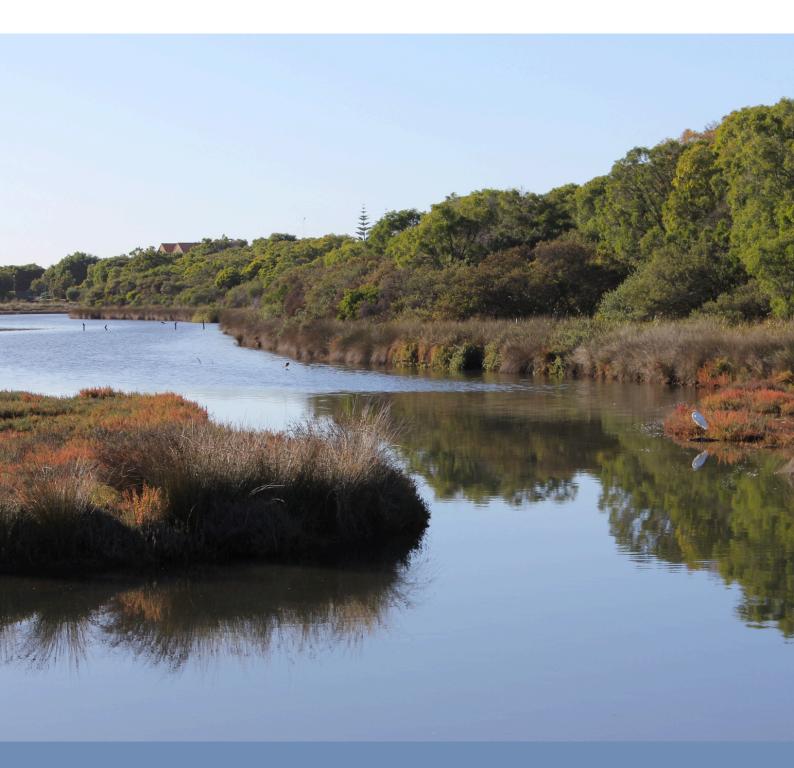
A YEAR IN REVIEW

2023-2024





Geographe Catchment Council: A Year in Review 2023-2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Geographe Catchment Council recognises the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work.

We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the on-going connection Wadandi and Bibbulmun people have with Country.

We respect the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the region and acknowledge that in southwestern Australia, Aboriginal cultural heritage spans deep time back to at least 48,000 years ago.

We acknowledge and value the on-going contribution First Nations people make to the sustainable management of the environment.



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As GeoCatch Chair, I've been eager to bring my social sciences background to the role, particularly in understanding the community's culture and perspectives. By listening to people's concerns and ideas for solutions, we can shape GeoCatch's activities to serve the community and inspire a deeper connection to caring for the Catchment. I believe that looking at things through an anthropological lens can help shift mindsets and foster positive cultural values around environmental stewardship.

The 2023/24 summer was particularly challenging for the catchment, with long dry spells affecting everything from native wildlife and local flora to the farming community. Despite these challenges, GeoCatch's staff have been proactive with key initiatives like possum avoidance training, the 2024 Ringtail Tally, FireWise Gardens, BayOk events, and sustainable agriculture programs like the Geographe Soil Testing Program, Grazing Matcher, Rivercare and Soil Wise.

Over the past 12 months I've also had the privilege of meeting many farmers across the catchment. From Yoongarillup dairy farmers Elaine and Neville Haddon to regenerative farmers Barry and Dale Green in Upper Capel, and Martin and Kathy Staines, growers of water lillies in Carbunup, these people are

CHAIR'S REPORT

VICKY WINTON CHAIR, GEOGRAPHE CATCHMENT COUNCIL

true flagships of GeoCatch's programs and values.

As a Board, we've had a busy year working to improve governance, assess risks and opportunities, and refine our strategies for stakeholder engagement. We set up the new Stakeholder Engagement Working Group which is playing an important role in our communications efforts, particularly with the community and the Vasse Taskforce. We've also maintained a strong focus on financial management, ensuring transparency and accountability in all decisions.

In terms of funding, I'm pleased to report that GeoCatch has secured support for upcoming projects. We received funding from the State NRM Community Stewardship Program to protect Western Ringtail Possums and local wildlife, enabling us to expand our catio rebate program and host community planting days. Additionally, we secured a significant grant from the Federal Climate-Smart Agriculture Program, which will support climate-smart projects for farmers over the next four years.

