

ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007

Compiled by Fiona O'Connor

Introduction

In preparing this report for 2006-2007, it became evident once again how much work a few people can do to make a difference in efforts to preserve the environment in the Peel Region. PPG committee members are forthright in their bids to influence decision makers on the environmental front and always eager to inform their members and the wider community about preservation and biodiversity issues.

I will acknowledge long-time campaigners on specific projects a bit later, but please keep in mind while you listen to this report that around a dozen people collectively put in hundreds of hours of work each year writing submissions, organising talks, mounting displays at events, fundraising, attending seminars, liaising with other environmental and community organisations, and representing the PPG on local and State Government committees and working groups....not much really!!

Before I get into the detail of this report, however, I'm not sure whether the move in February from Lotteries House to the Old Community Health Building on Ormsby Terrace is a highlight of the past year - so I haven't listed it under this heading- but it certainly was a memorable one.

In a lease-signing meeting with a City of Mandurah officer, the PPG members present and the officer faced the prospect of an overnight lock-in when the closed door of the PPG office (that everyone assumed could be opened from the inside) ...couldn't be opened. Luckily our Treasurer, Lyn Dickman, had her mobile phone because the PPG phone line hadn't been connected at that point. No worries, we'll just ring the Council and they'll come with a master key and open the door...

Nearly three hours later, after eating chocolate biscuits to relieve the stress (but wisely refraining from drinking too much tea or coffee for obvious reasons), a few discussions about how to climb through the high windows, and various ring-arounds to a few sections of Council, there was hammering in the corridor. A locksmith had finally arrived to free some very grateful women. So if you're wondering what the cartoon over there is all about - you've just heard a brief version of the story.

Activities

1. Highlights of the Year
2. Deputations/Presentations/Meetings
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Highlights of the Year

Guest Speaker Series

Following the success of the Dr Steven Hopper talk in September 2006, the PPG decided to continue organising guest speaker talks in association with the City of Mandurah with one held at the Bortolo Pavilion in January and two held in March and June at the City's Tuckey Room.

All sessions, which were very informative, were attended by upward of 60 to 150 people from a range of organisations and groups. The first talk by Dr Bernie Masters was about the Yarragadee Aquifer in WA's South West and the importance of this massive aquifer to the biodiversity of one of the world's 25 biodiversity hot spots and the devastating effect that major abstraction would have on this. It was indeed a relief to hear a couple of months later that one of the first major decisions made by the new Minister for the Environment; Climate Change; Peel, David Templeman, was to reject the Water Corporation's plans on this proposal.

Continuing on with our guest speakers - Dr Vic Semenuik, from the Royal Society of WA and the Wetlands Research Association, spoke on the topic "Astronomic Cycles, Climate Change and Wetlands". This covered the ancient astronomical patterns that affect the earth's climate and helped give listeners a greater appreciation of the complexities of climate change. We also heard how the next 30 years would become drier so water will continue to be an issue.

Water was also mentioned by Prof Richard Hobbs, from Murdoch University, who delivered the next talk, held in June, on "Ecological Restoration - current practice and prospects for the future". With reduced rainfall in many areas of WA, this poses a real challenge to in ecological restoration - where will funds and effort be best directed.

Crab Fest display

PPG has shared space with other agencies at the City of Mandurah's Crab Fest, but this year, we decided to book our own stall and gained a good position near the main foreshore footpath. PPG members were out in force over the two days distributing information about environmental issues in the Peel Region and asking people to sign the Sustainability Pledge. This pledge details 10 immediate and simple actions anyone can take to start reducing greenhouse gas emissions now. The first dignitaries to sign were our local Parliamentary member, David Templeman, and Mandurah Mayor Paddi Creevey.

Sharing PPG's space at Crab Fest were members of FRAGYLE who were collecting signatures to oppose much expanded coastal development between Mandurah and Preston Beach, including the Cape Bouvard urban residential developments at Clifton Beach (west of Lake Clifton) and the Mirvac and Satterley proposals north and south of the current Preston Beach townsite. The FRAGYLE members also collected signatures opposing the Eclipse application to extract limestone from the Old Lake Clifton Town Site.

Overall, the PPG stall was received well by the local community and visitors from the Peel Region and Perth who were genuinely interested in environmental issues with many signing the Sustainability Pledge.

Crab measures

The PPG was only too willing to write to the Minister for Fisheries Jon Ford to request more protection for crabs in the Peel-Harvey estuary, including a reduction to bag and boat limits until crab stocks increase, and that netting in the estuary be restricted to professional fishers. It was great to see that some of our requests were heeded especially with the crab fishing closure from September 1 to October 31 and the reduced bag and boat limits.

