



REGIONAL GOALS

People

Biophysical

Knowledge

Greening the Farm after a Fire

Wildfires can have a devastating impact on farms, farming communities and natural resources. The Waroona-Yarloop Fire of 2016 was no exception and burnt 33,000 ha of farmlands in the Peel-Harvey Catchment, causing many landholders to rethink current farming and vegetation management practices.

The impacts of wildfire include exposure of topsoil, loss of pasture and seed stores, proliferation of weeds and feral animals, and loss of wildlife habitat.

One farmer in the coastal Peel-Harvey catchment, Phil Curnow, responded to the challenge by implementing a new management system across paddocks and on-farm vegetation.

Mr Curnow purchased the property in 2013 and not long after began rejuvenating and reseeding paddocks. In January 2016 the Waroona-Yarloop wildfire swept across the property destroying native vegetation, farm infrastructure and summer pasture. Mr Curnow's story was familiar, with an estimated 414 farms throughout Waroona,

Yarloop, Harvey and surrounding districts heavily impacted by the fire.

In the months following the fire Mr Curnow utilised the support of the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) and funding partners to participate in workshops and field days. His approach was to not only improve production levels of grazing areas, but to protect, restore and expand areas of native vegetation that were located on the farm. He used a combination of sustainable agriculture, regenerative farming, and natural resource management techniques to restore and "green" his farm, and make the property more resilient to future fires and natural disasters.

Since 2016, shelterbelts of local native species have been installed, remnant vegetation protected and restored, and riparian corridors have been rehabilitated. In total, sixteen (16) hectares of vegetation has been established and protected on the farm, with careful consideration of emergency access and ongoing management of weeds and fuel loads.

FUNDING PROGRAM

Australian Government's National Landcare Program
WA Government's State NRM Program

PHCC PROGRAM

Supporting Sustainable Agriculture in the Peel-Harvey

PHCC PROJECT

Waroona Fire Recovery & NRM

FUNDING

National Landcare Program
State NRM Program
Shire of Waroona
Harvey River Restoration Taskforce

REGIONAL COVERAGE



Coastal Plain

STAKEHOLDERS

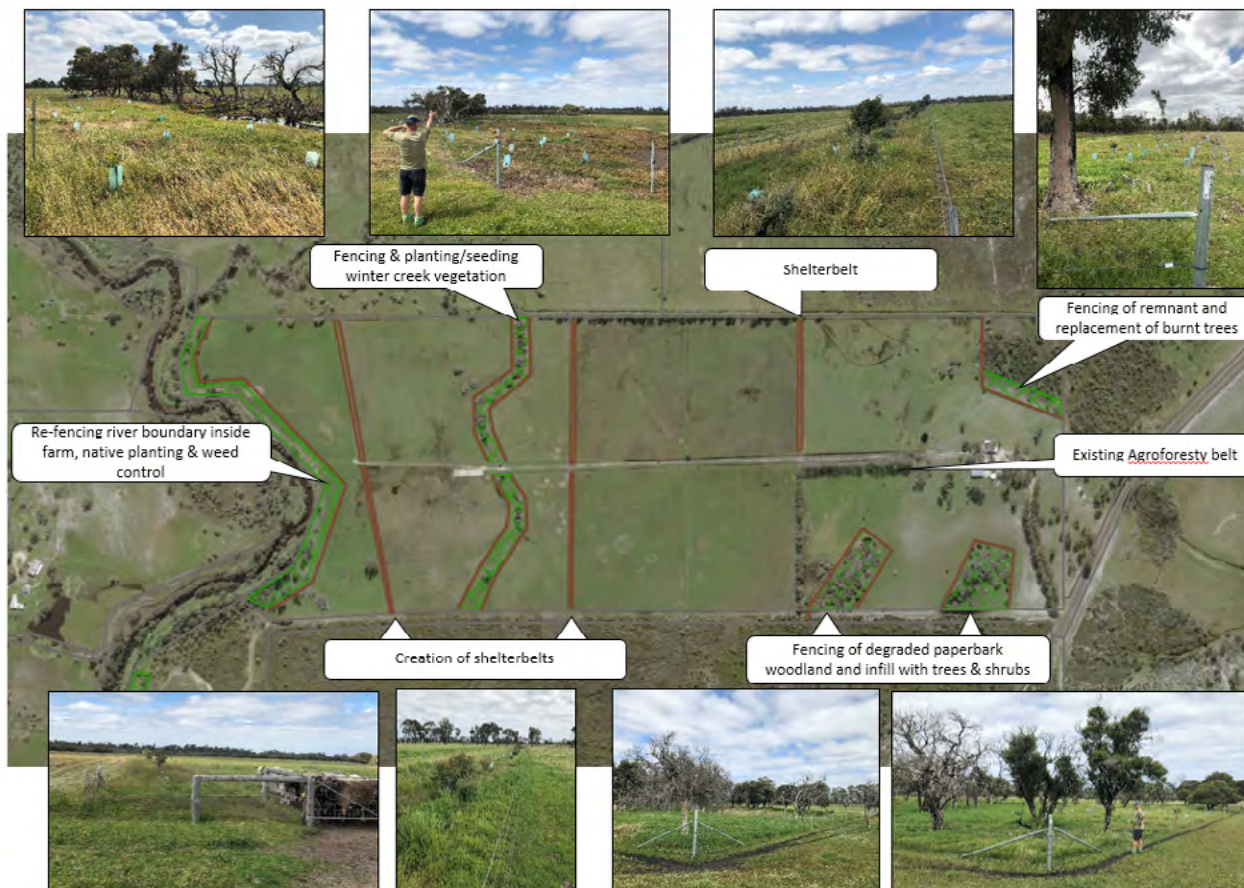
Shire of Waroona; Harvey River Restoration Taskforce

