

## MINUTES: Peel-Yalgorup System Ramsar Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

Annual Ramsar TAG Meeting (#19)  
9.30 am to 1.30 pm on Monday 22 March 2021  
Held at PHCC Shed, 58 Sutton Street, Mandurah



### 1 Acknowledgement of Country

Steve Fisher acknowledged the Bindjareb Noongar People as the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we met, and of our Ramsar 482 wetlands, and paid our respects to their elders past and present.

### 2 Introduction of New Chairman for Ramsar TAG

Steve introduced Claire Reid, PHCC Board Member –Community who PHCC has appointed as the new Ramsar TAG Chair. Claire replaces Amanda Willmott who resigned from PHCC Board in June 2020 to accept a position with the Gascoyne Development Commission in Exmouth.

Claire opened the meeting at 9.33am and asked those in attendance to introduce themselves.

### 3 Attendance

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Claire Reid    | Chair – Ramsar TAG (PHCC Community Member)    |
| Bill Russell   | Mandurah Bird Observers Group                 |
| Meegan Watts   | Commercial Fishers                            |
| Heidi Bucktin  | Department of Biodiversity and Attractions    |
| Anthea Jones   | Department of Biodiversity and Attractions    |
| Mike Coote     | Department of Biodiversity and Attractions    |
| Mark Cugley    | Department of Biodiversity and Attractions    |
| Mike Vernarsky | Department of Biodiversity and Attractions    |
| Bob Pond       | Department of Water                           |
| Jenny Rose     | Lake Clifton Herron Landcare Group            |
| Peter Wilmot   | Lake Mealup Preservation Society              |
| Bill Howard    | Mandurah Bird Observers Group                 |
| Anita Kane     | Visit Mandurah                                |
| Adrian Parker  | Peel Development Commission                   |
| Jane O'Malley  | PHCC  |
| Steve Fisher   | PHCC  |
| Charlie Jones  | PHCC  |
| Rick James     | PHCC  |
| Mike Griffiths | PHCC  |
| Julie MacMile  | PHCC (minute taker)                           |
| Tom Lerner     | Shire of Murray                               |
| Chris Adams    | Alcoa of Australia                            |
| Brett Flugge   | Shire of Murray                               |
| Neil Riches    | Department Agriculture, Water and Environment |
| Bob Paterson   | Friends of Lake McLarty                       |

### 4 Apologies:

Claire noted for the meeting there were a number of apologies as detailed below:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Frances D'Souza | Department of Water and Environmental Regulation |
| Tim Nicholas    | DPIRD  |
| Jeremy Ringma   | BirdLife Australia (WA Branch)                   |
| Paddi Creevy    | Peel Development Commission                      |
| Vicki Stokes    | Birdlife Australia WA Branch                     |



## 10 Member Group Reports

Members gave a brief report highlighting activities undertaken in past 24 months. Reports are summarised below:

### 10.1 Adrian Parker – Peel Development Commission

- PDC facilitating and advocating in the political space (in close collaboration with Local Governments and PHCC) for investment in the system around Water Research Infrastructure Project– (WRIP).
- Adrian advised that there has been some success in securing funding for physical infrastructure.
- DWER & City of Mandurah looking at an Internet of Things (Data Array Project).
- DWER Investigation into groundwater and reuse of treated waste water. Current tenders out, Climate independent role to be played by Gordon Road Treatment Plant. Important source of water for north of Mandurah. Water Corp need an additional off site space for recharge/disposal.
- Administrating \$2M Election Commitment for Yalgorup National Park.

### 10.2 Meegan Watts – Mandurah Licensed Fishermans Association

- Association has shrunk by 4 members as 4 fishing licences removed under the Voluntary Fisheries Adjustment Scheme.
- Involved in the full audit for the MSC – Department of Fisheries undertook Environmental Impact Assessment on the fishing component as part of the audit (Steve Fisher).
- Worked with PHCC and others with respect to submissions against the proposed Point Grey development.
- Extended closure of crabbing season for 5 months and curfew for scooping currently with Minister for decision.

