

Title: Implementing recovery actions to protect South Coast EPBC species and ecosystems - Karl Hansom

Introduction

South Coast NRM and community partners are implementing an exciting project to protect some of Western Australia's most threatened species and ecosystems. The South Coast region is a recognised biodiversity Hotspot, with an incredible diversity of flora and fauna species, many of which are endemic. The region contains over 5400 species of flora, and 42 mammals, many of which are found on private land.

The Protecting EPBC species and ecosystems project is being delivered using a multi-species landscape approach. This approach builds on earlier efforts to conserve national and regional ecosystems and improve landscape functionality along the South Coast. The project is funded by the Australian Government National Landcare Programme.

South Coast NRM uses the regional delivery model to effectively collaborate with organisations and individuals to protect natural assets, and ensure long term biodiversity outcomes. We work with community groups, non-government organisations, State and Local government agencies to provide benefits for the wider community. Without the experience and expertise of those groups, many of these achievements would not be possible.

The project vision is to maintain landscape resilience and habitat for EPBC listed species, by implementing recovery actions which protect, conserve and enhance important biodiversity assets. Project activities are informed by Regional Recovery planning tools and documents.

This investment involves 12 partner organisations and private landholders working towards protection of 11 EPBC listed fauna, 52 flora, and 2 TEC's. Project partners are enhancing remnant vegetation, and integrating threat abatement activity across 1,134 hectares of the South Coast project area. The project builds on previous work using best practice, and innovative restoration and monitoring techniques.

Environmental outcomes

Recovery actions for EPBC species have included flora monitoring of 25 species over 342 ha and monitoring of six threatened fauna over 846 ha; two of which are the critically endangered Gilberts potoroo, and Western ground parrot. Recovery actions are being implemented via partnerships with Department of Parks and Wildlife South coast region, and Frankland district, and by working with the Lake Muir Denbarker Community Feral Pig Eradication Group. Two translocations to offshore islands have been completed, one involving Gilberts potoroo, and the second involving Dibbler. Community volunteers have contributed their knowledge and experience to survey and monitoring efforts, and are extremely professional.

The Stirling Range Priority Protection Area (PPA) identified ongoing aerial phosphite spraying as a key management action to protect declared rare flora in a Threatened Ecological Community. This will be completed in autumn 2017. Dieback planning support to community groups through planning sessions, with Landcare groups and Reference groups has been facilitated. The community dieback

hygiene plan template, and DIDMS tools have been updated and will be revisited with project partners by June 2017.

24.2 ha of revegetation has been implemented to extend existing connectivity. Landholder activities in the Forest to Stirlings Conservation Action Plan area have achieved 10 ha of biodiverse revegetation plantings, protecting the upper reaches of the Corackerup creek. This is a significant catchment which feeds into the Pallinup River, Corackerup Creek, Monjebup Reserve and surrounding macro corridor, providing a passage for plants and animals moving in the Fitz-Stirling ecological link.

Six landholders have completed 10.2 ha of revegetation projects in the Forest to Stirlings Conservation Plan area, and the Lindesay Link Conservation Action Plan area. These projects have provided landholders outside of 'traditional catchment' areas the opportunity to improve native vegetation and protect important creek lines. Additionally the installation of 37.3 km fencing will protect remnant revegetation over 594.8 ha within the South Coast Macro Corridor.

Weeds of National Significance, African boxthorn, bridal creeper, and gorse have been managed to protect biodiversity of the Oyster Harbour, Pallinup River corridor, and riparian areas bordering the Fitzgerald River National Park. Earlier biological control of bridal creeper has now been monitored and mapped by Fitzgerald Biosphere Group, and is proving successful.

Social outcomes

Funding via South Coast NRM has enabled Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee to partner with the Denmark Weed Action Group to undertake weed control in the lower Wilson Inlet catchment. This has allowed this excellent group of motivated and experienced NRM volunteers to maintain their drive and enthusiasm.

A better coordinated approach to management of invasive weeds, has been a feature of this project. One aspect of this has been support and engagement with Noongar youth via the Green Army program facilitated by South Coast NRM. This relies on support and on ground projects provided in collaboration with other agencies such as Green Skills Inc. and Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW). A positive spin off from this engagement has been furthering the relationships between Department of Parks and Wildlife and the Noongar community on other issues, such as improving understanding of dieback management and joint management of National parks and reserves.

South Coast NRM is facilitating information exchange and relationship building through Noongar family field trips. South Coast NRM takes Noongar families (Elders, men, women and children) out on country with Department Parks and Wildlife rangers and scientists to share traditional knowledge and mainstream western science and land management methods.

Economic outcomes

A private contractor, Gnoweran Spraying & Environmental Services, are employed to carry out gorse and boxthorn control for asset protection. This supported the South Coast NRM commitment towards supporting Indigenous owned business. The project has shown there are economic benefits of supporting an active Landcare community group in isolated rural towns, including generation of contracting work for on ground activities and associated costs.

Conclusion

The program *Implementing recovery actions to protect South Coast EPBC species and ecosystems* has been made possible by adopting a region wide approach to managing landscape values and assets. Funding through the Australian Government enables South Coast NRM to actively foster collaboration with partner organisations towards achieving common conservation outcomes. The adoption of a regional approach has resulted in twelve Landcare groups, agencies, and NGO's providing access to technical skills and experience to implement key recommendations of south coast recovery plans. This approach is guided by the development and use of spatial planning tools, Recovery Plans and other regional management plans and strategies.