Looking ahead, GeoCatch is well-positioned to continue its work, thanks to the dedication of our staff, board members, and the community. I'm proud of the progress we've made over the past year and excited for what lies ahead.

ABOUT GEOCATCH



Geographe Catchment Council (GeoCatch) is a dedicated community organisation committed to enhancing the environmental health and sustainability of the Geographe Bay Catchment area in south-west Western Australia. Established in 1997, GeoCatch operates as a key partner in local and regional environmental management, focusing on improving water quality, restoring natural habitats, and promoting sustainable land-use practices.

The Geographe Catchment Council board is a Ministerial Advisory Committee to the Minister for Water. GeoCatch is integrated within State and local government responses to water quality management where it is recognised as the voice of the community.

Our mission is to protect and restore the natural resources of our catchment area through collaborative projects, community engagement, and innovative solutions.

GeoCatch prides itself in fostering strong community partnerships and delivering tangible outcomes that benefit both the environment and local communities. Through education, collaboration and targeted action, we strive to build resilience in our catchment and ensure a healthy and thriving ecosystem for future generations.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS



GeoCatch thrives on a network of collaborations and partnerships that are crucial to achieving its environmental goals. We work closely with local farmers, government agencies, schools, local businesses and community organisations, fostering a cooperative approach to managing the Geographe Bay Catchment.

These partnerships enable us to leverage diverse expertise and resources, ensuring the effectiveness of projects. Our collaboration with regional and state government agencies, including academic institutions and research organisations, integrates science and best practices into our programs. This collaborative approach expands our impact, driving positive environmental change and building a resilient, sustainable future for the Catchment.

BIODIVERSITY

GeoCatch is dedicated to preserving and enhancing biodiversity within the Geographe Bay Catchment through a range of innovative projects.

By undertaking activities such as revegetation, invasive species management, and habitat restoration, we work to improve ecosystem health and resilience, ensuring that these vital areas continue to thrive.

Our biodiversity initiatives also involve close collaboration with local landholders, community groups and stakeholders to amplify the impact of our projects.

Through these partnerships, we aim to expand and maintain restored habitats, enhance water quality, and provide better living conditions for native wildlife. These combined efforts are essential for sustaining the rich biodiversity of the Geographe Bay catchment and ensuring a balanced and vibrant ecosystem for future generations.

"IT'S GREAT TO SEE THE COMMUNITY
TAKING OWNERSHIP AND PRIDE IN
REGENERATING THEIR SURROUNDING
ENVIRONMENT FOR THE CRITICALLY
ENDANGERED WESTERN RINGTAIL
POSSUM." NICOLE LINCOLN





Protecting Nguraren

Western Ringtail Possum

This project aims to raise awareness of the critically endangered Western Ringtail Possum (WRP), reduce threats to improve the species recovery, and enhance habitat and canopy connectivity within the Geographe Bay Catchment.

Project overview

We engage community through planting events, workshops, citizen science projects, school incursions and the responsible pet ownership campaign 'Pets Away, Possums Play' targeting both cat and dog owners to keep their pets contained to protect possums and wildlife. This project relies strongly on collaboration with our target audience and key stakeholders.





State NRM 2023-25, Planet Ark 2023-24 Busselton Water 2023-24, Busselton Toyota 2024, Shire of AMR 2024-25, CoB 2024-25



2023-2025



CoB, Shire of AMR, Shire of Capel, Shire of DB, Western Ringtail Possum Action Group, DBCA, DWER, vets, wildlife carer groups

- 110 Catio rebates provided across the south west (City of Busselton, Augusta Margaret River, Capel and Donnybrook Balingup Shires)
- Held a series of events including:
 - DIY Catio Building Workshop
 - Possum Avoidance Training for Dogs
 - Possum First Aid Training for wildlife carers
- Installed a Catio display at City of Busselton Animal Facility
- Facilitated the citizen science project 'Ringtail Possum Tally'
- Planted 1000 seedlings at Community Planting Days
- Visited schools for tree planting events to raise awareness of WRP
- Distributed Responsible Pet Ownership resources.







Bushland ConnectionsTackling woody weed garden escapees

This project is designed to reduce woody weed infestations in and around Meelup Regional Park and nearby reserves by supporting landholders to control weeds on their properties.

