

Wheatbelt NRM Bi-monthly Newsletter

www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au

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Wheatbelt NRM a new force in land management

If you live in the WA Wheatbelt and want to have a say in the future of natural resource management (NRM) in your backyard, then your help is needed.

Wheatbelt NRM (formerly the Avon Catchment Council) has undergone major changes and seeks community input.

The group is responsible for managing natural resources in an area larger than the size of Tasmania, stretching from Coolgardie in the east, through to Wundowie, south to Lake Grace and north to Beacon.

Over recent years Wheatbelt NRM has been instrumental in helping landholders plant trees to fight salinity, clean up local creeks and waterways, tackle feral pests and weeds and encourage better care of our natural environment.

The group has undergone significant changes, but remains funded by the State and Australian governments, and this financial year has an operating budget of \$4.2 million.

The recent changes will give community groups more input into how the Wheatbelt's natural resources are managed including vegetation and agricultural land.

The Wheatbelt NRM chairperson Glenice Batchelor said in the past, the most successful projects had been the ones with community involvement.

"The changes we've made will make it easier to do this in the future," Glenice Batchelor said.



Glenice Batchelor, WNRN Chairperson

Changes include the formation of three reference groups representing the Yilgarn, Avon and Lockhart catchments.

"Individuals in the community who want to influence a particular NRM issue that affects them, could do this by joining one of these reference groups," Glenice Batchelor said.

"Community groups including catchment, wildlife and agricultural bodies can also sign up to be voting members of Wheatbelt NRM to have their say."

Individuals can also become associate members of Wheatbelt NRM through its website www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/associates.

To keep up to date on what's happening in your backyard, you can register for the Wheatbelt NRM's electronic bi-weekly newsletter.

Wheatbelt NRM's annual general meeting will be held in Northam on 22nd October, for more information please phone (08) 9690 2250.

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From the Chair

Hello Everyone,

Since my last message, there have been many changes in the Avon. It is now official! Avon Catchment Council is no more and we're proud and pleased to share our new name and new way of doing business with our community.

We believe that Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management (WNRM) better reflects our community, reminds us that our Avon River basin includes the three sub-catchments of Yilgarn, Lockhart and the Avon and focuses on our main business- Natural Resource Management. It fits neatly with two of our other WA regions and places us well amongst the 56 other regions across Australia. It is a very clear message about where we are in WA and historically what we have been about.

The name change is only the tip of the iceberg – our new name merely helps reinforce a new and better way of doing business and working with our community to manage our region's natural resources. With over 80% of our region privately held, this is essential.

As a board, we've completed changes to our constitution and reflected on our structure and function. WNRM is now an independent- community based board of skills -based directors providing membership opportunities to groups with a Natural Resource Management (NRM) focus in our region. Individuals can hold associate membership and have the opportunity to be involved through our sub-regional forums. These changes will provide a mechanism for input and feedback on programs and projects.

The focus will be on the right collaborations and partnerships to achieve our objectives. Although the name has changed- our commitment to providing leadership in managing our natural resources hasn't – WNRM has provided a base of knowledge and works that we can continue to build on in a new era of funding. This year our regional budget is over \$4.2 million and after careful planning, funding is

beginning to flow. Under the Sustainable Agriculture banner of Caring for Country funding from the Australian government wind erosion is the key target for us.

There has also been further funding success with National Reserve System.

Thanks to the ongoing commitment of our staff and partners WNRM is a finalist in the Dept of Indigenous Affairs , Indigenous service award, part of the regional achievement and community awards.

The State Landcare conference is in Geraldton at the end of October and again, WNRM's work is being recognized. There are other worthy finalists from our region and we wish them all the best and thank them for their commitment to natural resource management.

We are now beginning to see how some of the \$30 million promised to NRM from the WA State Government has been allocated on a variety of state based projects. As a region we continue to strive at every opportunity for input and to provide assistance to the process. We're expecting our previous contributions and on-ground activities are recognized and valued and we believe we are well placed- we are regionally and community- based and our core business is natural resource management.

Our AGM is on October 22nd and please feel most welcome to join us. We appreciate and need your input and support. Our new member groups will be approving our new Directors - who have a lot of hard work ahead as we confirm the strategic direction for Wheatbelt NRM.

Although there have been many changes-we haven't changed that much- we're still about creating healthy landscapes, livelihoods and communities. Our values haven't changed- we just need to be clear about who we are and what we want and then work towards it for our communities and environment.

