



Avon Catchment Council Bi-monthly Newsletter

www.avonnrm.org.au

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Funding available to Care for our Country

The Australian Government released its 2009/10 CFOC business plan in December 2008. Caring for our Country is the Australian Government's new natural resource management initiative and they have invited applications from organisations across the country to deliver projects that achieve the targets outlined in the plan. Targets applicable to the Avon River Basin include:

- Managing wind erosion;
- Increasing the National Reserve System;
- Increasing Indigenous protected areas;
- Managing Weeds of National Significance; and
- Managing critically endangered vegetation that is at risk from rabbits.

The Australian Government has identified targets for the Avon River Basin and have called for proposals to achieve these.

Natarsha Woods, Operations Manager Avon Catchment Council, advised:

Fortunately these targets align with the targets identified by the ARB Community in our strategic plan and this allows both the community and federal government to achieve their targets simultaneously.

The CFOC Business Plan strongly emphasises the value of partnerships in funding applications. As such, ACC invited organisations who were planning project submissions to contact them so that they may assist in bringing together partnerships for complementary projects.

Natarsha Woods also explained: *The ACC has extensive experience in coordinating partnerships, developing regional strategies, monitoring and*



evaluation and has a robust and proven system for project and financial management. These skills may be useful for small groups wishing to apply for CFOC grants.

The message from the Australian Government is that projects need to be based on sound science. During the past 4 years, the ACC has developed a good knowledge base for making investment decisions in areas like soil acidity, management plans for river sections and base-lining for natural diversity.

Please contact the ACC if you wish to provide them with some basic information about your intended project. They will then endeavor to put people in contact to establish beneficial partnerships and complementary approaches.

A copy of the CFOC Business Plan and application forms can be found at www.nrm.gov.au. Funding applications close on 6th March 2009.

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Message from the Chair

By **GLENICE BATCHELOR**

WELCOME to a newsletter with a lot of information - so I will be brief but there is much to tell!

Over the past twelve months Avon Catchment Council has been very busy rolling out extensive funds throughout the region. This has meant communication has been more about specific projects, but now it's time to share what has been happening.

We are now facing a complete change of how ACC has done business in the past. It's time to reflect and consider how we will go forward. Changes to both State and Federal Governments have meant a new mindset is needed. The Australian Government's new Caring for our Country funding provides us both with a funding opportunity but also a major challenge. As a region we are trying to see where our needs will meet government targets set to allow funding to flow. Funding is now competitive across Australia and whilst regions are in the box seat, we need to ensure that we as an organisation are very clear about what needs to be done and work with the community to ensure that this can occur.

Timing of funding is always an issue and the Board had to request Expressions of Interest for involvement in this initial Caring for our Country round prior to Christmas. The operational staff are now finalising how the applications will progress with key partners. We are still currently working via a largely undefined process which is adding to the complexity.

State-wise the regional model is undergoing two reviews. The first has been planned for some time. However the change of funding structure has meant this is timely. Internally, the six regional groups are conducting a 'warts and all' review to inform and ensure continuous improvement of how we all do business. The Honourable Terry Redman MLA, Minister for Agriculture and Food is now also running a review with stakeholder input and the findings from each of these will be



used to inform how Avon Catchment Council moves forward.

The Avon Catchment Council Board had already seen the need and has commenced a re-structure. I am now on board to help drive that process. Advisory committees have been formed to provide a mechanism for community input. This is in a direct response to the last three years – when Avon Catchment Council was primarily a delivery organisation for strategic funding. We need to be very clear about what it is we are really about and work with our regional community to achieve on your behalf.

ACC has been very busy delivering. Now it's time to take stock, share the knowledge gained and move forward. I personally believe that the way forward is about true partnership and collaborations to ensure the changes needed are achieved. ACC has had the support of many good people over many years who have carried out much hard work and accomplished a great deal at the local and regional levels. We need to honour this effort, and with good planning and valued community input, work together to "create healthy landscapes, livelihoods and communities"

'Message from the Chair' is continued on the next page with the 'Chair bio'...

