



South East Natural Resources Management Board

Achievement Report

2019 - 2020



Government of South Australia

South East Natural Resources
Management Board

*This is the final Achievement Report from the former
South East Natural Resources Management Board*

Foreword

I am proud to present the South East Natural Resources Management Board's Achievement Report for 2019/20. The Report captures some project highlights for the year that strive towards sustainable agriculture and environmental outcomes, with many funded by the South East Natural Resources Management Board and the National Landcare Program.

2019/20 has been a year of transition and challenges. The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* was passed in Parliament and this will direct future activity of the Limestone Coast Landscape Board. A special acknowledgement to the Natural Resources Management staff that volunteered to support the bushfire control efforts recently, and I sincerely thank them for giving up their time to support our State and our region, and the follow up efforts to support bushfire recovery.

A large focus for the Board has been around actioning the directives on the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan Science Review requested by the Minister, continuing the review of the Tatiara Water Allocation Plan and provide pest and weed control services across the region. We can be proud of the tremendous outcomes from our projects, supporting landholders in pest plant and animal control, natural resources education and providing education and engagement in natural resources management in order to value and protect our land, soils, water and biodiversity.

As this document will be the last publication of the South East Natural Resources Management Board, and therefore the last opportunity to reference the Board, I would like to sincerely thank the South East Natural Resources Management Board members during this time of transition in natural resources management governance. The Board worked with purpose and passion to find the balance and synergies between what often seems to be a competing use of resources, but is in fact, complimentary purposes of conservation and restoration of the natural environment for future generation's endeavours.

Dr Kerry DeGaris

South East Natural Resources Management Board

About the Board

The South East Natural Resources Management (SE NRM) Board works to ensure a sustainable approach to the management, protection and restoration of our soil, water, native plants and animals.

Board members are appointed by the Minister for Environment and Water, and selected for their knowledge and commitment to managing natural resources in our diverse region.

With a range of backgrounds and experiences, this passionate group of locals works together with community, industry and other organisations to develop the regional NRM Plan and make decisions about regional investment in NRM.



Kerry DeGaris



Nick Hunt



Graham Gates



Robyn Campbell



Michael Bleby



Kerry Gilkes



Faith Coleman



Deb Agnew

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Unleashing inner soil scientists from the comfort of home

Encouraging families to get their hands dirty and unleash their inner soil scientists, the Adaptive Ag project teamed up with NRM Education to deliver a soils workshop live on Facebook.

Adaptive Ag Project Coordinator Amanda Giles said COVID-19 presented an opportunity to trial a different way of connecting with the community and sharing information about soils.

"We wanted to really dial back and go back to soil basics," Amanda said.

"The live format on the Interact Limestone Coast Facebook page was a unique opportunity to reach people we may not normally reach at a typical workshop."

"With people isolating at home over the past few

months, this was a chance for families in particular to do the activities with us and learn along the way."

At any one time during the 40 minute workshop, at least 30 people were tuning in, reaching 46 people at viewing peak.

As well as doing some live testing of the soil on Education Coordinator Vanessa Freebairn's property, the duo discussed the role soil plays in climate storage and climate regulation.

"We're looking to adapt this content to be suitable for farmers and land managers, and run more soils workshops in the future," Amanda said.

6000
PEOPLE
REACHED ON
FACEBOOK

46
PEOPLE
WATCHING AT
PEAK



20
PEOPLE
ATTENDED THE
WORKSHOP

The Padthaway WAP - a community guided plan

The Padthaway WAP review began in 2019, and throughout the Board is working closely with the community.

Water allocation plans ensure our groundwater resources are managed sustainably, balancing the needs of the community, industry and the environment.

Representatives from the local farming community form the Stakeholder Advisory Group, which has provided valuable input into the Padthaway WAP review.

