



Factsheet: 5 Vasse Wonnerup wetlands

Vasse Taskforce

| May 2015 |



The Vasse Wonnerup wetlands are an important place for the community living and working in the Geographe catchment. The wetlands are home to one of the largest concentrations of waterbirds in Western Australia and their importance as a water bird habitat was recognised in 1990 with Ramsar listing as a wetland of international importance. The wetland system is highly modified with diversion of flow from several of the rivers, surge gates at the exits of both estuaries and high nutrient runoff from the catchment. Despite their high ecological values, the wetlands are characterised by poor water quality in the summer months resulting in reduced visual amenity and increased risk of algal blooms, noxious odours and fish deaths.

The Vasse Estuary Technical Working Group, with representatives from state and local government, natural resource management and industry groups will lead the implementation of projects to improve water quality and long-term management of the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands.

Key initiatives include:

- fish kill mitigation and response plan
- reconnecting rivers feasibility study
- management plan for the wetlands
- appointment of permanent asset manager
- seawater trial
- review surge gate operating procedures



Project Spotlight

Fish kill mitigation and response plan



Major fish kills events have been recorded in the Vasse Wonnerup system since 1905. To reduce the frequency and severity of fish kills the Vasse Estuary Technical Working Group has developed and is implementing a fish kill mitigation and response plan. The plan uses continuous monitoring of dissolved oxygen, environmental conditions and weekly phytoplankton data to predict and respond to conditions that increase the risk of a fish kill. The plan will be updated over the life of the strategy with new information and a greater understanding of the system and impact of response actions. Innovative management actions and tools to improve visual amenity and odour at the floodgates and reduce the risk of fish kills will be actioned in this project.

Project Spotlight

Management plan for the wetlands

The Vasse Wonnerup wetlands are managed for multiple purposes including waterbird habitat, flood and storm surge mitigation, visual amenity and the prevention of fish kills by a number of state and local government agencies. Without an overarching management plan there is a real risk that managing the system for one objective may have a detrimental effect on another. This project will develop a water management plan for the wetlands to guide how the wetlands will be managed into the future. Water and flood modeling tools will be used to review the surge gate operating procedures and Wonnerup Inlet bar opening. The project will investigate the feasibility of re-diverting river flow and other actions to improve water quality in the wetlands. Community input into the establishment of management objectives for the wetlands and future management actions will be integral to the development of the plan. Establishing clear management objectives for the wetlands will be an early priority of the project.



More information

More information about the Vasse Taskforce and projects delivered under the Vasse Geographer strategy is available on the GeoCatch website

www.geocatch.asn.au

Be involved

Community members will have opportunities to be involved in events and workshops as work progresses. Information on how you can be involved will be available on the GeoCatch website

www.geocatch.asn.au