



Vasse Taskforce

June 2017 | Meeting 9

The ninth Vasse Taskforce meeting was held in Busselton on 16 June 2017. Dr. Sally Talbot (MLC South West Region) incoming Vasse Taskforce chair, welcomed Taskforce partners to the first meeting of 2017 and congratulated them on how the science investigations are resulting in on-ground action and the level of collaboration and integration occurring.

1 New Chair of Taskforce

Dr. Talbot acknowledged the valuable contributions of former chairs Ms Mia Davies (former Minister for Water) and Ms Libby Mettam (Vasse MLA). The high level representation by government would continue with her appointment and assured the community that the current government is committed to the work of the Taskforce. Waterways management was an important issue for the community and government and was marked by a bipartisan approach across governments.

Under the McGowan Government the Hon Dave Kelly has responsibility for both water and science and this is symbolic for the Taskforce. The protection and management of waterways is dependent on the science forming a solid the basis for decision making aligning with the Taskforce's approach. Climate change is a significant challenge for our community and management of our water resources must be cognisant of this.

Change must be driven by local thinking and working differently. Dr Talbot will be feeding ideas about these changes into government. If we are to succeed we must improve water literacy across all sectors and change the hearts and minds of people. This includes understanding and using water that is fit for purpose. The Government is committed to working with community catchment organisations.

2 Community survey

Community members are encourage to go to the GeoCatch website and complete the on-line community survey. The survey closes on 5 July 2017.

This survey is the third part of a broader program to understand community values. Work commenced in May 2017 to understand the views of the broader Geographe Community. The first step was an online discussion board in early May to measure qualitative, attitudes, values and concerns. This helped the development of questions for the second part; a phone survey which was conducted in June.

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3 Sediment investigations

Taskforce partners have worked together to remove sediment around the Vasse Surge Barriers. The Water Corporation, Department of Water and City of Busselton have worked collectively, combining their knowledge, resources and streamlining approval processes to enable new technology to be applied to sediment removal.

In late 2016 multiple sediment cores were taken and provided information on the depth and extent and make-up of the sediments. After being briefed on the results of the work the Water Corporation committed its existing maintenance funds to remove sediment behind the Vasse Surge Barriers.

A new approach was used with a small scale vacuum pump system reducing disturbance of the sediment and therefore risk to fish due to reduced oxygenation in the water column. Sediment was transported to the Busselton Wastewater Treatment Plant where it is dried as part of the waste treatment process.

The Taskforce is now looking to undertake sediment investigations in the lower sections of the Lower Vasse River to determine sediment composition, particularly potentially acid generating materials, to value add to work previously undertaken by the City of Busselton.

4 Water treatment trials in the Lower Vasse River

Results from last summer's small scale treatment trials using the phosphorous binding hydrotalcite-clay in the Lower Vasse River adjacent to the City of Busselton offices are promising and in 2017/18 the trial will be scaled up to test how effective the new clay works in a more open situation.

The product can be applied to an existing algal bloom and the new clay also has the advantage by covering the sediments and stopping nutrients from being released.

Final results of the work will give the City of Busselton another option to help manage the Lower Vasse River.

5 Soil amendment trials

The City of Busselton, Department of Water, Water Corporation and the turf industry have come together to establish three trial sites to measure the effectiveness of Iron Man Gypsum (IMG) in mitigating nutrient loss, test the logistics associated with use of the product; and evaluate land holder satisfaction:

- In-drain treatment of soluble phosphorus in drain flows
- Top-dress IMG into existing turf
- Sub-surface treatment of soluble P beneath sporting complex

Iron Man Gypsum is a by-product of the mining industry. The Taskforce endorsed the trial site chosen and other opportunities to progress the commercial use of soil amendments.

6 Reconnecting Rivers and Toby Inlet Modelling

The Reconnecting Rivers and Toby Inlet Modelling work that was presented to the community in 2016 has now been assessed against flow rates and also nutrient loads. A successful solution needs to address both aspects. If additional water is being used to flush the rivers it is important that it is of good quality and does not add nutrients to area or the sediments. The report is being finalised and the Taskforce will be making recommendations to the City of Busselton on the best solutions and also the options which are not recommended.



Department of Water
Department of Regional Development



GeoCatch is working to provide information to the community explaining the various options and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

7 Up and coming events for the community

- August – sustainable agriculture nutrient management symposium Mandurah
- August – Go live Revitalising Geographe Waterways website

For specific dates and more information www.geocatch.asn.au

More information www.water.wa.gov.au

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