

ANNUAL REPORT 2004

INTRODUCTION

Not widely known, but in delving through Peel Preservation Group minutes for this annual report, I found in Business Arising that the PPG was awarded a citation for a "decade of achievements" by the Urban Bushland Council Meeting. We are now in the first year of another decade of being environmental watchdogs, or bulldogs as some might say. Conservation of our beautiful Peel Region requires passion and a dogged belief that we will make a difference. Sometimes the task seems daunting, but with small steps and mighty tenacity, we will keep fighting. Our efforts are mostly spent on local issues, but we are all too aware that we need to liaise and support environmental groups in other regions in WA, Australia and, indeed, the world to conserve the biodiversity of what we have left.

I have structured this annual report into six sections:

- Highlights - Successes
- Conservation Work on the Ground
- Political and Community Issues
- Workshops, Seminars and Submissions
- Guest Speakers
- The Future

HIGHLIGHTS - SUCCESSES

EDO takes up bore water cause

There has been movement, although slow, on the issue of salinity in Mandurah bores. PPG member Vic Beacham's doggedness on this issue for the past few years has resulted in the Environmental Defender's Office taking up his cause, saying it was a good case and something would be achieved. Not without incident, a memo from the EDO to the Minister for Environment was lost, which held up any progress on the issue. But Vic kept Greens MLA Chrissie Sharp updated on the matter and Chrissie brought the issue of the bores to the notice of Parliament after it was reported to the PPG that the Minister had not replied to the EDO's follow-up letter. Finally, Vic was invited to a meeting with Minister in October, but unfortunately couldn't go and had to be represented. There have been quiet wins for Vic, however, with developer Cedar Woods agreeing to put several aggrieved bore owners on mains waters. During the year, Vic also started bore water sampling at the new developments at Madora and has kept the PPG informed of every bores in Halls Head that has gone salty.

Shorebird Conservation Project

The Shorebird Conservation Project Taskforce visited Perth in early June studying sites (particularly Ramsar sites) all over Australia. Environmental campaigner Joan Payne contacted the PPG for some input to which the PPG obliged by compiling a list of waterbird sites needing care. In September, the news came through that Lake McLarty, Goegrup Lakes, Nairns and Lake Clifton would be included in the project, which is being funded by the World Wildlife Fund. WWF money ends in 2005. This is a major achievement for the PPG as it will strengthen the case for our Ramsar listed sites to be protected properly.

Environment inspires art award win

Long-time PPG treasurer Lyn Dickman won the \$1000 Acquisitive Award at the 2004 Rockingham Regional Art Award. Lyn was inspired to create her work "Regeneration" on the effects of natural and man-made impacts on the landscape, particularly in and around Mandurah. Lyn has regularly contributed her artwork to The Preservation Times over the years, which help highlight the articles written about a wide range of issues that the PPG takes on as part of its watchdog work. Congratulations once again to Lyn for helping to draw attention conservation issue in the Peel region.

CONSERVATION WORK

Following on from the Seal Rock transect near Tims Thicket last year, PPG members continued to work with Cate Tauss from the WA Herbarium on a transect at Long Island. In February, 10 stalwart souls waded through brackish swamp and waist-high water to reach the island, but they succeeded in locating a previous transect to collect a field herbarium of overall healthy vegetation, except for Casuarinas affected by previous fires and salt intrusion from high tides. As many as possible returned in October, despite very wet and windy conditions, to complete the transect collecting 33 specimens. The hardiest of the original group also completed the Seal Rock transect collecting on their person nearly as many kangaroo ticks as vegetation specimens.

After four years of testing the water at Lake McLarty and the Goegrup Lakes Brian Bucktin finished his work on April 1. This cannot go with a special thanks to Brian for his tireless efforts in providing such a good baseline for future testing that CALM has mentioned the results of his work at recent workshops in the area.

An organised walk of PPG committee members to check on reported concerns about weeds along Lake Clifton, namely narrow leafed cotton bush, apple of Sodom and bridal creeper, resulted in the PPG advising MEAC for action by Department of Agriculture. Action is still pending, although the Lake Clifton Landcare Group advised the PPG that it had distributed rust on to bridal creeper along a portion of the lake's edge.

Perth-Mandurah Railway - allocation of land to be granted in mitigation for parkland used in the rail corridor issue. The PPG viewed a map of suggested sites and reported on our choice of purchasing additional land adjoining Marlee Reserve as mitigation for environmental damage. Later in the year, PPG was disappointed to hear that this had been rejected by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure because the adjoining land was privately owned and too expensive to purchase. We wrote to the Department expressing it poor choice of rejecting the purchase of additional land adjoining Marlee Reserve and giving up 17ha of degraded bushland at Kwinana already in State Government ownership.