Conservation Council Awards

The PPG had much pleasure in nominating long-time PPG member and former PPG Committee President Griselda Hitchcock for the Conservation Council of WA Honours List 2007. The decision to nominate was an obvious one as Griselda has been an outstanding champion for environmental protection in the Peel Region and WA since the early '70s with major campaign involvement in the fight to save the Creery Wetlands, and other campaigns against unbridled development in the region, including the Peel Deviation, the Dawesville Channel, the Sarich development west of Lake Clifton and the Rhone-Poulenc Gallium plant at Pinjarra.

She was also involved in attracting funds for studies on the Samphire Marshes of the Peel Harvey Estuary and The Waterbirds of Goegrup and Black Lakes in the Peel Inlet Region - studies which are still quoted in scientific journals today. Suffice it to say, that Griselda has deservedly gained recognition on the Honours Lists.

Goegrup and Black Lakes

Due to the proximity of Goegrup and Black Lakes to Mandurah with its burgeoning population, the lakes' ecosystem is still under severe threat despite some attempts at protection under the old System 6 and now the Peel Region Scheme. To quote Griselda from an article she wrote in The Preservation Times early this year, "the Goegrup/Black Lakes system is still in a condition that could be rehabilitated and preserved as a wilderness place very close to Mandurah and Perth. It is still possible in some places to look across undisturbed samphire marsh to [see] feeding spoonbills and banded stilts with whistling kites and ospreys circling above". So the recent decision by Mandurah Council to support moves by the Peel Harvey Catchment Council to extend the RAMSAR listed wetlands by including Goegrup Lake, Black Lake, Soldiers' Cove and Samphire Cove has been a real highlight of the year for the PPG and local bird watchers. There is still much work to be done, but PPG will do whatever it can to

have these important water bodies listed along with the Peel Harvey Estuary, Lake McLarty, Lake Mealup, and the lakes and land within Yalgorup National Park to help protect tens of thousands of migratory birds that use these waterways.

Eastport Canal Development - Stage 5

The PPG has long opposed canal development on wetlands of the Peel Harvey Estuary and its river tributaries, so news that Mandurah Council had refused Port Bouvard's proposal to change a previously approved dry lot development to a canal development was greeted with excitement. The Council The worrying aspect of this decision was that Port Bouvard immediately appealed the decision with the State Appeals Tribunal and the outcome of this will be announced soon. The PPG hopes that the Council is able to stand by its decision whatever the outcome.

Mining and Quarry developments

The PPG has supported local communities in opposing mining proposals in environmentally sensitive areas. This past year, the main ones have been the proposed quarry expansion at Lot 5 Old Coast Road, Herron, the application for a lease to mine the Old Lake Clifton Town Site and a proposal to mine at North Dandalup. The threats to Lake Clifton - a Ramsar listed waterway - and the critically endangered thrombolites are a real concern if the two quarry proposals off the Old Coast Road were to get a green light. Mandurah Council has opposed the Lot 5 Old Coast Road proposal by WA Limestone, which is also due for a final State Appeals Tribunal hearing, and the Shire of Waroona has supported the Lake Clifton community in its efforts to have a Warden Court decision overturned on the Eclipse proposal for the Old Lake Clifton Town Site. Hopefully, there will be good news for the environment.

Other development threats

Over the past year, the PPG has also been involved in meetings on, discussions and/or writing submissions on the following developments which the group considers inappropriate for a number of reasons, including development on proximity to sensitive wetlands (the kidneys of our ecosystems), health issues, acid sulphate soils, and pressures on estuarine or riverine ecosystems.

These include:

- The huge urban Amarillo/Keralup development (City of Rockingham):
- Riverland Ramble in the Shire of Murray
- Point Grey in the Shire of Murray
- Satterley development - South Yunderup in the Shire of Murray
- Port Bouvard canal development - Eastport Stage 5 in the City of Mandurah
- Perth-Bunbury Highway - Southern Gateway Alliance
- Then there are the major coastal developments of:
- Clifton Beach - Cape Bouvard Investments - City of Mandurah and Shire of Waroona
- Preston Beach - Satterley & Mirvac in Shires of Waroona and Harvey
- Melros Beach - Cape Bouvard proposal

Climate Change and the Coast - Think Global Act Local Conference

This local conference hosted by the City of Mandurah and Coastal Zone Management confirmed much of what the PPG had been concerned about for years - unsustainable development on the coast and canal developments on rivers and the estuary and the vulnerability of these developments in the future.

It was inspiring to hear Mandurah Mayor Paddi Creevey talk about people power and political will to tackle climate change. It prompted the PPG to re-energise its efforts in making people more aware of what they could do at a local level.