### 10.3 Jenny Rose – Lake Clifton Landcare Group

- Planting last year cancelled but weed control continued.
- The Group will undertake the planting that didn't get done last year.
- Lake Clifton Residents Association working with DBCA on the Lime Kiln.

### 10.4 Bob Pond - DWER

- Fortnightly water quality monitoring across estuary continues.
- Bindjareb Djilba Plan (Estuary Protection Plan) has been released.
- Seagrass mapping happening this week involving a large crew, boats, drones etc.
- Installed first monitoring buoy in the Murray River near Ravenswood to provide 24 hours real time data of salinity, DO etc. 1 probe 0.5 metres from bottom. Uploads data every 5 minutes.

### 10.5 Mike Coote/Anthea Jones - DBCA

- Mapping wetlands across the Swan Coastal Plain. Working with DPLH and DWER for policy settings.
- Updating list of monitoring actions across 12 Ramsar sites.
- Maintaining documents for each Ramsar site. Anthea Jones working on Ramsar information sheets 6 of 12 sites complete and now working on the PYS.
- Mapping accurate Ramsar boundary.
- Mike thanked PHCC for supporting the wetlands conference. Has had great feedback from many.
- Reporting for Forest Management Plan.

### 10.6 Mark Cugley - DBCA

- Supporting PHCC's work on monitoring of water for Yalgorup Lakes.
- Management funding received for Lot 252 (between Mealup and McLarty) which is an important wetland integral to lakes system in that area.
- Lime Kiln site (Stage 2).
- Tender out for replacement of boardwalk at Lake Goegrup. Expect this to be complete by end of June 2021.
- Mark thanked all for their support in managing the site.

## 10.7 Heidi Bucktin

- Significant investment in Lot 68 to improve water quality through a Living Streams Project.
- Managing water levels, ASS and nutrients at Lake Mealup.
- Roberts Bay, Lake Goegrup, Yalgorup Lakes.
- Supporting PHCC in Saving Lake McLarty Project.

## 10.8 Tom Lerner

Shire of Waroona

- Trail around Lake Preston.
- Management Plan for Preston Beach.
- Climate Change impacts (CHRMAP Working Group).

Shire of Murray

- Lots of work on Murray River through work with Greening Australia.
- Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Planning Working Group (CHRMAP) is looking at risks to estuary from sea level rise.
- Installation of edible garden at Cantwell Park in town's centre.
- Amendment to make 'Marina' an 'X' (not permitted) use at the Point Grey Site currently with Minister for Planning for decision.

## 10.9 Pete Wilmot – LMPS

- Monthly water level and quality monitoring has been maintained. This is a joint effort by LMPS and DBCA.
- Salinity and pH have been within the limits of acceptable change (LAC) in the Peel-Yalgorup System. Management Plan (2009). However nitrogen and phosphorus continue to exceed the LAC. Typha continues to be absent from the lake, but no new sedges or rushes have been established. The lake continues to have algal blooms each summer.
- Water levels were below target at the end of spring 2020 despite management of the diversion weir to maximize drain inflows to the lake, as winter 2020 rainfall was poor. Lake level in February 2021 was about 10 cm below the level in February 2020 and 30 cm below February 2019. There will be substantial exposure of the lake bed in autumn with potential generation of acidity. However the lower water levels provide habitat for wading birds in autumn.
- Over 1,000 waterbirds number are regularly on the lake in from spring to autumn. Low water levels in autumn 2019 and 2020 provided habitat that attracted wading birds, including small numbers of transequatorial migrants.
- Floating islands installed in 2018 and 2019 have been popular with waterbirds. Additional islands are proposed.
- A macroinvertebrate survey was conducted by WRM in June 2019, while lake levels were low prior to winter filling. Overall the diversity of aquatic fauna was relatively poor, although some components were quite abundant. Funding was provided by Alcoa.
- A bushland action plan and bushland weed map was prepared by Focused Vision Consulting during 2019. Funding was provided by PHCC and the work supported by Mike Griffiths and Rick James of PHCC. This work provides a basis for management of the bushland to the west of Lake Mealup.
- Feral animal control was carried out at Lake Mealup by Eddy Duras during December 2020 as part of a broad control initiative in nature reserves in the area by DBCA. Eight foxes removed, no cats were observed and minimal rabbits seen. Further work is planned in 2021.
- Challenges and opportunities ahead:
  - Improvement of water quality to limit algal blooms.
  - Creation of sedge/rush habitat to support additional species of vertebrates and invertebrates.