Project overview

By providing incentives for peri-urban landholders to remove weeds and plant native species, Bushland Connections has reduced potential weed 'escapees' reaching nearby bushland, where they out-compete native species.

The project supported peri-urban and small-scale landholders with significant invasive weed infestations that adjoin high conservation value City reserves. Landholders in priority areas were targeted to participate.

Landholders received a 50% cost subsidy on woody weed removal and support in planting native alternatives.



State NRM through CoB

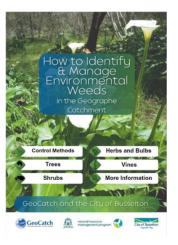


2022-24



CoB, property owners, Meelup Regional Park Management Committee, Naturaliste Tree Services, The Forever Project, Australia Post





- Engagement with over 350 residents adjacent to Meelup Regional Park and reserves
- Media campaign across print and digital platforms
- Produced a 16-page booklet 'How to Identify & Manage Environmental Weeds'
- 'Heavenly Hectares' workshop presented by Chris Ferreira of The Forever Project and City of Busselton
- Online survey for landholders to identify their need for information, resources and training
- Consultation to private landholders regarding the removal of approx 3.18 hectares of woody weeds.



KeepWatch Seagrass Monitoring

The KeepWatch Seagrass Monitoring program was initiated to monitor the health of seagrass meadows in Geographe Bay.

Project overview

KeepWatch Seagrass Monitoring is designed to measure potential impacts from nutrients coming from the Catchment. The program aims to monitor near-shore seagrass meadows annually to detect changes in seagrass health.

Seagrass shoot density is monitored at seven sites across Geographe Bay as an indicator of seagrass health. Observations and measurements help interpret changes over time.



Water Corporation



2022-2026



DBCA, Edith Cowan University

- Seagrass meadows in Geographe Bay remain healthy with seagrass shoot densities high at all sites compared to other similar meadows in Western Australia.
- Shoot densities increased or remained stable with the highest shoot densities recorded at Dunsborough and Buayanyup with lowest at the Port Geographe and Vasse-Wonnerup.
- No management triggers were breached in 2023.
- Nutrient content of seagrasses in Geographe Bay continues to be low with signs of higher exposure at Capel compared to other sites. The higher nitrogen isotope signal at Capel suggests that nitrogen is coming from animal wastes, septic tanks or natural vegetation sources. Visit geocatch.asn.au to view the full report.



OUR URBAN ENVIRONMENT

GeoCatch's urban projects are pivotal in integrating environmental sustainability into the growing urban landscapes of the Geographe Bay Catchment.

These initiatives focus on enhancing urban green spaces, managing nutrients effectively, and promoting water and fire wise practices in rapidly developing areas.

Our efforts contribute to creating healthier, more livable urban environments while addressing key environmental challenges posed by urbanisation.

Through educational programs, workshops, and collaborative projects, GeoCatch works to empower residents and businesses to adopt practices that support urban stewardship, which is essential in creating urban areas that improve quality of life while also safeguarding and preserving the natural environment.

"MANY SOUTH WEST GARDENERS ARE TURNING TO WATER-WISE LOW-NUTRIENT NATIVE GARDENS AS A SOLUTION TO THE DRYING CLIMATE." SABRINA HAHN





Bay OK Program

This project supports sustainable gardening that helps to protect waterways and improve water quality

Project overview

By raising awareness of waterways issues and fostering behaviour change in urban gardeners, Bay OK has reduced fertiliser use, runoff, and leaching of nutrients from urban areas.

This will contribute to improved water quality in local waterways, and increased adoption of sustainable gardening using low nutrient and water wise principles.



HEWA, Busselton Water, State NRM through CoB



Bay OK on-going since 2010, Project funding from 2019-23. Nature verges project 2022-24



DWER, DPIRD

- Promoted 'Garden Guardians of the Bay' campaign through local media
- Held a series of events including:
 - Presentations to community interest groups
 - Bay OK garden workshops
 - 'The science of composting' workshop with Mark Tupman
 - 'Growing native plants' with Sabrina Hahn
 - 11th annual Bay OK Day at Dunsborough Primary School
 - Bay Ok planting days and garden tours
- Design and installation of verge gardens (including plants and signage), Bay Ok presentation and support
- Presence in local media as experts in water-wise and fire-wise garden behaviour change
- Design and installation of two demonstration Bay OK gardens at St Mary's Church and CoB Park of Remembrance rain garden
- Bay OK Gardening displays in local gardening centres.