PPG members continued to be involved in planting projects, such as helping to plant 1800 trees with FOR Peel at South Yunderup and Culleenup Island, and successfully receiving \$200 from the City of Mandurah that was used for riverbank stabilisation at Serpentine Cove. Riverside Gardens Primary School students helped out. Thanks to Thelma Crook from Ribbons of Blue and to Men of the Trees for the plants. Maintenance work also continued at Lake McLarty to remove stakes and guards from seedlings planted in winter 2003. The success rate of plantings was reported to be about 55 per cent. Hopefully, the remaining plants will survive another long hot summer.

PPG members were out and about taking photographs of clearing and questionable location of dual-use path and extensive fore-dune stabilisation. Photos presented to MEAC members to view and to comment on the Southport Foreshore/Golf Course Management Plan. Photographs were also tabled during the year of clearing along the verge of Old Coast Road and the Cox Bay development after the Main Roads Department was reminded of the developer's obligation to revegetate. Still 70-80m of road verge needs attention along yet another limestone wall. PPG followed up with a letter expressing concern over location of housing on the wetland to the north. Due to the high risk of acid sulphate soils on the site, Council officers have asked for a redesign of the road between private lots and the foreshore reserve.

But it's not all work all of the time. PPG members took some time out to enjoy a wildflower walk to Lake Pollard and Martin's Tank in Yalgorup National Park. Marion Timms led the expedition followed by a picnic lunch. More than 70 species were identified and of these about 20 orchid species.

POLITICAL/COMMUNITY ISSUES

Wanjeep Road

We are still hoping to save good bushland at Wanjeep Road. Early in the year letters were written to Mandurah MLA David Templeman and the City of Mandurah on progress to buy bushland. Later we were told the Government couldn't afford to buy the land as the 52ha site was valued at \$5million (DPI advice). David Templeman met with PPG members to discuss other options, such as getting the developer to make a donation of some of the land, doing a land swap where the developer only takes degraded land, buying land from the developer (land NOT FOR SALE) or compulsory purchase.

Avenues were discussed to purchase land, including the Australian Bush Heritage Fund to buy and manage the land with use of conservation covenants. In May a copy of a Memorandum of Understanding for the Wanjeep site considered using 6-7ha on the southwest corner and 16-17ha on the NNE corner for high density multi-storey housing (1000 dwellings) leaving 29-31ha to be saved as bushland. This was considered a good compromise, but much still depends on the Government.

Sarich's land at Lake Clifton

A submission was sent to Canberra urgently after hearing that an Outline Development Plan for Sarich's land west of Lake Clifton had been advertised. A watch was kept on The West Australian for announcement of a Public Environmental Review. PPG was informed that Sarich (or Cape Bouvard Investments) had offered the Lake Clifton land to Australian Bush Heritage Fund but wanted the fully developed price. In November, Environment Australia notified the City of Mandurah that consideration under the EPBC Act had resulted in a decision that the proposal was likely to have significant impact on a matter protected by the Act. The proposal must undergo an assessment and approval process under the Act before it can proceed. No action is required by the Council yet, but the issue will be referred to the Mandurah Environmental Advisory Committee during the public consultation phase.

Peel-Harvey Catchment

Peel-Harvey Catchment Council Community Forum at Fairbridge - launch of Small Landholders' Information Centre and talks on the Peel-Harvey Water Initiative, the Govt's Greenhouse Strategy, Coastal Catchment Initiatives, Water Quality Improvement Plan and the Natural Resource Management Strategy. PPG represented on Water Quality Improvement Plan group - first meeting in March. The WQIP will ensure a coordinated approach to catchment management and discussion points at the meeting were on changing drainage management practices to reduce nutrient export, background on water flows in the Peel-Harvey, the current status of the regional perspective, barriers and issues. Disappointment that there were few community members on the group - it was weighted by Govt representation - and that the presentations were too brief and rushed. Further insult to injury when PPG not informed of the September meeting.

Western Power transmission lines

PPG members walked the site for the Western Power transmission lines across Meadow Springs and sent in a submission. Response from Western Power assuring PPG that steel poles would be used and would run from existing line at Stock Road to the new substation site. PPG impressed with Western Power's efforts to be good corporate citizens by avoiding important ecological communities and declare rare flora. Also employing Mike Bamford to advise on the flight paths of wetland birds that could be affected at the bridge over the Serpentine River. August: new arrangement for a site visit of alternate line route. September: PPG members met for site visit to Marlee Reserve Wetland - walked the western side of the wetland following the markers and noting the Tuarts and understory. Then drove to where Lakelands adjoins Amarillo and the clearing for the freeway extension (existing powerline there). Drafted a submission to Western Power and forwarded a copy to MEAC for the Sept 17 meeting.