Chair bio

GLENICE BATCHELOR works and lives in Tammin with her husband Fred and two daughters, Megan and Amy. Glenice has extensive experience and commitment to NRM and rural life having worked in Horticulture, Human Services, NRM and local government for over 20 years.

Glenice has managed a range of community based projects and is currently Project Manager for the Catchment Demonstration Initiative (CDI) for the Wallatin Wildlife and Landcare Inc group in Kellerberrin/Doodlakine. A feature of the CDI "Bringing it all Together" is the collaborations and partnerships developed with agencies and research bodies including a major partnership with CSIRO funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

Glenice believes that her experience in community driven research and on-ground activity provides a strong background as Avon Catchment Council Chair. The recent focus has been on salinity however Glenice believes that NRM has the capacity to incorporate and integrate the many opportunities available for industry and community development. She believes that much can be achieved by working together to manage our resources and environment.

Glenice is the current Chair of Saltland Pastures Association and recipient of the 2007/08 Landcare Professional Award. ACC is delighted to have such an accomplished Chairperson leading the way.

Message from the CEO

By **PETER SULLIVAN**

2009/10 will see significant change in the way Avon Catchment Council does business. This change is partly in response to the external funding environment as well as responding to our own internal review of business. This review identified our direct engagement with community and our ability to maintain a high level of Natural Resource Management service delivery as a key strategic priority.

As a result of this internal assessment and change in Australian Government funding, ACC will seek to better network and engage community in Natural Resource Management. Through enhanced networking and engagement, Avon Catchment Council will be better placed to reflect community aspirations and priorities in Natural Resource Management.

From a team perspective ACC is ready for change and will strive to deliver NRM services more effectively *with* the community.



Featured Story

Farewell from the Chair

By **MERRILYN TEMBY**

OVER the last three years Investment Plans delivered some \$30 million of investment into the Avon environment, tapping into the best expertise in our region to ensure our projects were done according to the Investment Plans that so many put time and effort into.

All Avon Catchment Council projects have delivered important outcomes but some stand out. The Avon River is a major asset and although we have worked to protect it for many years, the last three have seen a huge ramping up effort. Now some 97% of the Avon Channel has been fenced and rehabilitated, Beverley town pool and Mile Pool near Brookton have also been restored. The Department of Water, our delivery organisation for this project, has worked with Local Governments, landholders and community and Aboriginal groups to achieve this and last year were winners of a Premier's Award.

We celebrated the success of our "Recording of Traditional Knowledge for NRM" project. A DVD that recorded the thoughts of eleven Noongar Elders was launched. Also, Len Collard and Sandra Harben from Murdoch University presented their literature review on Traditional Knowledge.

Other highlights of ACC projects include the popular "Our Patch" project, which has seen the protection of iconic pieces of bush or other natural assets in some 25 Shires. After three years much has been achieved and a lot has been learnt.

It has been very pleasing to see the efforts of outstanding groups and individuals being formally recognised. The National Landcare Awards for 2008 included several finalists from the Avon Region - NEWROC (North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils) NRM and Wallatin Wildlife and Landcare. These groups, along with Glenice Bachelor, were also State Landcare award winners in 2008.

In the last year (2008/09) there has been a completely different funding scenario. Instead



Above: Merrilyn Temby

of the joint State/Commonwealth funding allocation of previous years, the new Commonwealth Government has funded us directly through their new "Caring For our Country" program. In 2009-2013, we will see further changes, with more emphasis on competitive bids for projects. There are huge changes taking place and NRM will be done differently, Avon Catchment Council is committed to trying to get the best 'deal' for the Avon NRM community, and the best outcomes will be achieved by continuing to work together.

I decided not to seek re-election for the position of Chair of Avon Catchment Council due to family commitments though will remain on Council as Deputy Chair. I wish to thank our CEO, Peter Sullivan, for his leadership, support and advice. I also commend the Avon staff for their dedication and enthusiasm for the job, and all the people involved in the planning, delivery and implementation of our projects over the whole period.

