

Peel-Harvey Catchment Council

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People Working Together for a Healthy Environment

Media release

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SCIENCE ADVISOR APPOINTED TO PEEL-HARVEY'S PEAK NRM BODY



Photo: Dr Steve Fisher, Peel-Harvey Catchment Council Science Advisor

Improved science leadership and integration of science into the management of the Peel-Harvey catchment are assured with the announcement of a significant new appointment at the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC).

Dr Steve Fisher has joined the region's peak natural resource management body as the PHCC's Science Advisor and will work with decision makers and practitioners at all levels to apply evidence-based knowledge to improve the environmental health of the catchment. Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) Chair Jan Star A.M. welcomed Dr Fisher to the key role.

“The role of Science Advisor at the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council provides a great opportunity for Steve to bring together his expertise in watery science, his communication skills and his love of the Peel-Harvey estuary environment to guide better-informed decision making towards improvement of the health of the Peel-Harvey waterways.”

She added one of Dr Fisher’s key tasks was to prepare an updated science strategy for the Peel-Harvey, incorporating broader catchment issues as well as those encountered in the estuary and rivers.

“The Peel-Harvey has been the focus of considerable research. The need for a Science Advisor to deliver outcomes for the Peel-Harvey has been recognised for several years. With funds recently provided by state and local government, Dr Fisher’s appointment has been secured.”

“Adaptive management priorities will have a strong focus on water quality but will also include biodiversity, species dispersal, wetland restoration, adaptation in a changing climate and more. Water quality science priorities will include nutrient pathways, assimilation of nutrients in drainage systems and Monosulphidic Black Ooze associated with sediment loss from erosion,” said Jan Star.

Steve has a PhD in Chemistry from Curtin University where he specialised in petroleum and environmental organic geochemistry. Although Steve was born in Kalgoorlie where there is little water, he quickly developed an affinity for estuaries and rivers while growing up in Perth. He spent much of his childhood fishing, swimming and boating on and around the Swan-Canning estuary, including his daily travels in a dinghy to and from school at Aquinas College on the Canning estuary. He learned to row on the Swan-Canning, continued competitive rowing beyond high school and is still actively involved through coaching.

Steve has kept this affinity with water as a common thread throughout his 30 –year career as a scientist. As an academic, consultant and while working at the CSIRO, WA Department of Fisheries and WA Department of Water, he has developed expertise in a diverse range of activities related to natural resource management.

This diversity includes investigating the impacts of oil exploration and production on the marine environment at the Northwest Shelf, to analysing otoliths (“ear stones”) from fish to determine the separateness of fish stocks such as pink snapper and dhufish to assist in decision making about management of these fisheries, to implementing water quality monitoring programs for the Swan – Canning Estuary, catchment and urban drainage network.

Since the 1970s, Steve has regularly holidayed in the Mandurah region spending many hours out on the Peel-Harvey Estuary as a recreational fisherman. During this time, he has seen Mandurah grow from a country town with a population of approx. 10,000 to the City of Mandurah of today and is passionate about improving the environmental health of the estuary and waterways.

Steve is also an experienced science communicator, having made oral presentations at international and national conferences as well as to workshops for community and volunteer organisations.

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