FireWise **Demonstration Garden**

This project facilitated the design and installation of a FireWise garden to show homeowners how to create gardens that are resilient to bushfire, helping to protect lives and properties.

Project overview

The project designed and installed a FireWise demonstration garden at the Dunsborough Fire Station to demonstrate to homeowners how to prepare for bushfires with FireWise garden design, including interpretive signage.

This project included a free community workshop to finish the final landscaping activities for the garden and explain the principles of FireWise design so that participants can design and install one of their own.

The FireWise garden is also being used to promote fire safety and support Bushfire Ready - a community-led program that encourages local residents to learn about planning and preparing for bushfires.



CoB 'You Choose' Aust. Govt National Emergency Mgnt Agency, GeoCatch



2024



The Forever Project, CoB, Dept of Fire and Emergency Services, Dunsborough Volunteer Fire Brigade

- Installed a 250m2 FireWise Garden
- Developed and installed interpretive signage throughout garden
- Organised workshop presented by Chris Ferreira (The Forever Project)
- Digital and print promotional campaign
- Cultivated new partnerships and working relationships
- Designed FireWise garden resources (digital and printable) and FireWise Gardens website page.





SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Sustainable agriculture is at the heart of GeoCatch's mission to promote environmental stewardship and enhance land management practices in the Geographe Bay Catchment.

Our approach to sustainable agriculture focuses on implementing strategies that improve soil health, optimise nutrient use and reduce environmental impact.

By providing farmers with practical tools and knowledge, we support the adoption of practices that promote nutrient efficiency, minimise runoff, and enhance biodiversity.

Through initiatives like the Geographe Soil Testing Program, Rivercare projects and collaborations with local farmers, we support efforts to protect Geographe Bay and its waterways. These programs not only aim to boost farm productivity but also ensure that agricultural practices contribute positively to the health of local waterways and ecosystems, aligning with our goal of fostering a resilient and sustainable environment for current and future generations.

IT'S ALL ABOUT GIVING FARMERS THE INSIGHTS THEY NEED TO MAKE SMART INFORMED DECISIONS THAT BOOST THEIR PRODUCTIVITY WHILE SAFEGUARDING OUR WATERWAYS." JENELLE SCHULT



Fertiliser Best Practice

This project was designed to support farmers making informed fertiliser decisions to ensure nutrients stay on farm and out of waterways, as well as engage farmers to be part of the Geographe farming network.

Project overview

The Geographe Soil Testing Program supports farmers to undertake soil sampling of their paddocks to determine the soil's nutrient status. Forty-one of the 53 properties chose to DIY, with the remaining farms being soil sampled by a contractor.

Fertcare accredited agronomists then provide nutrient advice to farmers, based on their soil and plant tissue test results.

Additional capacity building activities were held like Accu-Spread Field Day assisting farmers with testing and calibrating their spreaders to ensure optimal efficiency and



HEWA, RGW, Soil Wise



HEWA 2021-24 (with additional funds from Vasse Taskforce, Soil Wise 2022-24



DPIRD, DWER, farmers, agronomists

the Nutrient Management workshop (a core component of the Geographe Soil Testing Program), providing assistance to farmers in interpreting soil test results and advice on soil and plant nutrition.



- Soil and plant tissue testing and whole farm nutrient maps for 53 farmers
- 790 farm paddocks sampled across 7400 hectares
- Farmer workshop presenting soil test results, plus supplementary online and face-to-face workshops on nutrient and lime calculators
- Landholder surveys (undertaken before and after program) monitoring behaviour change of participants
- Fertiliser spreaders tested and calibrated at Accu-Spread Field Day.



Stream Restoration: Fencing and Revegetating

This project was designed to implement riparian management on grazing properties in the Geographe Catchment, with the aim to reduce nutrient load on waterways.

Project overview

Incentives are provided to landholders to fence off streams and waterways, undertake riparian revegetation and to install off-stream watering points. Keeping stock out of waterways is key to preventing nutrients from entering the waterway and ensuring the survival of riparian vegetation. Planting local native species restores the structure of the riparian edge, can filter nutrient runoff and promotes native biodiversity.