- Water level management – determination of optimal water level regime, quality and quantity of drainage water for augmentation, risk of acid generation with lower water levels.
- Maintaining and expanding monitoring and management of the lake.

#### **10.10 Jane O'Malley - PHCC**

- PHCC has been advocating for election commitments including:
  - 10 year plan to government (\$111 M) - Advocating for large scale projects
  - Science of our Estuary Election Commitment ~\$2M
- \$5 million election commitment from McGowan Government for protection of the Estuary.
- Peel Main Drain under REI – challenging project. As of last week there is half a weir - should be complete in the next few weeks. Weir is in the drain and transfers water into the swales which is treated before being released back into the drain.
- Support for Scheme Amendment to remove Marina as a permitted use at Point Grey.
- ARC Linkage research results presented to chair and board of EPA and senior staff so they are aware how unhealthy the system is.

#### **10.11 Bill Russell**

- Annual Shorebird count undertaken by a large team of volunteers. Most dramatic change has occurred at Lake Pollard with the disappearance of Black Swans.
- Black Swans are common in Leschenault Inlet therefore there is something going on at Lake Pollard to cause the decline.

#### **10.12 Charlie Jones - PHCC**

- Many events to provide community with information on the importance of our Ramsar Site and opportunities for their involvement in wise use of wetlands.
- Wetlands conference was a highlight.
- See PHCC report (Item 11).

#### **10.13 Brett Flugge – Shire of Murray**

- Southern Palusplain Strategy endorsed by WAPC, which will limit development on the estuary side of the highway – less intensified land use.
- Looking at ecological corridors to assist with restoration of system.
- Shire to establish a policy and contribution scheme for environmental restoration (such as revegetation of ecological linkages and drainage lines) in the Strategy area to be triggered when intensification of land use is proposed.

#### **10.14 Chris Adams - Alcoa**

- Alcoa Foundation has supported projects through the Three Rivers, One Estuary initiative.

#### **10.15 Anita Kane**

- Change from MAPTO to Visit Mandurah.
- Currently manage the Mandurah Visitors Centre which is being revamped.
- Developed a new Destination Brand – Relax by Nature.
- Excited by funding to enhance tourism around Yalgorup National Park – Aboriginal Tourism opportunities (75% of international visitors want to have an aboriginal experience).
- Lots of small nature based tourism operators have started up. Supporting these businesses to get through the next 12 months (e.g. Salt & Bush, Ways to Nature).
- Troll sculptures – contracts not signed as yet. Just a concept at this stage.

#### **Action:**

TAG to form a subgroup to review Ramsar Information Sheet for Peel Yalgorup System.

## 11 Wetlands and People - PHCC Ramsar Project (Steve Fisher, PHCC)

Steve Fisher presented an overview of the work PHCC is doing in and around the Ramsar 482 site. Presentation and written report is available on the Ramsar TAG Members Page on the PHCC website.

## 12 Lake Clifton Thrombolites: Health Assessment Work (Mike Vernarsky, DBCA)

Mike Vernarsky presented on his work assessing the health of Thrombolites of Lake Clifton. Presentation is available on the Ramsar TAG Members Page on the PHCC website.