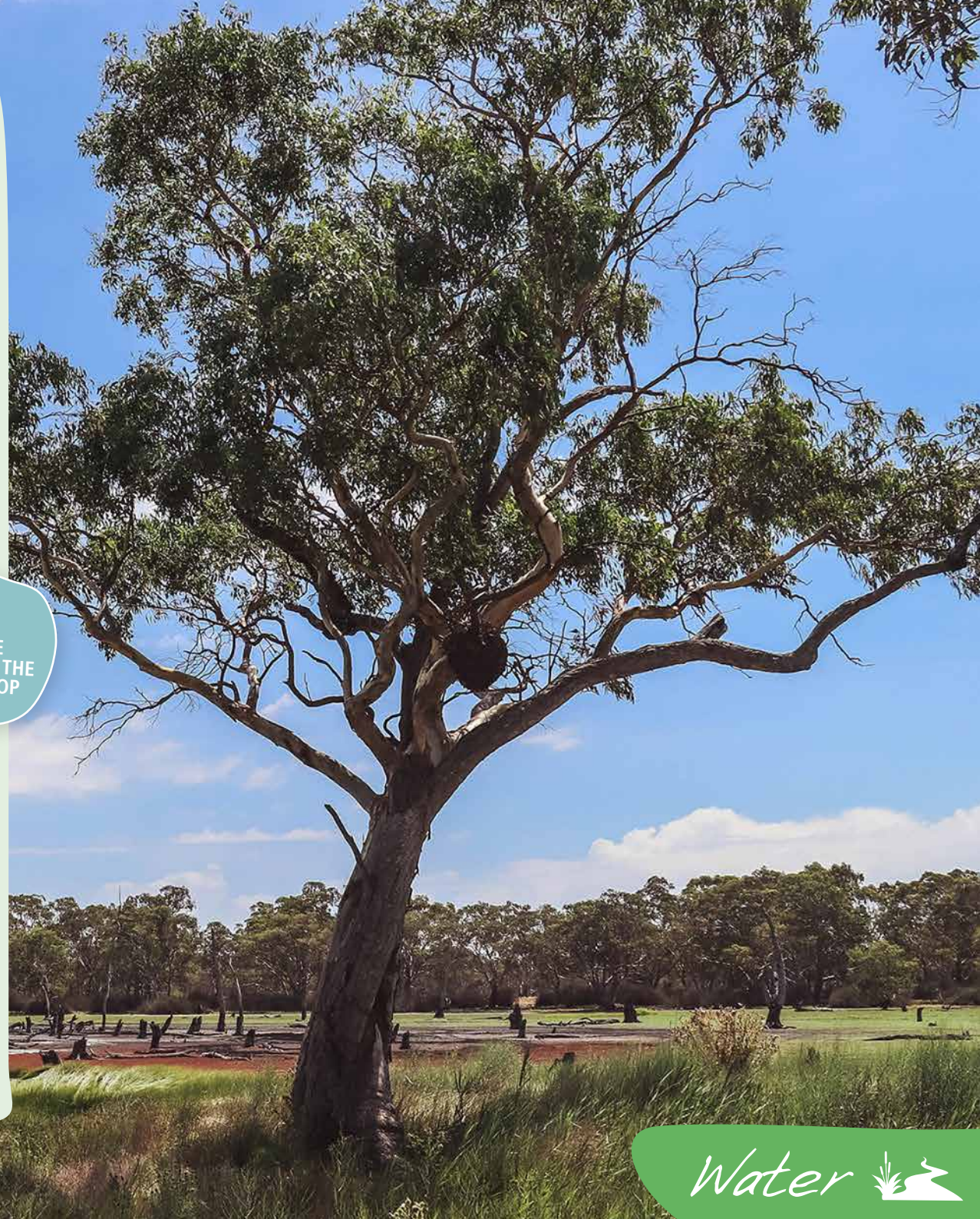
Senior Planning Officer Ryan Judd said the South East Aboriginal Focus Group is also actively involved.

"We recently met with the group on country for a workshop at Cockatoo Lake to talk about their spiritual connection to water," Ryan said.

"The group also talked about the importance of water in providing food and materials throughout the seasons."

"It's important that we incorporate the knowledge of the SEAFG and the cultural values of our water into the Padthaway WAP review," Ryan said.

"Bringing this together with the needs of our farming community and environment will be at the core of the next plan."





Landholders ready for practical pest control

Landholders from across the region kept up to date on best practice pest animal control this year, attending a number of workshops delivered by Natural Resources South East and PIRSA.

Workshops were held at Mil Lel, Avenue, Wild Dog Valley, Taunta Hut, Lochaber, Willalooka and Taratap.

PIRSA Rabbit Control Coordinator Josh Rosser presented at each, discussing planning techniques for implementing effective fox and rabbit control.

"Together with the NRM Officers, we shared practical advice and ran demonstrations for different techniques including rabbit layer application, rabbit warren ripping, and fumigation," Josh said.

"We also discussed biological controls for rabbits and went into the key differences between the K5 and RHDV2 calicivirus, encouraging landholders to make informed decisions for their area."

The workshops also included information about fox control, and safe baiting practices.

"It's encouraging to see so many landholders with an active interest in the latest pest animal information, and making a real effort manage pests like rabbits and foxes."

70
LANDHOLDERS
PARTICIPATED
IN THE
PROJECT

Beating the rush on weed control

Often mistaken for a native, spiny rush (*Juncus acutus*) is a highly invasive agricultural and environmental pest plant.

