

WATERWAYS (RIVERCARE & RAMSAR)
STEERING COMMITTEE (Out of Session)



Meeting via email on 1 July 2020

Called by Coordinator, Healthy Rivers and direct response to Rivercare Officer.

Committee – Board Members	Committee - Staff
Bob Pond (Chair)	Steve Fisher – Program Manager, Science & Waterways
Mark Cugley	Jo Garvey – Coordinator, Healthy Rivers
Marilyn Gray	Rick James – Coordinator, Wetlands Science & Management
Rob Summers	Mike Griffiths – Wetlands Restoration Officer
Howard Mitchell	Jesse Rowley – Rivercare Officer

Agenda:

ITEM 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Explanation (below)b. Fish Friendly Farms Scope of Works (attached to email)c. Fish Friendly Farms budget (attached to email)
ITEM 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Endorse and/or provide reasons why not to endorse supporting The Nature Conservancy’s ‘Shellfish Gardening Program’ (via email)

Attachments:

1. Fish Friendly Farms project description of works
2. Fish Friendly Farms budget

Explanation:

At our last steering committee meeting, the team provided you with an update on each of the Estuary Grants projects including how the Fish Friendly Farms Initiative was progressing. To refresh your memory, Fish Friendly Farms aims to work with community, private landholders, local noongar groups and other organisations to enhance and/or re-create habitat for native fish species such as black bream. This concept was developed by OzFish Unlimited to take advantage of the strong connection many farmers have to their waterway and develop this connection further by educating farmers about the proactive management of aquatic ecosystems.

At the time of our last meeting, site visits had commenced along the middle Murray River to see if there were areas for in-stream re-snagging or bank restoration to potentially take place in the aim to enhance habitat for fish. It was evident that there were large abundances of woody debris in various sizes, so much so, that in some sections of the river, it was choking up the waterway. Furthermore, it was noted that invasive plant species such as cottonbush is a major issue. However, drawing the focus back to the Fish Friendly Farms Initiative being to enhance habitat for fish, other options were explored. (Please note that funding has been requested to undertake restoration works specifically along the middle Murray River through the next phase of the Alcoa Foundation project).

This brings us to why we would like hold this Out of Session Steering Committee consultation.

The Nature Conservancy are beginning to roll out their 'Shellfish Gardening Program' which aims to engage private landholders in the estuarine components of Murray and Serpentine Rivers, as well as the Estuary, to grow shellfish reefs within artificial baskets. Engaging community and schools to raise awareness on the importance of shellfish reefs in marine and freshwater ecosystems also forms part of this program. Using artificial baskets to promote shellfish growth also increases food sources and habitat for native fish species that inhabit the estuarine components of the Murray and Serpentine Rivers, such as Black Bream. Therefore, as this program aligns with the Fish Friendly Farms Initiative, we are proposing to support The Nature Conservancy in running this program by providing a total of \$30,000 to enable the purchasing of equipment such as baskets and other monitoring type instruments to lend to schools and landholders.

In summary, we thank you for your time and invite you to endorse supporting The Nature Conservancy in providing \$30,000 to go towards progressing their 'Shellfish Gardening Program' forward, or offer reasons as to why this should not be endorsed.

Please request, via email, if you require additional information.