



CoastSWaP Coastal Management Case Studies (9/10)

The Status of Coastcare in the Peel-Harvey Region

By Blair Darvill, January 2017

Background

Between 2014 and 2016 the South West and Peel Coastal Management Group (CoastSWaP) coordinated a series of annual coastal stakeholder forums in sub-regional areas between Mandurah and Walpole. The forums main objectives were to:

- Provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to share up to date information on issues, priorities and actions within the coastal zone.
- Identify potential planning and management solutions for future coastal rehabilitation and protection.
- Strengthen relationships between stakeholders and assist to find common ground to work together on.

After three years, fourteen forums and input from one hundred and fifty key stakeholders a great deal of information has been compiled and shared with the CoastSWaP network via direct communication, forum minutes, case studies, presentations at conferences and posted onto the CoastSWaP website (see CoastSWaP website [forums](#) and [case studies](#) pages for further information).

This information has been used to:

- Advocate for better integrated regional and state coordination and support to address priority issues.
- Identify and share successful and 'best practice' coastal management methodology and cases.
- Assist with the development of the South West Coastal Action Plan (SWCC 2015).

Overall, the information gathered from the forums and further communications with stakeholders paints a 'big picture' of the status of coastal management in the south west region.

The following information is a general summary of the Peel-Harvey component of this picture, with regards to the key stakeholders involved and their main challenges and actions. (See [here](#) for a summary status of the South West region from Binningup to Walpole). There is always room for improvement in an organisations' efficiency and effectiveness, as well as how separate organisations work together to reach common goals.

From CoastSWaP's position as an independent body bringing these stakeholders together and compiling information that is shared, we can (over time) identify some of these areas for improvement. These have also been summarised below.

Peel-Harvey Regional Forums

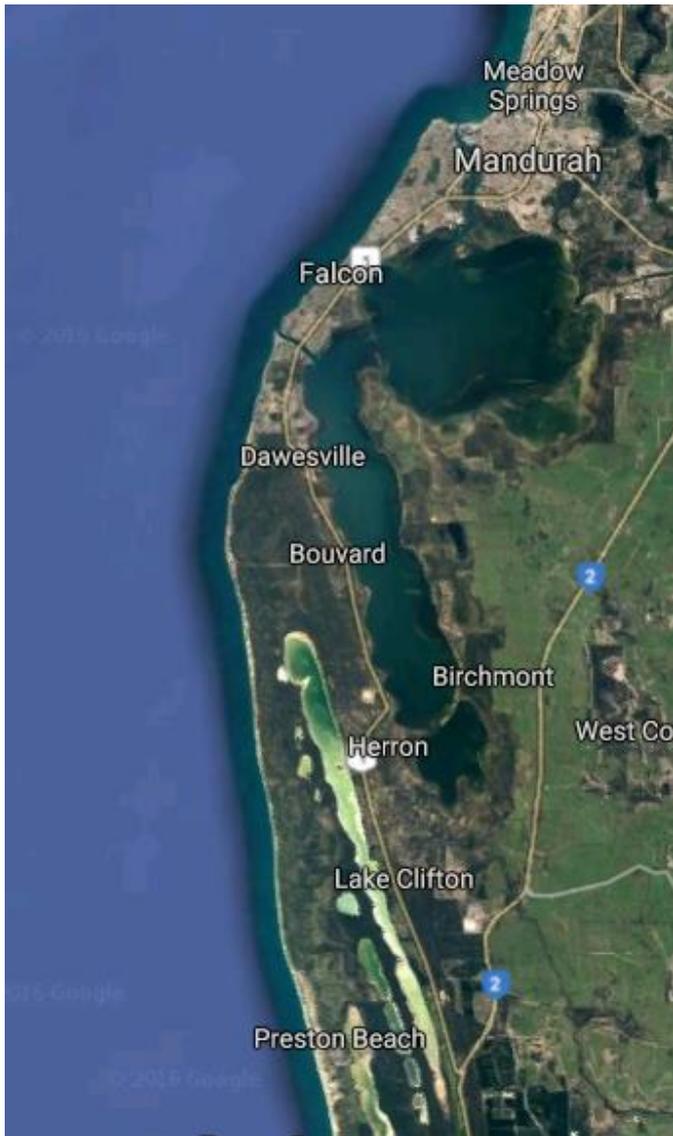


Figure 1: The Peel-Harvey Coastal region.
(Image: Google Maps)

Three coastal stakeholder forums were held annually in the Peel-Harvey region between 2014 and 2016, which covers the coastal area between Mandurah and Preston Beach. Overall, thirty-one coastal stakeholders attended from eleven groups and organisations, this included:

- City of Mandurah (CoM)
- Shire of Waroona
- Department of Parks and Wildlife
- Peel Harvey Catchments Council
- Peron Naturaliste Partnership
- CoastSWaP
- Falcon Coastcare
- Bouvard Coastcare
- Preston Beach Volunteer Rangers
- West Australian Landcare Network

Key Coastcare Stakeholders

MCCAG and the City of Mandurah

The Mandurah Coastcare Coordination Advisory Group (MCCAG) is comprised of 6 local coastcare community groups and supported by City of Mandurah staff. It was set up by the City of Mandurah in 1996 with the purpose to advise on general coastal management issues and assist with planning and coordinating on-ground actions.

The group is active with bi-monthly meetings and annual volunteer planting days. One of the key recent management decisions to have come from the groups advisory role is to ban the use of plastic guards on dunes within the City of Mandurah. The MCCAG members decided that due to the high risk and occurrence of the guards becoming marine debris, or collapsing and killing seedlings if not maintained or during strong wind events, they are not appropriate for use on exposed coastal dunes.