Natural Resources Management Officer Saxon Ellis said the sharp spines of the declared weed can cause injury to stock, pets and people.

"When established, spiny rush can become impenetrable, causing access issues and reducing pasture production," Saxon said.

"Spiny rush is also often confused with the native Sea rush (*Juncus kraussii*)"

"The two species sometimes grow together as well, so it's important that the groups we're working with can identify spiny rush correctly before taking control measures."

Compared to its native lookalike, Spiny rush tends to be more spherical in profile with much stiffer stems.

"We've been working with local landholders, National Parks and Wildlife Service SA and forestry to treat large infestations in the region," Saxon said.

"The success we've had so far really emphasises how important a coordinated landscape approach to Spiny rush control, and any pest control program, is."



100HA
COVERED FOR
CONTROL AT
LAKE GEORGE

40HA
COVERED FOR
CONTROL ON
PRIVATE LAND

80HA
COVERED FOR
CONTROL AT
LAKE FROME,
INCLUDING
PRIVATE LAND

Pest Plants & Animals





Photo by Liz Rymill

The power of paddock trees

Paddock trees are an integral feature of the South East landscape.

To celebrate these iconic landmarks, the Board initiated the Power of Paddock Trees photo exhibition.

Bush Management Advisor Jacqui Owen said the exhibition features local people, local trees, and their stories.

"Paddock trees are an important part of the landscape, providing food and habitat for native animals, shade for livestock and a focal point for family stories through generations," Jacqui said.

"Putting this exhibition together, it was really special to talk to members of the community and local landholders about their connection with the trees in the area."

The exhibition has two parts. The first is a series of 10 photographs, showcasing remnant trees in the landscape and highlighting their significance.

The second part of the exhibition presents pairs of photographs of the same tree, some of the original images taken around 100 years ago, and a second photo taken from the same spot within the past couple of months.

"Although some of the trees have changed slightly over the century, it's the surrounding landscape where we see significant modification," Jacqui said.

"We were able to share these local paddock tree stories in Naracoorte and Keith then on Facebook while COVID-19 public gathering restrictions were in place."

"The exhibition is picking up again in Millicent, and we hope that the value of these icons of our landscape is recognised."

FACEBOOK
POSTS
REACHED OVER
26,000

30
SITE VISITS
CONDUCTED
BY BUSH
MANAGEMENT
ADVISOR



Fish count gives insight into water health

Healthy, functioning watercourses were highlighted as a priority for the community at the Board's Ranges and Cross-border Creeks subregional forum.

The Board has been working on monitoring in this area, and using this research to improve the health of our waterways and the native species that call them home.

Team Leader Habitat Conservation Tania Rajic said an indicator of good health in a water course is the presence of native fish.

"We have conducted fish monitoring at 31 sites across the Mosquito Creek catchment area," Tania said.

Mosquito Creek provides important and rare habitat and supports permanent pools as refuges for native fish.

"Although not an ideal result, the most recent count showed native freshwater generalist Carp Gudgeon and Flathead Gudgeon, and introduced Easter Gambusia were dominant in the area," Tania said.

"These species have relatively broad habitat requirements and often proliferate during periods of low flow."

"Encouragingly, we also had good catches of the native freshwater specialist the Southern Pygmy Perch, but species that seem to require higher seasonal flows to sustain refuge pools such as the Yarra Pygmy Perch, River Blackfish and Little Galaxias aren't faring as well."

"As a result of this research, we're now investigating options to create permanent pools to sustain some of these more sensitive native freshwater specialist species through dry periods, and tip the balance back in their favour."

FISH
MONITORED
AT
31
SITES

Biodiversity



Cultural calendar forms basis for wetland plan

Sandy's Hut is one of five Aboriginal Managed Lands near Kingston SE.

Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator David New said the South East Aboriginal Focus Group has recently collaborated with Flinders University to develop a management plan for the wetland.

"The draft plan highlights community aspirations for the site and collates seasonal information such as cultural activities like weaving or swan egg collection, and community Elders recollections of the past," David said.

"With work already undertaken, water and Kungari (black swan) have returned to the wetland, a sight not seen for over 40 years."

"We intend for people visiting the property to use the plan for education and a guide of how they can contribute. It will include guidelines around weed control, monitoring and property management actions."

The SE NRM Board has supported the South East Aboriginal Focus Group to undertake environmental protection and restoration at the property since 2004.

The next stage of the wetland plan involves digital development, establishing monitoring programs, and mapping out cultural water events based on key totems like the Kungari.



Local students lead the way to environmental change

Student leaders from across the region met for the first instalment of the Young Environmental Leaders Program in Naracoorte earlier this year.

