commented, "Two ferrets were used to clear out a rabbit warren followed by a tour of tree plantings. We wanted to provide an educational field day with a difference". She believes the level of community engagement is testament that landholders want to look after the land for future generations.

Lessons Learnt

The project highlighted how important it is to maximise the survival rate of seedlings. Jean highlighted, "Only three years after ensuring high survival rates of the perennials, the dense belts in the gully are now providing habitat for birds and animals". Apart from good site preparation, she thinks that the high survival rates may have also been attributed to the absence of waterlogged soil at the time of establishment. "We learnt that in dry years, survival rates can still be very high".

Additionally, the project reconfirmed Jean's belief that revegetation can help halt further degradation of the landscape, having observed the stabilisation of the gully. "We have learnt that with planning and preparation, solutions can be found to tackle problem areas and reclaimed land". This confidence in the strategy has encouraged the family to continue their land conservation efforts further down the landscape. "We will be planting 20,000 more perennials in 2013 which we purchased through our local nursery, Kokardine Trees" Jean commented.

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