CoM staff and coastcare group volunteers have noted that MCCAG's capacity as an advisory group has notably reduced over the last few years. This is partly due to a combination of; a reduced number of active coastcare champions; a regional coastal NRM facilitator position no longer exists and; restructuring within the City of Mandurah's environmental team and community engagement program. The groups advisory role has also recently merged with the City's Mandurah Environmental Advisory Group (MEAG).



Figure 2: Malcolm Flett, Coordinator of Bouvard Coastcare for 22 years retired in February 2016. (Photo – Richard Polden, Mandurah Mail)

MCCAG is a great model of integrated community and local government coastal management and history has shown its effectiveness, however for the group to remain effective they require a boost in active community members and continued capacity building support from the City of Mandurah.

The City of Mandurah's Waterways Management teams' main priority is to maintain and preserve their foreshores. This involves a wide range of works including beach renourishment through sand bypassing and dredging, berm grading and coastal protection works. They also carry out detailed monitoring and assessments (photo-points, tide and wave data, sand movement analysis) to better understand the coastal processes in the area. In 2016 the team requested further resources from council to address growing coastal erosion issues in a strategic manner.

Peel Harvey Catchments Council

In 2013 the Peel Harvey Catchments Council (PHCC) also restructured from a sub-regional to a regional NRM body, effectively enabling them to act independently from the South West Catchments Council (SWCC) and access dedicated federal funding. The PHCC have prioritised and carried out a wide range of actions within the Peel-Yalgorup coastal estuaries and wetlands, in particular the significant migratory shorebird sites in the region.

However, less focus has been placed on the beach and dune systems and there is currently no coastal NRM facilitator position for the region, the first time this has been the case in twenty years. While it must be acknowledged that PHCC is doing what they can with the extra responsibility and limited funding that has been allocated to them (the PHCC receives the lowest funding allocation in Western Australia from the federal National Landcare Program), it is hoped that further resources can be sourced to help support key stakeholders and address the coastal issues within the area.

Department of Parks and Wildlife

A key issue in the Peel-Harvey region's natural coastal areas is unsustainable recreational use of the coast, causing damage to natural vegetation and disturbing native animals. At the recent 2016 CoastSWaP Peel – Harvey Coastal Stakeholders Forum ([see minutes here](#)), David Charles, Parks and Visitors Officer for the

Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) Swan Coastal Plain District, noted that over 200,000 vehicles visited Tims Thicket and White Hills annually between 2015/16.

The Yalgorup National Park adjoins these areas and a large number of illegal or unofficial tracks between the National Park and the City's reserves allows users to gain access into the dunes. Rangers from both jurisdictions are constantly closing and delineating tracks through brushing and barricading. These installations are often removed by the small percentage of visitors that are either ignorant or uncaring. Once again, limited resources have been allocated to manage these sites, therefore illegal camping, domestic animals, hooning, fires, defecation and littering are all issues that continue to cause damage on an increasing scale. With the potential to add a recently acquired private property to the Yalgorup National Park, it is anticipated further resources can be obtained to develop a recreational plan and designate formal camping and day use areas in the park.

Interestingly, of the 10 on-ground Coastcare projects funded by Coastwest (\$260 000) from 2013 – 2016 in the South West and Peel regions, none were managed or carried out within the City of Mandurah or Yalgorup National Park areas (apart from CoastSWaP Forums and Tangaroa Blue Beach clean-ups). If land manager funding is limited within these areas, it would be worthwhile for stakeholders to investigate applying for Coastwest funds to help address coastal issues.

Shire of Waroona

Further south in the Waroona Shire, the Preston Beach Volunteers (PBV) are continuing to minimise unsustainable actions in the coastal zone (see [CoastSWaP case study](#) on Preston Beach Volunteers) by maintaining regular patrols, raising awareness and educating beach users and working with staff and agencies from Waroona Shire, Police, DPaW, Fisheries and emergency services.

The Waroona Shire carry out annual Coastcare planting days and beach cleanups with local school groups and volunteers. Volunteers also run a successful dune stabilisation program with brush stockpiled by residents from local prunings. Unfortunately, this stockpile was recently set alight by arsonists and will not be stockpiled through the summer of 2016-2017. CCTV and surveillance cameras may be installed at beach access sites to monitor activity. The Shire are also looking at applying for funds and developing a Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan (CHRMAP) for Preston Beach in the near future.

Conclusion

Coastcare stakeholders in the Peel-Harvey region have been active in protecting and caring for natural coastal areas for over twenty years. However, the loss of a regional coastal facilitator position (and coastal NRM program), a current lack of active volunteer champions and a reduction in staff and funding resources from land managers has resulted in a reduced level of capacity of stakeholders. Impacts from unsustainable activities in the coastal zone such as illegal or informal access from Off Road Vehicles can only increase if these organisational issues are not addressed. External funding applications through Coastwest and State NRM grant programs, although limited, could help to alleviate the current lack of funds available. An investment in coastcare education, volunteer recruitment and succession planning by land managers may help to turn the tide of declining active coastcare groups. This could also involve the reformation of a volunteer ranger group similar to the Preston Beach Volunteer Rangers.

These potential solutions could have a greater chance of success if they were planned and implemented in a collaborative manner involving all key stakeholders, from grass level community group volunteers, local and state land managers and NRM organisations. CoastSWaP can also play a part by continuing to bring stakeholders together and compiling and sharing information on improved methods of coastal management.

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This case study series is dedicated to coastcare champion Chris Gibbs.

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