Glenice Batchelor



Featured Project

Funding available to address wind erosion on farms

Looking around much of the Avon River Basin at present you would be forgiven for thinking that wind erosion couldn't be a problem in this area. However look back to the summer and autumn months of previous years and you may remember the fertile dust fraction of your soil being picked up from bare, dry paddocks only to be dumped far away on non-farm land or into the ocean.

Now is a good time to work on solutions to this problem so that fertile top soils are retained on our farms and production and yield can be sustained well into the future.

Wheatbelt NRM through the Caring for our Country funding program is providing opportunities for farmer groups and individuals to tackle wind erosion over the next four years.


The program commences in mid-October and will enable farmers, as individuals or groups, to apply for funds to establish projects that demonstrate how to reduce wind erosion to their local community. Traditionally the key methods for reducing wind

erosion are the use of trees in blocks or belts to slow wind speed, management of crop stubble to protect the soil surface during summer & autumn and retaining adequate groundcover in grazing systems during susceptible times.

Wheatbelt NRM however will consider all ideas from groups and individuals that are applicable to their local community and will affect an overall reduction in wind erosion.

To give projects the best chance of success, funding recipients will have access to the technical advice required to plan, implement and analyse the projects through our many respected partners in this project. The program encourages successful applicants to share the successes & outcomes of their trials, so that other farmers can take this knowledge back to their own place and investigate how it might benefit their own enterprise.

If you would like to apply for the funds available, please contact Rochelle Pyle on 9690 2250 for an Expression of Interest form and project guidelines.



'Now is a good time to work on solutions to this problem so that fertile top soils are retained on our farms and production and yield can be sustained well into the future'

Photo courtesy: Monica Durcan

Staff focus

Recording Traditional Knowledge Staff training



'This training provided staff with a means to document what they are doing, what they have learnt and literally show what they have achieved in their projects'

Victor Steffenson and Dan Ferguson

The Wheatbelt NRM team took part in a week of recording skills and methods training, facilitated by the Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways (TKRP) organisation*.

Victor Steffenson of TKRP visited Wheatbelt NRM and coordinated the training sessions which saw all staff learn how to utilise these exciting new tools.

By recording NRM knowledge Wheatbelt NRM plans to integrate this new media into their management strategies, reporting and evaluation methods for their projects in the region.

This training has provided staff with a means to document what they are doing, what they have learnt and literally show what they have achieved in their projects. It will also enable them to better illustrate issues affecting the region to those who sponsor Wheatbelt NRM projects.

'It shows the enthusiasm to a broader audience' said Rochelle Pyle, Program Coordinator for Sustainable Agriculture.

'Its a way to get the community involved and participating in the conservation of our region, as well as providing NRM knowledge sharing throughout the Avon River Basin.'

Wheatbelt NRM staff will soon be out in the field, recording and promoting NRM knowledge sharing throughout the Avon River Basin.

**TKRP was developed in Queensland from the aspirations of Indigenous Elders, to preserve and recognise Traditional Indigenous Knowledge.*

Staff focus

Recording Traditional Knowledge Staff training

'It demonstrates the enthusiasm to a broader audience, and is a way to get the community involved in the conservation of our region'



Djeromi Collope of TKRP



Dan Ferguson
Program Manager - Sustainable Agriculture.

Dan Ferguson and Michelle Kidman interview Doodlakine farmer Michael McFarlane



Michelle Kidman at work editing



Rochelle Pyle
Program Coordinator - Sustainable Agriculture

Rochelle Pyle in interview



Chris David counting down to filming

Around the Region

Network Support and Development Incentive Scheme

Mukinbudin Men's Shed

A program designed to enrich the lives of older men has undertaken a tree planting program with a difference.

The Mukinbudin 50's Men's Shed restores old machinery and has used a 1965 Chamberlain Super 90 tractor to plant 4500 seedlings.

The seedlings were provided as part of a \$4500 grant by Wheatbelt NRM (formerly Avon Catchment Council), as part of the Network Support and Development Incentive Scheme.



Bill Crook, Gil Williams, Roy Jones, Mukinbudin NRM Tracey Hobbs and Joyce Zhang.

Djidi Smoking Ceremony

A smoking ceremony and burn-off was recently held in Wyalkatchem as part of a knowledge sharing project.

The traditional burn off by Djidi Djidi allowed the community to revegetate and rehabilitate the Korrelocking Reserve in the future as well as educating interested community members.

This cultural awareness activity was funded as part of the Wheatbelt NRM Network Support and Development Incentive Scheme.



