

Ramsar TAG Meeting to be held on 14 March 2019

Significant activities since March 2018

1. National Landcare Program Regional Land Partnerships (NLP2 RLP) tender.
 - PHCC was successful in its submission to the Australian Government's request for tender for NLP2 RLP. The 5-year Project Design *Wetlands and People – A community restoring the Ecological Character of the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar 482 Wetland* addresses the Australian Government's specified Outcome 1 *By 2023, there is a restoration of, and a reduction in threats to, the ecological character of Ramsar sites through the implementation of priority actions* and is specifically relevant to this TAG. This Project Design consisted of four components, briefly described as follows:
 - i. Integrated collaborative management facilitated for ongoing integrated delivery and sustained action: PHCC will continue to lead Peel-Yalgorup System's "Ramsar 482" initiative, including facilitating the Technical Advisory Group (TAG); reporting the condition of the Ecological Character of the Site against the Limits of Acceptable Change; supporting subsidiary TAGs and Working Groups, and reviewing and updating the Site's Ecological Character Description, Monitoring and Evaluation Guide and the Management Plan.
 - ii. Community Engagement (Wetlands and People): this sub-project supports the Ramsar Convention's Program on communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) including implementing the Wetlands & People Plan – CEPA-Action Plan priority activities.
 - iii. Assess Ecological Character and address key knowledge gaps: core elements of the 12 recommended Monitoring Programs within the Monitoring and Evaluation Guide for the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar Site (2008) will be implemented, as well as investigations into the hydrology of Lake Clifton and biological investigations to establish the condition of the Lake Clifton Thrombolite Threatened Ecological Community, and investigations into ASS at Lake McLarty.
 - iv. On-ground priority actions: will be implemented to remediate riparian and aquatic areas and associated upland habitats and reduce threats to further degradation. Priority actions include weed control, illegal access control, debris (litter and pollution) control, feral animal control and restoration. Note that due to their extent and importance as habitat the Salt Marsh and Clay Pan TECs of the estuary were addressed under a separate project proposal within the tender, which was unsuccessful.
 - PHCC received a work-order from the Australian Government in November 2018 enabling delivery against their specified project services from Nov 2018 to June 2023. .Progress to date is summarized as follows:

Science and Collaborative Management (Components i and iii above)

- Recruited and appointed Rick James as Coordinator, Wetlands Science and Management (Nov 2018)
- Organising the Ramsar Technical Advisory Group meeting scheduled for 14 March 2019.
- Preliminary scoping for a specification for the updates (addenda) to the Ecological Character Description and subsequently the Monitoring & Evaluation Guide and Management Plan for the Peel-Yalgorup System
- Commenced discussions and negotiations with key stakeholders (DWER and DBCA) regarding monitoring programs to better understand the hydrology of Lake Clifton

Wetlands & People (Community Engagement, Component ii above)

- This component is managed by Sharon Meredith Coordinator, Ramsar Community Engagement

- Organised a successful Shorebird 2020 Count (10 February) in partnership with Birdlife –Peel which involved facilitating shorebird identification workshops for volunteers with Ornithological Technical Services providing the key trainer (18 & 19 January), and coordination of the February 10th count program involving more than 60 volunteers split into 20 teams across the Ramsar Site.
- Negotiating with Mandurah Performing Arts Centre to produce a soundtrack to the “Wetlands from Above” feature film, show-casing the natural assets of the Ramsar Site.
- Coordinating an 8-minute preview of “Wetlands from Above” film to be showcased at Performance of the Planet in Perth (27th March), Perth Symphony Orchestra will provide a live musical performance.
- Organised the *Stints are Rad* incursion to John Tonkin College (5 February) with Milly Formby introducing students to the importance of our Ramsar Site to migratory shorebirds, and teaching shorebird identification skills.
- Coordinated the Clean-up Peel Waterways Workshops in Pinjarra and Mandurah (22 February) as preludes to the Cleanup Peel Waterways event throughout March.
- Supported Birdlife’s Great Cocky Count Workshop (6 March), attended by 12 people.
- Delivered 44 Communication materials including 1 Media Release, 4 Newspaper Adverts, 5 Flyers, 1 Newsletter Article + 33 Social Media Posts.
- On-going planning and coordinating a total of 12 community engagement and education events to be delivered by June 2019, including the Clean-up Peel Waterways Workshops in Pinjarra and Mandurah on 22 February as preludes to the Cleanup event itself throughout March.
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On-Ground (Component iv)