HEWA



2021-24



DWER. Geographe landholders

This project has also delivered three workshops over the four years to empower and build capacity in landholders to undertake effective stream restoration.



- 7.54 km of stock-proof fencing for the FY 2023-24 (30.63 km stockproof fencing total since 2021)
- 7.1 ha riparian revegetation for the FY 2023-24 (28.7 ha riparian revegetation since 2021)
- Over 19,000 seedlings planted in 2024
- Thirty-four farmers supported in-stream restoration projects
- Three workshops facilitated by experts in riparian restoration, targeted to Rivercare landholders
- An event delivered and partnered with NCMRR at Canebrake Pool, to give participants first-hand experience to see creatures that are thriving in the pool, including marron, minnows and turtles.



Geographe Farmers protecting Geographe Bay

Established in 2022, Geographe Farmers Protecting Geographe Bay (GFPGB) recognises the importance of farmers working collectively to make a difference – improving water quality, looking after the environment and supporting a thriving and sustainable agriculture industry.



Project overview

Every sustainable agriculture event is an opportunity to promote GFPGB and the active network of farmers working with GeoCatch.

Soil Wise Workshop Series

Soil Wise funding helped deliver workshop themes in regenerative agriculture such as On-Farm Composting, Multi-Species Pastures and Cropping, Soil Microscopy, Optimising Plant Nutrition, and Biochar.



HEWA, NLP, Regen WA, SoilWise



HEWA 2020-24, DAWE (NLP) 2021-24, SoilWise



DWER, DPIRD, agronomists, Geographe farmers





- Five Soil Wise workshops welcoming new farmers into GFPGB
- GFPGB packs developed with merchandise and collateral products
- Annual Farmer Sundowner held, recognising achievements of the year
- Launched the inaugural Rural Women Connect event, highlighting the contribution of women to agriculture and rural community
- Exhibited at the 2023 Regen Ag Conference in Margaret River and sponsored local farmers to attend
- Distributed GFPGB farm gate signs to farmers participating in GeoCatch's sustainable agriculture programs
- Campaigns shared through local media, GeoCatch's social media networks and 'Kicking the Dirt' sustainable agriculture newsletter
- Supported farmers to attend the Grazing Matcher program.

GeoCatch The Environment - In Our Hands



Grazing Best Management Practices: Nutrient Plans

This project was designed to pilot the rollout of nutrient best management practices (BMPs) on grazing land using a BMP benchmarking tool and Nutrient Plan (NP) with farmers.

Project overview

The BMPs were piloted with farmers through the creation of a benchmarking tool and a Nutrient Management Plan (NP).

NPs are developed with farmers involved in GeoCatch projects like Rivercare and Soil Testing. The plan is a one-stop-shop for nutrient management information and provides farmers with recommendations and support to meet best practice for grazing management.

To address gaps in the NPs where best practices weren't fully achieved, GeoCatch facilitated programs to support farmers such as Grazing Matcher, grazing management workshops and increased promotion of tools like soil and plant tissue testing.



HEWA, NLP



RGW 2020, HEWA 2021-24, DAWE(NLP) 2021-24



DPIRD, DWER, farmers, agronomists





- Grazing BMP document developed and launched by Minister
- BMP benchmarking tool and nutrient plan template developed with methodology and procedures
- 30 Nutrient Management Plans were completed in partnership with 30 farmers, with an additional 20 plans on track for completion by December 2024
- Based on completed NPs, an average of 79% of BMPs were met as best practice, up from 69% before implementation of a NP.

ENGAGEMENT, OPERATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

Over the past year, GeoCatch has taken a innovative approach to sharing our work with the community. Our Communications and Engagement team has used a variety of platforms to spread the word and connect with different audiences. Through engaging campaigns, we've raised awareness about GeoCatch and encouraged public involvement in our environmental efforts.

On the financial front, GeoCatch has managed its resources to ensure transparency and accountability. Our financial team has implemented comprehensive budgeting and reporting practices, ensuring that every dollar is used effectively to support our mission and maximise our environmental impact.

The GeoCatch Board has provided strong leadership and strategic oversight, ensuring projects align with the long-term vision and address the needs of the local community. The diverse expertise of its members has been invaluable in building partnerships and securing opportunities, while their governance has not only supported our current initiatives but has also paved the way for future growth and success.





