

PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

9700 Estuary Grants
Agenda item 7. for meeting discussion

ESTUARY GRANTS DELIVERY UPDATE



PHCC received funding from the State Governments Royalties for Regions program to undertake four Projects. Which include instream restoration, riparian works such as fencing, weed control, bank stabilisation, that benefit native fish and fish habitat in priority areas informed from the River Action Plan. At least two sites would be chosen to be developed as demonstration sites, highlighting these benefits.

Projects:

1) **Fish Friendly Farms:**

- 9734_1_Restoring habitat for native wildlife in the Murray River (\$90K)
- PHCC has existing relationship with landholders on the Middle Murray River through the implementation of the Middle Murray River Action Plan done in 2015.
 - This relationship is being extended and sites identified where on-ground actions (e.g. riparian restoration, fencing, weed control, bank stabilisation) could occur. The outcome must benefit native fish and riparian and instream habitat.
 - A recent site visit was undertaken with PHBG and the DPIRD at Murray River Farms, a 3500 hectares of agricultural and reserve land including parts of the Murray River. Murray River Farms has been identified as a potential site to undertake on-ground and instream works including the conduction of river health assessments as this site could be utilised as a 'reference site' due to its pristine condition.
 - This is a site where River Health Assessments could be undertaken, and also a study site for the Mussels in Dams project (see below).
 - PHCC first engaged Murray River Farms back in 2015 through the Rivers Ramsar (R2R) project. Although the land manager Darryl Robinson was keen to take part, the Agreement paperwork did not proceed.
 - This project presents the opportunity to implement in-stream works, such as re-snagging in reaches, which goes towards the original vision of the overarching Project Application.
 - Black Bream are also known to inhabit the waters above the Pinjarra weir so improving fish habitat would also benefit this important recreational species. This project would link to the re-stocking of black bream in the Murray River component project.

9734_2_Mussels in Dams (\$7K)

The PHCC will assist Alan Lymbery from Murdoch University in their research project 'Using freshwater mussels to improve water quality in farm dams: a win-win for conservation and agriculture' with the aim to conserve and provide assurances against possible extinction of the *W.carteri* freshwater mussel by:

- a) Finding locations and connecting landholders with the project team
- b) Assisting to pay for a casual Research Assistant to help for approx. 150hrs to assist with the dam surveys.

The project aims to look at how freshwater mussels can improve water quality and provide ecosystem services through a study that:

- a) The necessary parameters (physio-chem, biological) that would support large self-sustainable populations of freshwater mussels in farm dams.
- b) The filtration rates of the freshwater mussel, how fast they can filter the dams water.

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Restoring the Serpentine River



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- c) What densities of freshwater mussels are required to significantly improve water quality.

PHCC (Colleen) will put together a map of the dams identified as potential sites for the study (\$2,300). There is the possibility the PHCC could provide assistance on the ground.

9734_3_Project Scope_Resnagging Rivers Feasibility (\$3K)

- o OzFish are keen to support community involvement in habitat restoration in-stream. The focus for OzFish is to resnag or introduce logs, and artificial habitat back to the waterways.
- o Over the past 6 months potential projects have been scoped, including identifying areas for installing artificial habitat modules. Two places that were identified are situated within the Shire of Murray Locality and the shire are very supportive and keen for these types of activities to be undertaken in their space. However, there are issues around permissions/approvals and working with a wide range of key stakeholders and managers.
- o As a result Andrew Matthews (OzFish Unlimited), has suggested he pull together a feasibility study, looking at the issues, costings, tenure and recommendations, as well as streamlining this type of work. PHCC has asked OzFish Unlimited to quote and is waiting for a response.

2) Stock Enhancement of Black Bream in the Murray River:

The baby bream arrived at John Tonkin College on the 9th November, and students placed them into their nursery tanks. The students will grow the bream, feeding them from their phytoplankton aquaculture system. Once they reach a good size the bream will be placed in the Murray River at a pre-determined site. The latest reports are saying that the bream are growing faster than first anticipated and should be released by 18th December.

The Murdoch team have asked for extra funds to ensure success for the project, including:

- o \$40K extension to 'Bream Project' Murdoch would like to top up the funding to continue and build the project.
- o \$10K Agreement with John Tonkin College for an aquaculture technician to carry out work on the aquaculture system set up by Murdoch University staff and research students.

3) Harvey River Demonstration Reach:

The Concept Plan prepared by Urbaqua for HRRT, titled "Harvey River Restoration Conceptual Design – Harvey Dam to Lake Clifton Road" is now complete. The Plan is providing an evaluation of the physical status of a section of the Harvey River and Harvey Main Drain and contains designs for future restoration activities.

- o See Workplan attached for details of how the Estuary Grants are supporting the State NRM grant.
- o See Project Report for latest updates on project works.

4) River Health Assessments:

The River Health Assessments have been completed and results published in a 25 page document attached.