- Recruited and appointed Mike Griffiths as the Wetlands Restoration Officer to deliver this component (commenced 11 March).
- In the interim, Rick has identified some target areas for weed control, feral animal control and revegetation across the five years of the project; summarised the tasks to be completed by June 2019 as project briefs and prioritized these for Mike to implement.
- Weed control in Kooljerrenup Nature Reserve commenced Feb 2019.
- Preparation of Lake Mealup Bushland Action Plan commenced March 2019

2. East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership

- PHCC were invited to attend the East Asia Australasian Flyway Partnership’s (EAAFP) CEPA Workshop held in Manila October 2nd to 4th, 2018. Representatives from ten countries along the flyway attended. This included two sites in Russia, two North Korean delegates, Alaska, Myanmar, Singapore, Japan, the Philippines and New Zealand.
- The Peel-Yalgorup is not a nominated Flyway site. However, PHCC was invited due to having published Australia’s only, and one of very few world-wide, stand-alone site-specific CEPA Plans.
- Kim Wilson and Sharon Meredith (funded by PHCC to attend and capture the event through social media) represented PHCC.
- We were also invited to present at *A Journey with Migratory Birds* organized by National Geographic for 120 High School and University students from Manila held on October 5th. Sharon Meredith presented *Destination Down-under*, introducing the Ramsar Site as the southernmost destination on the flyway.
- The workshop provided strong Flyway-wide networking and learning opportunities with resources and ideas shared and ideas for Flyway-wide projects explored.

- It provided Sharon the opportunity to promote Milly Formby’s Wing Threads project internationally and especially to the EAAF Secretariat and National Geographic. Milly is currently in conversation with the EAAFP for funding opportunities.
- PHCC were encouraged by the EAAF Secretariat’s Chief, Dr Lew Young to discuss the potential with DBCA and DoEE for the listing of the Peel-Yalgorup as a Flyway Site. Preliminary discussions were held with DBCA and Dr Mark Carey (DoEE) in November and will be pursued when capacity allows.
- Following our participation at the CEPA Workshop, PHCC were invited by Dr Young, to:
 - i. provide a representative for the EAAF Partnership’s CEPA Working Group and;
 - ii. attend the Meeting of Parties (MOP) in China in December.

It was decided PHCC did not have the capacity to attend the MOP, which would be as an observer as the PYS is not a Flyway Site, so close to the October workshop and declined the invitation. The invitation to join the CEPA Working Group was accepted and Kim Wilson is the nominated representative.

3. Alcoa Foundation Connecting Corridors and Communities: Restoring the Serpentine River

- PHCC continued delivery of the project *Connecting Corridors and Communities: Restoring the Serpentine River*, funded by the Alcoa Foundation. Through this project we aim to create corridors for biodiversity along the Serpentine River through on-ground works including fencing, feral animal control, revegetation and bank stabilization. Development of a River Action Plan for areas where none exist; performing ecological surveys of river health and community engagement and education with landholders and local Noongar Aboriginals are also key components. Major achievements include:
 - Engagement with landholders and Traditional Owners through a forum held 13 Oct 2018
 - Administering a devolved grants round to perform onground works on private landholdings (~\$66K cash > \$50K in-kind)
 - Revegetation - planting of >10,000 seedlings (66 ha)
 - River Health assessments performed at 3 sites in 2017 / 2018 including Lowlands Reserve as a reference site. Further assessments are scheduled for autumn and summer of 2019.
 - Training in aquatic macroinvertebrate identification and vegetation identification
 - Aerial (helicopter) survey of the Serpentine River to inform a River action Plan and engaging a contractor to perform ground-truthing and produce the plan.
 - Supporting Landcare SJ to prepare a strategy for removal of water hyacinth
- The Nature Conservancy (Revitalising the Peel-Harvey through nature-based solutions) and Greening Australia (The Three Rivers Project: ecological restoration with the local Peel Harvey Community) were also successful in their funding applications. A joint launch of the projects as the Three Rivers, One Estuary Initiative was held in Mandurah on 23 March 2018, and all organisations continue to work closely together.