The South East NRM Board's program saw a big increase in school participation with 90 students from 23 schools participating this year, compared to 62 students and 15 schools in 2019.

Environmental Education Coordinator Vanessa Freebairn said students were keen to learn and build on their knowledge of environmental issues.

"The big increase in numbers this year is really encouraging," Vanessa said.

"We're excited about the enthusiasm of this year's student group, and the support of their schools, to learn about our local landscape and the challenges we face in the region."

Students spent the morning of the first forum in Blanche Cave listening to presentations on pest plants and animals, protecting the coast, water in our landscape, and local biodiversity.

Following the talks, students then brainstormed ideas for projects they will work on with their schools for the year.

The next meeting of the YELP group will be at the Earthkeepers Camp, scheduled for August.

"This year we're focusing on local landscape topics - pests, biodiversity, water, and soils," Vanessa said.

"We're really looking forward to seeing the creative projects the YELP students will lead."



91
STUDENTS
INVOLVED IN THE
YELP PROGRAM

Community Engagement 



Photo by Tim Rosenthal

WEEDS
CONTROLLED ON
200HA
OF PRIVATE
LAND



Important feeding site rejuvenated for endangered cockatoos

Trees for Life have recently tackled 200 hectares of pine wilding control within farmer Tom Giles' Heritage Agreement bushland near Coonawarra.

Pine tree seedlings from plantations can establish in native bushland close to plantations, outcompeting native trees such as stringybark, meaning less food for the endangered South Eastern Red-Tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Tom said the area of Stringybark feeding habitat was heavily infested with hundreds of large pine trees, many of which had been there for 30 years or more.

"The pines were out of control," Tom said.

"If we didn't do anything about it, I was worried the scrub would look like a pine forest within 20 years. My neighbour controlled the pines in his adjoining scrub a few years ago

and I was inspired by the results."

With Tom using a drone to help map the pines, A & M Contracting were engaged to tackle the task of falling and ringbarking large trees, while brush cutting the smaller ones.

Trees For Life Habitat Officer Cassie Hlava working on the Communities helping Cockies project, said the rejuvenated area is an important block of feeding habitat.

"The outstanding work undertaken by Tom, and the support of A & M contracting, will ensure the area can provide food for cockies for many years to come."

Communities Helping Cockies is supported by the South East Natural Resources Management Board, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, and is delivered in partnership with Birdlife Australia, Zoos SA and Trees For Life.

National Landcare Program

Project Partnerships



National
Landcare
Program



Successful grants program supports adaptive agriculture

The 'Agricultural Industries Adapting to Variable Climates and Markets' project delivered a successful 2019/20 grants program, enabling local groups to deliver a range of activities for landholders supporting sustainable agriculture. Highlights from the program include:

- Grasslands - trail site workshop at Avenue Range
- Dairy SA - pasture management walks
- Coorong Tatiara Local Action Plan livestock water security tours
- Mackillop Farm Management Group - Unlocking Agricultural Potential, Diversified Farming workshops

The grants have also supported a number of other activities in the region, using local networks and the expertise of local interest groups. Another round of grant funding will be available in 2020/2021, further supporting groups to build resilience in a changing and variable climate.

This project is supported by the South East Natural Resources Management Board, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Weed control in the Coorong takes off

The Our Coorong | Our Coast team took to the skies this year, in an effort to control African boxthorn, a Weed of National Significance.

African Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) poses a persistent threat to the sensitive environment throughout the Coorong area.

Project Coordinator Julie Palmer said the treatment, via helicopter, involves applying a measured dose of herbicide to individual Boxthorn bushes.

"Compared to on ground treatment, aerial control is efficient and cost effective," Julie said.

"Controlling Boxthorn from the helicopter also means that we can treat 26,000 hectares of difficult to access terrain that we wouldn't be able to reach manually."

The Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar Wetland is one of Australia's most important wetland areas, due to its diversity of ecological features. The pest plant control program aims to protect this fragile environment.

"This area is home to internationally significant migratory birds and endangered resident beach nesting birds," Julie said.

"The impact of invasive pest plants like Boxthorn can be disastrous to their fragile coastal habitats."

Left untreated, Boxthorn can severely alter habitat by outcompeting native vegetation, and harbouring pest animals such as rabbits and foxes. The aerial treatment is very precise and has minimal impact to surrounding native plants and animals. Pest plant control in the area is one of the key steps being taken towards preserving the environmental values of the Coorong.

"We are looking to work with landholders neighbouring Coorong National Park, to expand the program and improve its effectiveness," Julie said.

This project is supported by the South East Natural Resources Management Board, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



26,000HA
COVERED BY
AERIAL WEED
CONTROL

National Landcare Program

Project Partnerships



National
Landcare
Program