## 13 Yalgorup Lakes Surface Water Quality Program (Rick James, PHCC)

Rick James presented on PHCC's Water Quality Program. Presentation is available on the Ramsar TAG Members Page on the PHCC website.

## 14 Mapping of Ramsar Boundary (Mike Coote, DBCA)

Mike presented an update on mapping of the Ramsar Boundary. Presentation is available on the Ramsar TAG Members Page on the PHCC website.

Discussion ensued around the lengthy process required to include all of the proposed extensions into the Ramsar site. Mike Coote confirmed that significant consultation will occur prior to formally including all of the lots into the extensions.

## 15 Lake McLarty lot 68 "Living Stream" & 2020 revegetation work (Heidi Bucktin, DBCA)

Heidi presented on Lake McLarty Lot 68 "Living Stream" & 2020 revegetation work. Presentation is available on the Ramsar TAG Members Page on the PHCC website.

## 16 Q&A

Questions addressed during presentations.

## 17 Other Business and Wrap

### 17.1 Extended Crab Season Closure

Meegan Watts brought this to the Group's attention during her member update (Item 10.2). This item raised some alarm bells as the group were not aware of this.

#### **Action:**

Steve Fisher to make some enquiries to determine what is happening with the Extended Crab Season Closure, where it is at and the process followed.

### 17.2 Serpentine River Action Plan

Brett Flugge asked if the Shire can partner with PHCC to deliver some works on the next priority site.

#### **Action:**

Steve Fisher to put PHCC's Project Manager for this Project in touch with the Shire of Murray to discuss future works on priority sites.

### 17.3 Lake McLarty

Jenny Rose congratulated Heidi and the volunteers for their work at Lake McLarty.

**17.4 Wrap Up (Steve Fisher)**

- Agreed to consider Change of name of TAG. Survey Monkey to be sent to all attendees and absentees to settle on whether to rename or what we rename to.
- Ramsar Sheet Update – Anthea to form a subgroup to TAG to review the Ramsar information sheet for PYS. This group will also consider extensions to the site and boundaries of existing site.
- Consider forming a Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation subgroup of the TAG.
- Funding Opportunities from Election Commitments, but currently unsure what they are.
- Presentation by Mike Vernarsky and Rick James regarding Lake Clifton Thrombolite Health generated a lot of interest.
- Crab Season Closure extension could have serious repercussions on tourism and commercial fishing.
- DWER have installed a water quality monitoring buoy in the Murray River.

**18 Next Meeting: Thursday, 10 March 2022**

*The meeting closed at 1.28pm and members were invited to share a light lunch.*

*Chairman:* .....

*Date:* .....

Summary of actions from TAG #19 meeting of 22 March 2021:

| Minutes Item No. | Meeting No. & Date | Item for Action                    | Stakeholder Responsible |   |  |
|------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|
| 9                | #19<br>22/3/21     | Proposed Structure of TAG          | PHCC                    | An Email to be sent to all stakeholders seeking suggestions giving two weeks for people to get back to Rick James with suggestions.<br><br>A survey be sent to all stakeholders with all suggestions put forward. | Rick James/Julie MacMile<br><br>Rick James/Julie MacMile |
| 10               | #19<br>22/3/21     | TAG Sub Group                      | DBCA/PHCC               | TAG to form a subgroup to review Ramsar Information Sheet for PYS   | Anthea Jones / Rick James                                |
| 11               | #19<br>22/3/21     | Extended Close for Crabbing Season | PHCC                    | Enquiries to be made to determine what is happening with the Extended Crab Season Closure, where it is at and the process followed.   | Steve Fisher   |
| 12               | #19<br>22/3/21     | Serpentine River Action Plan       | PHCC                    | PHCC Project Manager (Jo Garvey) to contact the Shire of Murray to discuss future works on priority sites.  | Steve Fisher   |
| 18               | #19<br>22/3/21     | Next Meeting – Save the Date       | PHCC                    | Send Save the Date for next meeting to all stakeholders   | Julie MacMile/Rick James                                 |