4. Peel-Harvey Estuary Grants (Program to improve the ecological health of Peel-Harvey waterways to enhance fish habitat).

- In December 2017, Peel Development Commission, Recfishwest, WA Fishing Industry Council and Mandurah Licensed Fishermen’s Association endorsed five projects shown in Table 1 below) for further consideration for funding through a 2017 Election Commitment to improve the Health of the Peel-Harvey Estuary. PHCC entered into a Financial Assistance Agreement with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in May 2018 to implement these projects.

Table 1: Key enabling project and component projects to improve the ecological health of Peel-Harvey waterways to enhance fish habitat funded through the State Estuary Grants.

No.	Project name	Project lead or partner	Timeframe
Key Enabler	Restoring our Rivers	PHCC	3 years
1	Fish Friendly farms on the three rivers	Recfishwest	3 years
2	Stock enhancement of bream in the Murray River	Murdoch University	2 years
3	Harvey River Restoration – Implementation of Demonstration Reach Project	Harvey River Restoration Taskforce	3 years
4	Measuring Effectiveness of Restoration 1: River Health Assessments in the Murray, Serpentine and Harvey Rivers	PHCC	3 years

- Progress to date:
 - Harvey River Restoration Taskforce contracted to implement Harvey River Demonstration Reach project (\$150,000) and River Health Assessments (\$20,000).
 - River Health Assessment field work (aquatic biota theme) co-funded by Alcoa Foundation (\$25,000) via Greening Australia completed by Murdoch University (Nov 2018)
 - Urbaqua subcontracted to perform a survey of societal values of the Harvey River
 - Contracted Murdoch University to undertake Stock Enhancement of black bream in the Murray River project including set up of an aquaculture facility at John Tonkin College.
 - River Health assessments undertaken in the Murray River at one site
 - Delivery of Fish-friendly farms component still to be negotiated with Recfishwest, OzFish Unlimited and HRRT.
- 5. Shorebird ID Training and 2020 Count
 - PHCC once again facilitated the annual Shorebird 2020 training (funded by the Australian Government’s NLP) – see Wetlands and People component above
 - In another superb citizen science effort, the Count was conducted by 17 teams of volunteers on the weekend of 9/10 February. Preliminary results show:
 - Shorebirds across all sites: 57,979 (■ LAC = 20,000), largest number reported since 2013
 - Hooded Plovers – breeding: 40 (■ LAC = 60, 3 out of 5 years, < 60 in 2014 & 2015; > 60 in 2017)
 - Red-necked Stints 3112 (■ LAC = 3200 1% World Population Estimate, 4460 in 2018)
 - Sharp-tailed Sand pipers 5136 (■ LAC = 1600 1% WPE, < 1600 since 2012 except in 2014)
- 6. Saving Lake McLarty (Phase 1): Addressing acidification, hydrology and habitats
 - PHCC (Andrew Del Marco) with support from DBCA and the Friends of Lake McLarty developed a successful application to the State NRM Program Community Stewardship Grants “Saving Lake McLarty Phase 1: Addressing acidification, hydrology and habitats”. The proposal includes funding for on-ground works and project management costs to understand the decline in water levels and mitigate risks of formation and oxidation of acid sulfate materials and increasing terrestrialisation of the lake (approx. \$352K over three years 2019-2021). The proposed works are in accordance with the Lake McLarty Action Plan, developed by PHCC in collaboration with the Friends of Lake McLarty, DBCA and the Lake McLarty TAG.
 - Contract yet to be finalised with the State NRM Program: the first step revise the work plan to fit the amended budget (requested \$351,859, awarded \$350,859) has been completed