BENEFICIARIES

Fire-affected Farming Community

PROJECT MANAGER

Megan LeRoy



Aerial view of property showing exclusion fencing (brown) and rehabilitation areas (green cross-hatch), with photo inserts showing on-ground work.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

On-farm vegetation management includes:

- Re-alignment of river corridor fencing within the property and rehabilitation of river foreshores to improve riverbank stability and wildlife habitat; Adequate emergency access points have been provided to these areas, and crash-grazing is used to manage weed and fuel loads
- Creation of five (5) native vegetation shelterbelts between paddocks, to reduce the impact of prevailing easterly winds
- Fencing off a winter creek, and rehabilitation with both tubestock seedlings and direct seeding. This 1.5 ha revegetated area provides a wildlife corridor between the local nature reserve, Coronation Reserve, and other remnant vegetation to the north of the farm
- Fencing off two degraded paperbark woodland remnants, and infill planting with native shrubs and trees
- Fencing off 1.8 hectares of eucalypt woodland in north-east corner of the property, where the fire killed many mature jarrahs; replanting of this area with mixed species native vegetation
- Selective herbicide control of grassy weeds in revegetation areas until native shrubs/trees are established enough to crash graze
- Crash grazing fenced remnant vegetation areas

prior to revegetation, and as required to reduce fuel loads once seedlings are can withstand grazing pressure

Pasture, paddock and infrastructure improvements include:

- Removal of shallow winter only watering points and replacement with reticulated water troughs in each paddock, located away from high fire risk areas
- Rotational cell and strip grazing practices across all paddocks
- Whole Farm Nutrient Mapping soil testing to customise fertiliser blends; this resulted in a reduction in fertiliser rate and increased stock carrying capacity
- Replacement of all fire equipment fittings to metal
- Design and construction of new farm buildings to provide greater protection against wildfire
- Garden design, including use of fire retardant plants, utilized around the homestead

Years on from the devastating fire event, Mr Curnow has a highly productive hay and cattle property, with parts of the property under managed native vegetation. Areas of on-farm vegetation have protected river and creek banks, provide shelterbelts against prevailing summer easterly winds, and enable wildlife to use and move across the farm.