

Improving Water Quality in the Vasse-Wonnerup System - Rural drainage and Waterways project

Aim/Purpose:

To improve water quality of waterways and Ramsar wetlands in the Vasse-Wonnerup catchment through:

- Drainage reform within a strategically chosen sub-catchment through building on the Drainage Reform Option Report
- Implementation of best management practices (BMP'S) for land uses in the rural catchment focusing on a reduction in the export of nutrients and sediment from agricultural land
- Water quality monitoring to identify sources of nutrients and to provide information for a future Decision Support System model. This model will help in making strategic decisions as to the most appropriate action to achieve a reduction in pollutants entering the drainage system and ultimately the Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands

Start Date:

1st July, 2006

Finish Date:

31st December, 2008

Project Partners:

- Geographe Catchment Council
- Department of Water

Project Stakeholders:

- Landholders in the Vasse-Wonnerup Catchment with drains and waterways
- Vasse-Wonnerup LCDC
- Geographe Catchment Council
- Water Corporation
- Department of Water
- The Shire of Busselton
- Department of Agriculture and Food WA
- South West Catchments Council
- Geographe Community Landcare Nursery

2. Background:

This project is primarily focused at the protection of the Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands, which are Ramsar listed, through improvement in its water quality. The Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands are recognised for their associated rich biodiversity and importance for waterbird breeding and habitat. The system is currently under threat from excessive nutrient inputs from agricultural practices and increasingly from urban development. The region needs to address both diffuse and point source pollution, which are serious threats to

this high priority asset. Landuses including agriculture, industry and residential are shown as being exporters of pollutants in the catchment. Drainage on the surrounding coastal plains is transporting P, N, sediment and other pollutants to the wetlands and other associated high value assets in the catchment such as the sea grass populations in Geographe Bay and natural waterways. The wetlands themselves also have a number of localised threats (such as weed invasion, vegetation loss, grazing by stock) that are reducing their health and hence their ability to deal with pollutants in the system. By improving the ecological health of the system the wetlands will also be better able to absorb the effects of pollutants and other anthropogenic influences.

Main Achievements: (to date)

- Setting up of management committee with strong community and agency links
- 21km of fencing of drains completed or agreed to
- 5 stock crossings
- Development of a comprehensive water quality monitoring programme for baseline data prior to installation of BMP's

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