7. Point Grey Marina Proposal

- PHCC wrote to the Minister for Environment; Disability Services (10 Sep 2018) in regard to the Report and Recommendations of the Environmental Protection Authority to the Minister for Environment Point Grey Marina Proposal – Inquiry under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 to amend Ministerial Statement 906 (i.e. EPA R&R No: 1621)
- At their invitation, we had already provided a submission to the EPA in September 2017 detailing evidence showing a decline in the health of the estuary since the initial assessment of the impact of the development on the health of the estuary in 2011 and information that emerged since and was therefore not considered in the initial assessment. In our letter of September 2018 we rebutted several of the arguments presented in EPA R&R No: 1621 and reiterated our concern that the precautionary principle seemed to have been ignored. We asked the Minister to:
 - i. Not grant the extension to the Time Limit for Substantial Commencement to the proponent of the Point Grey development.
Failing (i) above:
 - ii. That the Time Limit for Substantial Commencement is extended to no later than 28 July 2019 to align with the Commonwealth approval timeline.
 - iii. That all dredge and spoil disposal management plans, including the Capital Dredging and Spoil Disposal Management Plan and the Maintenance Dredging and Spoil Management Plan be made available for public comment as a condition of the extension of the Time Limit for Substantial Commencement.
- The Minister declined both requests and granted the extension to the Time Limit for substantial Commencement to 2022.
- Since then, the proponents have applied to Shire of Murray to commence the development by clearing and excavating the land identified for the marina. This application for development approval is currently open to public submissions.

8. Ramsar 101 Master Classes

- PHCC continued this initiative by delivering a series of presentations giving an overview of the ecological character of the Peel-Yalgorup System Ramsar Site (Ramsar 101), the threats and threatening processes to these values and the research, science and on- ground works currently underway to address these threats. Presentations were made to the following audiences:
 - Dolphin Watch information and training session on 21 March, attended by approximately 150 -200 volunteers who registered to participate in the dolphin watch program in the Peel-Harvey estuary.
 - Mandurah Rotary Club as an after dinner speech to approx. 20 members on 30 April
 - Mature Aged Learning Association (Peel) as a 2 hour lecture to approx. 20 members of the on 14 May
 - Mandurah Rotary Club as an after dinner speech to approx. 20 members on 25 June
 - University of the 3rd Age as a 1 hour lecture to approx. 20 members on 24 July at the Mandurah Seniors and Community Centre
 - Morning Glory series (hosted by The Makers) as a breakfast speech to approx. 15 community members on 6 August
 - City of Mandurah Works and Services Directorate as a keynote address to approximately 180 employees at their professional development and wellness day on 24 October.

- Mature Aged Learning Association (Peel) as a 2-hour lecture at their summer school on 9 January attended by approximately 60 people (650 overall for all sessions).