Communications and Engagement

The Communications and Engagement Plan aims to showcase GeoCatch's work to the local community, raise awareness about the Geographe Catchment's importance, and highlight how individuals can contribute to enhancing our environment.

Project overview

The Communications and Engagement team utilises different channels to share GeoCatch's work and messages, including the website (geocatch.asn.au), electronic direct mail, social media, print media, and in-person events such as community days, workshops and presentations.



Ongoing across all projects



DWER, CoB, Water Corporation, local media, businesses, farmers, schools, gardeners, landholders

















Financial Management

For the 2023-24 Financial Year, Geographe Catchment Council continued to rely on external funding sources to support our projects and operations.

Grants and partnerships with government agencies, industry groups, and other stakeholders played a critical role in enabling us to carry out our mission. Careful financial management and strategic planning helped us maximize the impact of every dollar received, ensuring we deliver meaningful environmental outcomes across the Geographe Catchment.

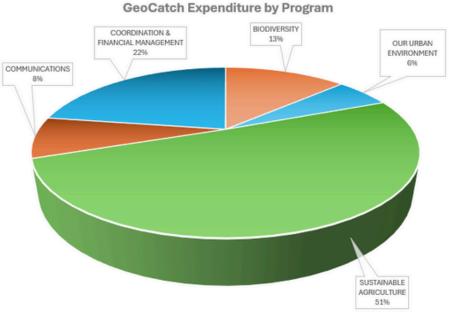


Figure 1. GeoCatch's expenditure by program.

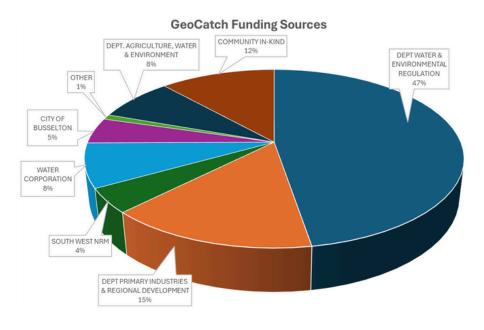


Figure 2. GeoCatch's funding sources.

STAFF MEMBERS



HARRIET WYATT



CAROLYN NEWMAN



ANDREW BLAND
COMMUNICATIONS AND
ENGAGEMENTOFFICER



NICOLE LINCOLN
BIODIVERSITY NRM OFFICER



LISA MASSEY
BAY OK NRM OFFICER



SHANNON CLOHESSY

NRM OFFICER



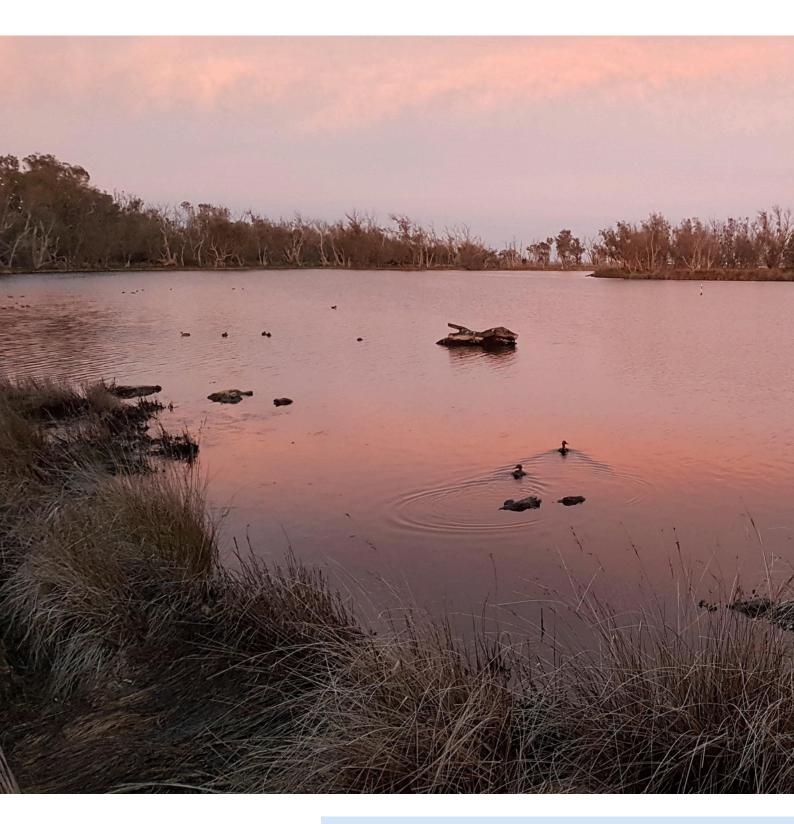
JENELLE SCHULT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COORDINATOR