Miscellaneous

There has been so much to be involved in and the PPG Committee members and PPG members can't afford to spread themselves too thinly, but other issues that continually need awareness raising are:

- Fauna in remnant bushland - appropriate relocations

- Water monitoring at Lake McLarty
- Groundwater monitoring and rubbish dumping Deputations/Presentations/Meetings

In 2006-07, the PPG has been involved in:

- Foreshore 2020 meetings and a deputation to Council on Soldiers Cove
- A presentation of five high priority local issues to Mandurah MLA David Templeman -
 1. Land for sale at end of Lake Clifton - possible purchase for Yalgorup
 2. Lake Clifton mining
 3. Cedar Woods not honouring agreement to reimburse bore owners for water costs
 4. Maintenance and enforcing by-laws on reserves (rubbish, fire management, weeds)
 5. Maintaining tuarts in urban areas.
- Regular meetings with David Templeman & Sally Talbot
- Occasional meetings with Kim Hames

Workshops/Conferences/Seminars/Events

PPG members attended the following during 2006-07

- Guest speaker talks with Dr Bernie Masters, Dr Vic Semenuik, and Prof Richard Hobbs
- Crab Fest stall and Sustainability Pledge
- Bridgewater North Workshop - Judy Trembath and Shirley Joiner wrote two reports on this development issue as well
- Point Grey Workshop - Judy Trembath
- Conservation Council's "Conservation in a Changing Climate Conference" - March 2007 (plus award to Grisdelda Hitchcock for environmental work)
- Climate Change and the Coast - Think Global Act Local Conference - August 20, 2007
- Tuart Decline Workshop - Tuart Research Group & Tuart Health Research Group
- Grant Writing Workshop - Shirley Joiner Submissions

PPG members wrote submissions on the following:

- Ormsby Terrace sand erosion
- The State Government's Biodiversity Strategy
- Proposed Point Grey Development
- Mining at North Dandalup - Iluka Resources
- Old Coast wetland adjacent to Len Howard Conservation Reserve
- Wanjeep Street - Frasers Development
- Lot 5 Old Coast Road - application from WA Limestone to expand its quarry
- RPS Ben Holyoake submission on development at Furnissdale
- Comment on Placid Waters development
- Protection of crab stocks

Grants

The PPG applied for the following grants:

- Lotterywest grant for computer
- Grant from David Templeman for Sustainability Pledge

- City of Mandurah Community Assistance Grants

Special Mentions

Thanks should go to all PPG Committee Members for their work during the year but special mention goes to the following:

Nancy Fardin, Coral Richards & Lyn Dickman for the writing, editing, copy tasting and production of The Preservation Times - PPG's Newsletter - over the year.

Vic Beacham for his (excuse the pun) tireless work to have dumped tyres removed, his continual work on water monitoring in Halls Head and push to have Cedar Woods honour their commitment to local residents, and his latest push to have Mirvac change their policy on solar hot water heaters on roofs in Mirvac developments

Shirley Joiner for carrying on two very labour intensive roles of secretary and tending to the PPG office, especially with the added tasks of the move to the new premises and trouble with phone lines, bills and a new computer

Lyn Dickman for her continued dedication to PPG in her role as treasurer - a position she has held for well over 10 years now.

Marion Timms for her excellent flora survey work and willingness to help with submission writing despite an already heavy workload

Nancy Fardin and Coral Richards for their role in developing and organising with the City of Mandurah the successful guest speaker series.

The PPG would also like to acknowledge the work of Cr John Hughes and Coral Richards for their work to have Eldora Reserve in Falcon renamed Josephine Te Puni Reserve and the City of Mandurah's EcoServices section, particularly Jane O'Malley, Lisa Wray and Shane Kearney for their continued support of the PPG's mission to preserve the natural qualities of the Peel-Harvey Catchment and Estuary.

Others to thank for their support and assistance are FoRPeel, Men Of The Trees, Friends of Island Point and Friends of Lake Clifton

The Future

As usual, the future is always full of challenges and opportunities. The PPG has survived another year and a tough year at that. We will continue to liaise and network with other environmental groups, lobby all tiers of Government, support individuals and community groups.

Issues that will require our dedication and energy in the future include:

- Ormsby Terrace - sand erosion issues show a wider problem of development being too close to coast
- A watching brief on the New Perth-Bunbury Highway and all the proposed developments outlined earlier in this report
- The Network City idea to link up with other environmental groups in WA
- Production of a booklet on Lake Clifton and a Calendar of Events featuring long-time PPG member and cartoonist Frank Jenkins
- Draft Peel-Harvey Water Quality Improvement Management Plan
- The use of red mud from Alcoa
- Preservation of Caddadup Reserve Bushland especially Quandongs
- Professor John Devlin - International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) conference in Perth scheduled for early May 2008

Thank you