Lastly I wish to thank the three departing Board members, Wayne Clarke, David Singe and Pauline Guest for their outstanding service. They have been dedicated contributors to all aspects of ACC.

Spotlight On

Site development at Burlong Pool



“It really has all three aspects of local heritage significance, being a Noongar heritage site, settler heritage site and also an important environmental spot.”

Above: Burlong Pool

BURLONG is of major significance to the Noongar People and is listed under the Aboriginal Sites Act. It was for them an important camping site and corroboree ground as well as a source of food and water. The dream time serpent the Wagyl was believed to live there during the long summer months. It is believed with the approach of summer the Wagyl made his way underground, down the Toodyay Brook to the Avon, and upstream along that river to the long deep pool at Burlong. There he stayed until winter rains made the brooks flow again. (Erickson 1974*).

Burlong was also once a premier park for picnics, swimming, water sports and military exercises, as well as a major source of fresh water for the Northam community, steam trains and for export to the Goldfields.

Much time is being spent liaising with the Northam Noongar community to ensure that any development has their support. This liaison is an essential part of the process to revitalise this important site. This consultation process is ongoing with local Noongar Elders and the community.

Avon Catchment Council in partnership with the Northam Noongar community, Avon Valley Environmental Society, Avon Valley Contractors, Department of Water, Shire of Northam and surrounding farmers will oversee a long term plan to improve the Burlong Pool area, making it suitable for cultural and recreational use, and also educational conservation and heritage significance.

Peter Weatherly, President of Avon Valley Environmental Society, explained: *It really has all three aspects of local heritage significance, being a Noongar heritage site, settler heritage site and also an important environmental spot.*

Nathan Heal, Aboriginal NRM Officer at ACC recently visited the site along with Peter Weatherly, Brian Blurton, Department of Indigenous Affairs and Tom and Lindsay Garlett, members of the Northam Aboriginal community. Proposed site works were discussed including a general cleanup, making the area safe for entry, installation of interpretive signage and re-vegetating the riparian zone.

*Erickson, R (1974) *Old Toodyay and Newcastle*, Toodyay Shire Council, Perth.

Featured Project

Mapping Our Investment Footprint

By **MICHELLE KIDMAN**

INVESTMENT FOOTPRINT MAPPING is being carried out in all six Western Australian Natural Resource Management groups. It will enable everyone interested in protecting our natural resources to see what has been done where, and by whom.

The Avon Catchment Council is working with the Shared Land Information Platform (SLIP) NRM Information team to map all ACC delivered projects funded through the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust funding program for the period 2005-2009.

To date 24 projects have been mapped, with over 4,214 project outputs captured. Some of these outputs include:

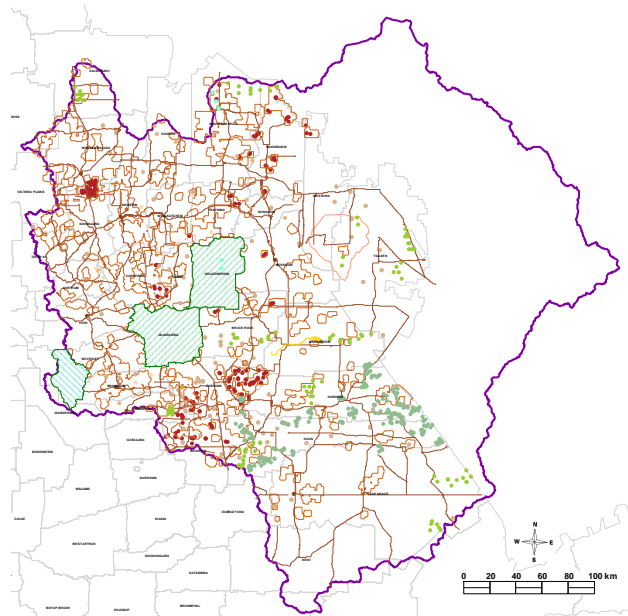
- Monitoring water quality of the Avon River and its tributaries;
- Managing biodiversity and water quality through monitoring, fencing, revegetation, pest and weed control, and fire management guidelines;
- Planting of saltbush, sandalwood, brushwood, oil mallees and other species suitable for saline affected land;
- Integrating tree crops into cropping systems;
- Mapping and reporting on salinity trend;
- Monitoring and analysis of soil quality and pH across the Avon; and
- Identification of sites of Aboriginal significance.

