

Connecting Corridors and Communities



PHCC | Working Together
Peel-Harvey Catchment Council

Restoring the Serpentine River

Edition 3
April 2019

Welcome to the third 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.

Local Projects Underway

In our aim to improve the health, biodiversity and ecosystem function of the Serpentine River, we have been working collaboratively with private landholders through PHCC's Community Environment Grant Program.

Five projects are now well underway within the Serpentine River sub-catchment on private landholdings to deliver a range of on-ground activities, including fencing, revegetation, bank stabilisation, feral animal control and weed control. Along the lower Serpentine River reaches, one of our

landholders has been busy installing a new fence line to help protect and conserve existing areas of vegetation along the river and surrounding bushland. This fencing will also provide protection for 1000 seedlings we will plant this year from rabbits and western grey kangaroos as it is no secret that these animals love to eat most native plant species. Once these plants establish, they will provide habitat for local fauna species such as quendas as well as having the ability to stifle weed species within the site.

Landholders along the upper reaches have been undertaking extensive weed control targeting the highly invasive species cotton bush and arum lily. This will help reduce the impact and spread of these species and provide a more natural riparian and bushland environment. Repair and maintenance of an in-stream riffle is also underway with the aim to improve water quality through reducing erosion, stabilising the bank and providing habitat for native fish and macroinvertebrate species.



Preparation for National Tree Day 2019

The River Care team and volunteers from Alcoa and Trillion Trees (Men of the Trees), came together in March to undertake site maintenance in preparation for this year's National Tree Day. This was conducted at the Serpentine River foreshore reserve in Fraser's Landing, Coodanup. Activities included tidying up tree guards and stakes and removing dead plants from the previous year's planting.

The survival rate was poor in parts due to the sandy soils which prove difficult for seedlings to maintain water and nutrients. The next step will be to infill with new seedlings, and spread mulch throughout the site to shelter and protect the plant roots to increase the survival rate.

You can help make a difference by participating in this year's National Tree Day at Fraser's Landing on Sunday the 28th of July. Planting kicks off at 10am and there will be plenty of fun for the family through a variety of stalls.



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Water Hyacinth - Choking our Waterways

Native to South America, floating water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) is a declared pest in Western Australia. It may look innocent, but it has become one of the most invasive weeds within our Peel-Harvey waterways.

This species is considered to be a food source in some overseas cultures as well as being used throughout ornamental ponds due to its floral presentation. The release of this plant into lakes and creeks within the upper reaches of our Serpentine River has enabled this species to flourish but in doing so, choke our river in places and rapidly expand as it moves downstream.

As a floating plant species, water hyacinth is very easy to spot due to its bright green wavy shaped leaves that stand upright. The flowers are very attractive and predominately lilac in colour with a small yellow mark within the upper petal. A single fruit can contain up to 300 seeds which in ideal conditions, can remain viable for up to 20 years. The growth rate is therefore incredibly fast, and it quickly forms dense mats that spread out across the water surface, eventually choking that section of the river.

Collaborative efforts are ramping up to eradicate this weed from the Serpentine River with a number of key stakeholders being involved. At present, Department of Communities have installed large booms

(pictured) at strategic points in the Serpentine River, with more proposed for the future. The objective is to hold back the water hyacinth to keep it from spreading. Once contained, the hyacinth is either chemically sprayed or manually removed from the river depending on the surrounding environment.

At times, people may be unaware that releasing hyacinth is putting the health of our waterways at risk. It is very important if you see water hyacinth to report it immediately to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's Pest and Disease Information Service on (08) 9368 3080 or by using the MyWeedWatcher App on your smart phone or tablet.



Serpentine River, Keralup

River Action Plans for the Serpentine

Through the *Connecting Corridors and Communities: Restoring the Serpentine River* project, development of a River Action Plan (RAP) is well underway. We are assessing the condition of the river bank and foreshore which will guide actions we undertake at specific sites along the river later in the project.

In addition to the RAP, River Health Assessments will be carried out at five sites. These will provide a snapshot of the current condition of the river, both in-stream through measuring abundance of native fish and freshwater crayfish and the foreshore through vegetation assessments.

Assessments will be conducted after restoration works have taken place to indicate if the health of the river has improved.



Coming Up...

MAY 5 **SJ Food & Farm Fest**

MAY 16 **S.H.A.R.E in the Shed Banksias**
58 Sutton St Mandurah
6210

JULY 28 **National Tree Day Fraser's Landing, Coodanup**



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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