

Connecting Corridors and Communities



PHCC Working Together
Peel-Harvey Catchment Council

Restoring the Serpentine River

Edition 2
December 2018

Welcome to the second edition of *Connecting Corridors and Communities* - an update on the project and on Natural Resource Management (NRM) in our Peel-Harvey Catchment. NRM refers to the management of natural resources such as land, water, soils, plants and animals. It brings together landuse planning, water management, biodiversity conservation and the future sustainability of industries such as agriculture, mining, tourism, fisheries and forestry.

Serpentine Community Comes Together

On October 13, PHCC hosted a Community Forum where stakeholders and landholders came together to share stories about the Serpentine River. This included listening to our *Three Rivers, One Estuary Initiative* partners Greening Australia and The Nature Conservancy, as well as the City of Mandurah, Local Noongar Elder Harry Nannup and

some local Serpentine landholders. We were lucky enough to have Uncle Harry give an insight to what life was like growing up on the Serpentine and how much it has changed over most of his life. Other presenters shared valuable information about their individual projects occurring not only along the Serpentine, but also in the Murray and

Harvey river systems. It is through these conversations that we can appreciate the values of, and learn the true keys to success to improving the health and biodiversity of our rivers including the Serpentine. At the end of the workshop, we assisted interested landholders in applying for our Community Environment Grants.



People Working Together to Save Our Serpentine

Over the past month, our Rivercare team has been extremely busy visiting landholders across the Serpentine River sub-catchment as part of the 2018 Community Environment Grants Program. Through this program, PHCC has made \$160,000 dollars available to landholders to assist with their projects that will lead to an improvement in condition of the Serpentine River. We had 14 expressions of interest from landholders who live directly adjacent to the Serpentine River who

are keen to help improve the health and biodiversity of this river system.

Where possible, officers visited each landholder on their properties to help them plan their projects and assist with applications. Eight applications were assessed by our Independent Assessment Panel and we are now finalising successful projects. Each of the successful projects will undertake and deliver a range of on-ground activities, including revegetation,

bank stabilisation, fencing, enhancement of fish habitat, weed control and feral animal control.

These activities will greatly improve the ecological health of the Serpentine River and surrounds through reconnecting bushland and riparian zones, protecting and conserving existing vegetation, improving water quality and providing food and habitat for native fish species and other fauna.



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NRM Receives Training from Renowned Botanist

Earlier this month, partners and stakeholders took part in an *Introduction to Native Vegetation Assessment* training with renowned expert botanist Bronwen Keighery. Bronwen has a passion and love for local wildflower species in WA. Through her career, she studied botany and zoology, taught biology, researched vegetation and flora of the Swan Coastal Plain and applied these studies (and others) to the Conservation Plan for Perth (Bush Forever). She has been involved in multiple not-for-profit and community organisations such as the Wildflower Society of WA. Bronwen now works as a consultant botanist and volunteer.

The training ran over two days: Day One involved a master class on how to correctly

perform a vegetation assessment. On Day Two we put our skills to the test on how to correctly perform a vegetation assessment at Lowlands Conservation Reserve. This site was chosen as a test site because several botanical studies have been undertaken there against which we could compare our results. It is also the reference site for our Alcoa Foundation project.

With people from various organisations, including Alcoa team members, it gave the opportunity to share and exchange vital knowledge in vegetation assessment and best practise methodology. We look forward to taking learnings and implementing them into our upcoming projects.



Planting Success for Local Landholders Farm



PHCC, local landholders and the not-for-profit group Growing Towards Wellness recently came together just down stream

of Lowlands Reserve to plant 1000 *Lepidosperma persecans*, a riparian sedge that naturally occurs in our region and forms a major part of the understorey along the Serpentine River. It is no secret that western grey kangaroos love to eat this species for supper, therefore seriously impacting the establishment of these plants.

Potential sites were inspected prior to commencing planting to ensure this species had a chance at growing to full capacity. The sites chosen are protected from kangaroos and livestock through a fenceline that runs adjacent to the river that includes the surrounding riparian bushland.

The landholder is also currently working with the Dept of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and volunteers to estimate kangaroo numbers to inform future management strategies. Once these plants establish, they will create shade and habitat for other fauna species as well as having the ability to displace weed species in the area.

What's that bug?



PHCC officers Rick James and Jesse Rowley recently took part in *WaterBug Identification Training* as part of the National WaterBug BioBlitz led by renowned freshwater ecologist John Gooderham. The team learnt how to correctly sample and identify macroinvertebrates within river and estuarine systems.

This training will be put into action in autumn when River Health Assessments get underway to help determine the health of the Serpentine River. Macroinvertebrates are key indicator species of river health that respond to contaminants such as metals, pesticides, bacteria and nutrients and threatening process such as increasing salinity and decreasing flows.

We would like to wish our Community, project partners and volunteers a safe and Merry Christmas. We look forward to continuing to work with you all in 2019.

Please note: Our office will be closed from 21st December and will re-open on the 7th of January.



This project is supported by the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council through funding from the Alcoa Foundation's *Three Rivers, One Estuary Initiative*. Alcoa Foundation: Investing where Alcoa has a presence, partnering with communities to address local needs in a sustainable manner. With our nonprofit partners, we contribute to environmental excellence, economic success and social responsibility around the globe.

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