In addition, over 6,000 kilometres of regionally significant roads in the Avon River Basin, assessed for their risk of damage through the impacts of salinity, have also been mapped.

This information will be publicly available on the NRM Info website in the very near future.

Keep posted, and visit the NRM Info website at <http://spatial.agric.wa.gov.au/slip>

NRM Info will be updated regularly to include new projects being delivered through the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program.



The investment footprint: A map of the Avon River Basin showing locations of ACC projects.

'...It will enable everyone interested in protecting our natural resources to see what has been done where, and by whom.'

Seasonal Update

Six ACC Newsletters will be released in 2009 to coincide with the six Noongar seasons of Bunuru, Djeran, Makuru, Djilba, Kambarang and Birak.

Bunuru

February - March

Hot easterly and north winds

THE BUNURU Noongar season occurs between February and March. It is characterized by hot easterly and north winds. During the Bunuru season, people moved towards coastal areas as inland water supplies became scarce.

'Fishing in coastal areas and estuaries dominated this season, with large assemblies and gatherings. The fruits of the zamia (*Macrozamia riedlei*) were collected and treated for toxins by a process of burying, soaking and roasting. Red fruit nut called baio, ripe in March, is considered a delicacy by the natives.' (Stokes 1846*)



Above: Ballardong Noongar Seasons

*Stokes, J.L. (1846) *Discoveries in Australia; an account of the coasts and rivers explored and surveyed during the voyage of HMS Beagle in the years 1837-43*. T & W Boon, London.

Around the Regions

Support for Fencing and Tree Cropping in the Dale Ecoscape

By **REBECCA PALUMBO**

ONE OF the most important biodiversity 'hotspots' within the Avon River Basin is being targeted in an effort to protect it.

The Dale Ecoscape lies on the western side of the Beverley and Brookton shires and runs into the York shire. It also includes the Dale River, which is one of the last remaining fresh waterways in the Western Australian Wheatbelt.

The Avon Catchment Council has set aside \$680,000 in 2008-09 to help preserve the 76,000 hectare area, which contains at least five threatened fauna species including the numbat.



Above: View of the Dale Ecoscape

The biodiversity within the Dale Ecoscape is extremely diverse, and often shows changes in vegetation type over short ranges. There is also a large number of threatened flora species.

The Dale River pools are filling up with sediment and due to salinity the remaining riparian vegetation is generally in poor health.

There is a need for extensive work on both the river and remnant bush to combat the impacts of salinity, fragmentation and erosion.

Currently the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Department of Water are working with local landholders to undertake work such as fencing off areas of remnant bush and fencing the Dale River and its tributaries to prevent stock entering the area. Revegetation projects along these waterways are planned for later in the year.

A Rivercare workshop is planned as well as an introductory workshop on tree cropping. This latter workshop complements the announced funding from the ACC for support for tree cropping within the Ecoscape area.

Kokerbin Nature Reserve

By **NATHAN HEAL**

A PARTNERSHIP has been developed between the Bruce Rock Shire, community and traditional custodians, Njaki-Njaki and Balardong Noongar groups, the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and the Avon Catchment Council to implement conservation works at the Kokerbin Nature Reserve.

The road access to the top of the rock has been closed to ensure cultural and conservation outcomes are preserved. A sign was erected in August/September 2008 at the point of closure to advise visitors of this and

further information can be gained from the DEC office in Merredin. A car park has been completed at the historic well and picnic tables will also be installed in the future .

An interpretive shelter is planned for construction at the end of June 2009 and will be a similar shape to the dome of the rock.

Further work will include the development of a stable platform to allow access to the cave and wave formations and refine the walking trail. A survey will also be conducted of the Black-flanked Rock Wallabies (*Petrogale lateralis*) to ascertain population statistics.