MICHELLE PRIEST SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE NRM OFFICER



OLIVIA TUNNEY RIVERCARE NRM OFFICER



"BY LISTENING TO PEOPLE'S CONCERNS
AND IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS WE CAN
SHAPE GEOCATCH'S ACTIVITIES TO
SERVE THE COMMUNITY AND INSPIRE A
DEEPER CONNECTION TO CARING FOR
THE CATCHMENT." VICKY WINTON

BOARD MEMBERS



VICKY WINTON



ROBIN BELFORD
DEPUTY CHAIR



PETER TOGNO ECRETARY-TREASURER



JULIE HOWES
DEPUTY SECRETARY
TREASURER



ANNETTE BATLEY
COMMUNITY MEMBER



ROSS BROMELL COMMUNITY MEMBER



STEVE PURSELL COMMUNITY MEMBER



ANDREW WEINERT COMMUNITY MEMBER



CR PHILL CRONIN CITY OF BUSSELTON



CR JOHN FERGUSSON SHIRE OF CAPEL



CLARE FORWARD DBCA



ADAM MASKEW
DWER



JASON RINGROSE
WATER CORPORATION



LEON VAN WYK

FUNDING PARTNERS

GeoCatch is proud to work with its funding partners in 2023-24:

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

National Landcare Program

National Emergency Managemnt Agency

WA STATE GOVERNMENT

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

Department of Biosecurity, Conservation and Attractions

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Vasse Taskforce

Water Corporation

Soil Wise

State NRM

Lotterywest

Busselton Water

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

City of Busselton

Shire of Augusta Margaret River

Shire of Capel

Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

ORGANISATIONS

South West NRM

Regen WA

Murdoch University

Edith Cowan University

The Forever Project

Planet Ark

INDUSTRY

Busselton Toyota





List of Acronomyns

AMR Augusta Margaret River

BMP Best Management Practice

CoB City of Busselton

DAWE Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

DB Donnybrook

DBCA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

DIY Do-It-Yourself

DWER Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

FY Financial Year

GFPGB Geographe Farmers Protecting Geographe Bay

Ha Hectares

HEWA Healthy Estuaries Western Australia

Km Kilometres

NCMRR Nature Conservation Margaret River Region

NLP National Landcare Program

NP Nutrient Plan

RGW Revitalising Geographe Waterways

WRP Western Ringtail Possum

Year In

27 years in the community Community's voice in the catchment



+ **4** agency + **Z** local board members 8 community government

9 staff members



GARDENS 2 Bay OK

NONITORING SEAGRASS

(eepwatch



demonstration gardens developed.

REBATE CATIO

students.

rebates to protect native wildlife. Funding secured for 110 catio



Bay OK Day celebrated 11th Annual

tested across 400 hectares of farmland. 53 farms soil



Management Practice: 50 farm **Nutrient Plans**

developed.

Grazing Best

UUTRIENT

TESTING

SEEDLINGS **PLANTED** 20,500 seedlings planted across the catchment.



DEMONSTRATION FIREWISE GARDEN

Demonstration Garden constructed. **FireWise**



7.5km of fencing installed to protect 7.1ha FENCING

users, 3376 socia 956 participant

6200 website

62 events with COMMUNITY

ENGAGED

media followers



of riparian

OPERATIONS, LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

BIODIVERSITY

network database **3375** contacts n the GeoCatch

> avoidance training for dogs

> > Animal Care

farmer nutrient

Facility

Possum

Catio display

nstalled at

50 stomised

AGRICULTURE SUSTAINABLE

Busselton





for wildl<u>if</u>e

first aid training

Possum

articles, advertorials 93 newspaper and adverts



6 school incursions

5 school tree planting events and

Western Ringtail Possum

sharing knowledge

raising awareness of

ENVIRONMENT OUR URBAN

to community, T Bay OK Gardens displays, 6 presentations tour and I planting day

workshops **4** Bay OK garden

25 garden visits for native verge garden project



















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ingtail Tally cience Citizen











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