Frank and Trevor Davis conduct the smoking ceremony.

Gwambygine Pool River

The York River Conservation Society have employed an experienced zoologist, David Knowles, to carry out an invertebrate survey of the Gwambygine Pool Reserve to compliment the aquatic survey made in 1996-98 of Gwambygine Pool.

Three surveys each of thirty hours duration will be carried out as funded by the Wheatbelt NRM Network Support and Development Incentive Scheme.

It is anticipated that the outcome of this survey will be of significant benefit to researchers and students into the future and become a yardstick to measure against climate and environmental changes.



David Knowles preparing for the survey.

Spotlight on

Wheatbelt NRM CFOC Projects for 2009 - 2013

National Reserve System

This program will deliver activities against CFOC targets which identified the Avon Wheatbelt IBRA Region as a high priority for increasing the National Reserve System.

This Wheatbelt NRM program will increase the National Reserve System by working with land managers to legally protect locations through the use of conservation covenants. The locations target priority remnant bushland in the Avon River Basin that have been identified through a strategic conservation plan as significant and irreplaceable.

To complement this National Reserve System work, threatened species that are impacted by rabbits will have management activities identified while community groups will be given opportunities to participate in activities aimed at protecting over 100 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation listed species in the Avon River Basin.

Indigenous involvement in biodiversity conservation will be facilitated through accessing established networks in the region through WNRM indigenous officers.

Sustainable Agriculture

The 2009-2010 Caring for our Country Business Plan identifies the Avon region as a priority area to reduce the risk of wind erosion through increased adoption of sustainable farm practices. This Wheatbelt NRM project devolves funds for local, on-ground activities to instigate the voluntary adoption by land managers of the following current recommended practices by 2013:

- recommended management practices to retain crop residues;
- recommended grazing management practices to maintain at least 40% ground cover;
- integration of perennial plants into agricultural systems; and
- soil quality maintenance, amelioration and monitoring.

The project is underpinned by the Farm Practice Change Model which supports the practical decision making processes of land managers in progressing from motivation, exploration to adoption of an alternative agricultural system. Proposed activities adhere to the rationale that broad-scale soil management issues on agricultural land necessitate low-cost per hectare initiatives that maximise participation of targeted stakeholders.

Aboriginal NRM

Building on the wheatbelt NRM's investment (from 2006) the Aboriginal NRM project will incorporate Aboriginal traditional cultural knowledge into natural resource management through recording traditional ecological knowledge, a network of Indigenous Advisory Groups and specific site management activities over the next four years.

This will be achieved through;

1. A continuation of the recording traditional knowledge, building on the capacity WNRM has developed, to date. This includes maintaining and building the capacity of Avon Aboriginal Advisory Groups.
2. Developing partnerships with Aboriginal and NRM organisations, identifying a further three sites per year of cultural and environmental significance where the Aboriginal community is willing to play an active management role, and to develop processes allowing WNRM to continue integrating cultural ecological knowledge into site management plans.
3. Continued employment of the Nyungar Budjar Carers through partnerships with National Reserve System managers in the region to integrate traditional knowledge.
4. Assistance to Aboriginal landowners in the region to become more sustainable, both in their farming practices and through caring for the environment.

MERI update

Wheatbelt NRM

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Wheatbelt NRM is implementing a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Plan for each program funded by the Australian Government through Caring for Our Country:

- National Reserve System and Biodiversity Conservation
- Supporting Farm Practice Change to Manage Wind Erosion in the Avon River Basin
- Aboriginal Natural Resource Management in the Avon River Basin
- Core Operating and Community Engagement and Participation

The continuous and integrated cycle of monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement is referred to as MERI in the Australian natural resource management context.

These plans guide MERI for each of the programs funded under Caring for our Country in accordance with the stated Caring for our Country outcomes and targets (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/me/index.html>) and consistent with the Caring for our Country MERI Strategy (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/me/index.html>)

The plans provide a base from which to review the progress the project is making towards the agreed Caring for our Country targets and outcomes and from which to learn about successful implementation strategies and to adapt in response to lessons learnt.

A MERI plan articulates all the different aspects of MERI that will be needed and how they will be implemented over the life of the program.

If you would like more information about these plans, or require assistance in developing your own MERI plan, please contact Michelle Kidman, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator on 9690 2250 or via email at:

mkidman@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

The plans are available on the Wheatbelt NRM website at :

<http://www.avonnrm.org.au/projects0913>