Seascapes development

Seascapes - PPG members attended a workshop at Mandurah Quays organised by Mirvac Fini which was safe beach campaign for a groyne, a rock pool and rocks to be removed from swimming holes. A Seascapes Beach Steering Group was formed by Sustainable Consulting for Mirvac Fini with wide representation from community, local and government groups: Mandurah City Council, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Department of Environment, PPG, Conservation Council of WA, Recfishwest, indigenous representatives, Coastcare, Surf Life Saving and Seascape residents. Steering committee beach bus tour to Watermans, Scarborough, Cottesloe, Leighton and Mandurah beaches.

Len Howard Reserve

What a disappointment the past year has been in the management of the reserve. The dedication plaque installed in memory of our late environmental crusader and founder went missing again and like the year before, vandalism continues to be a problem as does dying vegetation already stressed by the drier conditions. Winter storms brought down many of the dead trees leaving the reserve floor strewn

with masses of fire fodder. On the positive side, CALM upgraded the car park south of the reserve, widened the road with crushed limestone and installed bollards.

Sustainable September display once again mounted by PPG at the Mandurah Library.

PPG members involved in handing out pamphlets at the Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-Tourism state conference at Mandurah Quay stating the real story of the battle to save the Creery Wetlands.

Annual fundraiser at Mewburn Centre on November 27 was very successful with nearly \$600 raised. Thanks to all those who contributed and helped on the day.

WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/SUBMISSIONS

Workshops/Seminars

Peel Regional Park Workshop - PPG members attended as a stakeholder group identified by Environmental Resource Management and expressed concern for future management of the park. PPG also stressed that the Serpentine River be included in management plans. Environmental Resource Management advised it would hold further community workshops during February and then draft a plan for further comment. Apparently, appointments were made for the Peel Regional Park Management Plan Committee, but the PPG was not included and not advised. Great disappointment.

Lake Clifton/Herron Structure Plan workshop organised by Koltasz Smith for MCC and Waroona Shire - beach access came up as a priority by some residents while others wanted to save the environment. Not represented accurately in the consultant's report - PPG protested and consultants acknowledged misleading results.

PPG comments requested for management plans being prepared by Ecoscapes for the City of Mandurah on Island Point and Warrungup Springs.

We attended a Litter Forum organised by the Department of Environment in June that highlighted the successful "R U a Tosser" campaign in NSW.

PPG attended workshops and prepared submissions on the draft bushland management plans for and Beecham Reserve in Coodanup, Dawesville Reserve, Janis Street Reserve, Tindale Reserve, Halls Head Reserve, Mandurah Terrace.

Submissions

Amendments to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Peel Region Scheme amendments.

Lot 2, Dawesville, and Barrow Island.

South West Catchment Natural Resource Management Strategy - Federal fund pool.

Lake McLarty, Lake Goegrup and Lake Clifton for inclusion into Peel Regional Plan.

The WA Government's Draft Greenhouse Strategy.

Mandurah Council's Draft Coastal Management Plan

ASS Workshop - Sept 1-3. No-one could go, but a walk arranged for PPG members to South Yunderup to see where a proposal for more canals is being considered for the worst ASS affected area in the Peel region.

Submission on plans for mining operation at Lake Clifton townsite

GUEST SPEAKERS

Kylee Carpenter gave us an update on the Conservation Council, Barrow Island, Bio-prospecting (using native plants for pharmaceuticals and who owns the rights), and introduced the Council's new Water Policy Officer from Environment House in Maylands

Water Corporation Project Manager Jim Chaswala and Environmental Officer Guy Watson spoke about the corporation's proposal to install an Activated Sludge Plant at the Caddadup Wastewater Treatment

Plant to improve the quality of water available for reuse at the Port Bouvard development, including the golf course. Reassured that bores were already in place monitoring groundwater used and the water would be treated so that bacteria levels met health standards. On the down side, there would be some clearing for the sludge plant, but only minimal, and the officers said a flora and fauna survey would be carried out before the plant and an entry track were constructed.

Cameron Gardiner (Senior Natural Resource Manager for Peel-Harvey Project) reported on the progress of the Water Quality Improvement Plan, which is funded by the Federal Govt through the National Heritage Trust and is one of five being implemented in Australia. (June)

THE FUTURE

Cape Bouvard rural subdivision to be put on the MEAC agenda

Peel Environment Centre

Peel-Yalgorup Biosphere project

Burning off and firebreaks - changes to update legislation

Peel Deviation

South West Metro Rail project

Acid Sulphate Soils

Thank you to everyone who has supported the PPG over the past year, your help is much appreciated.