9. Other highlights:

- Actively engaged with the Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Region (SAPPR) review process through a series of meetings with the review team reiterating PHCCs view on the importance of considering the environment in strategic planning decisions. This included a fly-over of the Ramsar Site in light aircraft and tour by bus to some demonstration sites on the Swan Coastal Plain catchment.
- Marine Stewardship Council Certification of Peel-Harvey Estuarine Fishery – Audit process
 - Provided written comments to the Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) on 16 May for the second annual audit of the MSC certification, advising the CAB of the variation in the number and severity of fish kills in 2017 and 2018; the proposed dredging operations in 2018, and how these might impact the catch and catch rate of Blue Swimmer Crabs and finfish. Followed up by attending a stakeholder meeting with representatives of the CAB (Sabine Daume and Sandy Morison) on 24 May.
- Constructed a Draft Ramsar 482Report Card based on condition measurements against Limits of acceptable Change
- PHCC provided comment on the Forest Management Plan during which we reviewed the status of all LACs
- Continuing involvement and engagement in school education programs through incursions and excursions
- Collaboration with Peel Bright Minds (a regional hub of Inspiring Australia at SciTech) promoting Ramsar values in the context of inspiring a curious community.
- Continuing involvement in and support for the ARC Linkage Project *Balancing estuarine and societal health in a changing environment* led by Murdoch University and UWA.
 - Hosted a workshop *Understanding Local Competitiveness: Identifying Key and Strategic Industries, Peel-Harvey 2006-2016* to better understand the socio-economics of the region to eventually inform future land use planning scenarios.
- Fisheries Management Paper No. 288 – proposed changes to management arrangements for the blue swimmer crab resource in the South West. PHCC made a submission to DPIRD (Fisheries), supporting an extended closure for at least one month to include November, especially to recreational fishing, to provide additional respite for migratory shorebirds from disturbance as they re-provisioned. PHCC is supportive of management actions that protect crab and fish stocks as these are important features of the ecological character of the Ramsar site. To this end the submission also recommended that:
 - the sustainability principles upon which the Marine Stewardship Council Certification are based, including the Harvest Strategy for blue swimmer crabs are used to guide management of the fishery and are consistent with the proposed changes to management arrangements
 - regulations for commercial fishers did not necessarily need to be identical to those for recreational fishers.
 - A monitoring program be re-implemented to monitor the effects of an extended closure.
 - Developing fisheries operating in Areas 1 (Comet Bay) and 2 (Mandurah to Bunbury) outside of the Peel-Harvey Estuary should be subject to similar management arrangements to protect breeding stock levels of blue swimmer crabs.
- SHARE in the Shed - Migratory Shorebirds theme
 - PHCC facilitated the event “Winged Travellers” on 25 September, attended by approximately 35 community members. The event included the following presentations:

- Vicki Stokes (WA Program Manager, Birdlife Australia) who spoke about a project she is leading in partnership with PHCC to investigate migratory shorebird disturbance (see below for more detail)
 - Sharon Meredith (Wetland and People Officer, PHCC) who presented on her upcoming attendance at the East Australasian Asian Flyway Partnership Communications, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Working Group Workshop.
 - Milly Formby (Winged Threads) who spoke about her planned flight around Australia in her microlight aeroplane to promote awareness of migratory shorebirds.
 - Milly also brought her microlight aeroplane with her which she assembled in the courtyard outside the shed, which created a lot of interest and was a big drawcard for the evening.
- Disturbance of Migratory Birds (with Birdlife Australia)
 - In 2017 Birdlife Australia was successful in obtaining a grant from the State NRM Office through the Community Action Grants to fund a project investigating the disturbance of shore birds by various activities through a series of surveys throughout the summer of 2018/19. This project complements studies undertaken by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries) investigating the disturbance caused by recreational crabbing.
 - PHCC committed to assisting with recruitment of volunteers and hosting bird identification workshops for these volunteers to enable these surveys. One such workshop was held on 6 September and was attended by approximately 20 members of the community. In addition to those recruited at similar events held earlier in 2018, we have sufficient volunteers to support the surveys.
 - Kim Wilson gave the keynote presentation to the RAIWA’s (Revegetation Industry Association of WA) “Revegetating the Regions” Conference held in Peel on September 6th and 7th. Kim presented the techniques applied and outcomes of the Yalgorup National Park and Lake Clifton Buffer restoration projects conducted by PHCC, LCHLG and partners and guided and monitored by Dr Katinka Ruthrof 2012 to 2017. Dr Ruthrof provided the majority of monitoring results and related slides.

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We acknowledge the Noongar people as Traditional Custodians of this land and pay our respects to all Elders past and present