Around the Regions

Get the dirt at ACC

By **DAN FERGUSON**

AGRICULTURE is an integral part of the Avon River Basin so providing farmers with ways to maintain the soil resource is a priority of the Avon Catchment Council.

During the past three years projects to equip the Avon community to manage soil acidity, secondary salinity and improve soil health have been undertaken in the region.

Eighteen-thousand top-soil and twenty-thousand sub-soil samples were collected to provide farmers with precise liming recommendations to treat soil acidity. The data also presented a regional picture of soil pH to help identify priority areas to address the issue in the future. Project partners, the Department of Agriculture & Food WA (DAFWA) conveyed messages on soil acidity management through a well received extension campaign that included the 'Time to Re-Lime' information series

ACC's investment into salinity management included the planting of 700 ha of oil mallees, 1800 ha of saltbush; 350 ha brushwood/sandalwood and two safe disposal of acid groundwater demonstration sites. The Avon Salinity Tender provided further planting of 628 ha of mixed perennial pastures; 80 ha of tagasaste and 259 ha of oil mallees for land managers to

'More than eighty farmers across 264 sites were provided a better picture of their soil health.'



Above: Soil pit in paddock

contain or adapt to secondary salinity. Significant funding was allocated to salinity management extension activities and the protection of built infrastructure (road, rail and towns) from secondary salinity.

More than eighty farmers across 264 sites were provided a better picture of their soil health. Participants were provided with a comprehensive look at the biological, chemical and physical characteristics of their soils through analysis of samples by researchers at the University of Western Australia and DAFWA. Monitoring soil health helps inform participants to change management practices to achieve a more sustainable and profitable production system. Further information on this project can be accessed from the award winning website www.soilquality.org.au.



Above: Sandy soil pit

Soil degradation is extensive in its scale and severity in the Avon River Basin so limited public funds need to be allocated strategically and at a low cost per hectare. Future projects under programs like Caring for our Country will continue the opportunity for land managers to increase their knowledge of the vital soil resource and implement changes to agricultural systems so soils are maintained for future generations.

Staff Focus



NATHAN HEAL has joined the Avon Catchment Council team to work in Indigenous Engagement and Natural Resource Management. He has worked on a number of conservation related works for various organisations, leading teams of Australian and International volunteers on a number of projects in Namibia, Tasmania, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Most recently Nathan was the Green Corps Team Leader for the Gumber Caring for Country project in Moora.

Nathan Heal
Aboriginal NRM Officer
nheal@agric.wa.gov.au
(08) 9690 2268



CILLA KUIPER grew up in rural Western Australia and holds a degree in agribusiness marketing from Curtin University and a graduate diploma in equine studies from Charles Sturt University. Upon leaving Curtin University, Cilla worked as a Community Landcare Co-ordinator at the Shire of Beverley then spent some time working in the equine nutrition field managing territory in WA and SE Asia. Cilla is excited to be returning to her roots and looks forward to playing a role in conserving the precious natural assets of the Avon River Basin.

Cilla Kuiper
Communications Officer
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CHRIS DAVID joined Avon Catchment Council in January 2009 in the role of Communications Facilitator. Chris's background is primarily in Marketing and he has previously worked for C.Y. O'Connor College of TAFE, the Wheatbelt Public Health Unit and the Community Arts Network WA in Perth. Chris has a keen interest in Community Cultural Development (CCD) and is also a visual artist. Chris lives in Northam with his wife and children.

Chris David
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Board Focus

MURRY MCGREGOR has recently been elected to the ACC Board. Murry is General Manager (Research) of the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) and is Chair of Agribusiness at Curtin University of Technology.

Prior to taking up his current job with the DKCRC Murray was the Director of Muresk Institute of Agriculture. For the past 6 years Murray has been part of the management team for the DKCRC which is focused on 'desert' Australia. In his role he is responsible for managing the Centre's research projects. He has had extensive involvement in research and the implementation of natural resource policy in New Zealand, Western Europe and Australia. He lives with his family in Irishtown.



Above: New ACC Board member Murry McGregor

Initiatives, Collaborations and Partnerships

Noongar Budjar Carers

A partnership between Avon Catchment Council and the Department of Environment and Conservation

In November 2008 the Avon Catchment Council and the Department of Environment and Conservation made an innovative partnership for the creation of two Noongar Budjar Carer positions in Merredin and Northam. These trained Noongar Budjar Carers undertake a range of conservation work on land managed by DEC as well as implementing ACC projects elsewhere. This includes the management of Aboriginal sites within the regions, specifically; Badjalng, Burlong pool and Kokerbin Rock.

KATHLEEN KICKETT



KATHLEEN started employment with the Department of Conservation and Environment Avon-Mortlock District, Northam in December 2008 as a Noongar Budjar Carer, the

position being a joint funded initiative by the Avon Catchment Council.

Kathleen will help in the implementation of Department of Environment and Conservation programs. She will also be provided training opportunities relating to her work. When asked why she enjoyed her position Kathleen said that she was happy 'learning something new everyday.'

While only new to the position Kathleen has been keeping busy in her new role with community education in the management of Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*), letter drops, speaking with the community and visual monitoring.

Kathleen is keen to visit more of the 133 nature reserves in her District and has been given an introduction to Namelcatchem Nature Reserve (Shire of Dowerin) which requires significant rehabilitation from previous clearing.

Previously Kathleen worked as an Industrial cleaner and is happy with her new position with Department of Environment and Conservation as she believes it will provide her with further opportunities. Kathleen also has a cousin working within the Department in the Albany office.

MICHAEL 'MICK' HAYDEN SNR



MICK is a Njaki - Njaki man, born in Kellerberrin and raised in Merredin. Michael has spent the last 13 months employed by the Department of Environment and Conservation as a Noongar Budjar Carer,

the position being a joint funded initiative by the Avon Catchment Council.

Prior to this appointment Michael worked for 16 and a half years at Western Power, in the mining industry and also as a mentor for boys at Merredin Senior High School. Michael is also a sitting Counsellor of the Merredin Shire and is the first Indigenous Counsellor in the Wheatbelt.

Michael is passionate about his area and people; he is keen to ensure recognition of the Njaki - Njaki peoples achievements and is aware of the positive role model he is to the Noongar people in his community. In his current role with DEC Michael is particularly passionate about the promotion of Aboriginal sites and communicating their importance. He hopes that his work in Natural Resource Management will be an incentive to other Noongar people to become involved and nurture their connection to the land.

An avid football player who played for Burracoppin and Merredin, Michael is married with two sons, one daughter and a foster daughter.

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Funding Opportunities

Caring for our Country

Applications close 6 March 2009

The Australian Government is now calling for investment proposals for projects that will meet the targets outlined in the Caring for our Country business plan 2009-10.

For more information contact: ACC on (08) 9690 2250 or visit <http://www.nrm.gov.au/business-plan/index.html>

Climate ready funding program

Applications for round three close 12 March 2009

Climate Ready provides grants from \$50,000 to \$5 million on a matching funding basis to support projects that address the effects of climate change.

For more information visit: the AusIndustry website at www.ausindustry.gov.au or contact the AusIndustry hotline on 13 28 46 or by email at hotline@ausindustry.gov.au

Tree Cropping Funding

Applications close 23 March 2009

The Avon Catchment Council is offering funding to support the implementation of tree cropping in locations that are part of the Avon Ecoscapes Project.

For more information contact: Rebecca Palumbo (08) 9690 2265

Re-tooling for Climate Change

Round Three Applications close 1 June 2009

For small and medium sized Australian manufacturers to reduce their environmental footprint through projects to improve the energy and/or water efficiency of their production processes.

For more information visit: www.ausindustry.gov.au or call the hotline on 13 28 46.

FarmReady (the new FarmBis)

Further information about the FarmReady program will be available in the coming months

The Australian Government is providing \$26.5 million to train farmers in preparation for climate change as part of the \$130 million Australia's Farming Future initiative.

For more information visit: www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/australias-farming-future/farmready or call 1800 638 746.