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## South Coast landcare heroes recognised

A South Coast NRM project that is boosting Aboriginal employment and cultural engagement in the South Coast region has taken out a prestigious 2009 West Australian Landcare award.

Restoring Connections was announced the winner of the Leighton Holdings Indigenous Award at the state NRM conference in Geraldton last week for its outstanding land management practices, which integrate Indigenous ecological knowledge and cultural practices.

The Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee, a South Coast NRM community partner, was awarded the Toshiba Community Group Award.

Restoring Connections works with Noongar communities across the South Coast to identify, restore and protect cultural places at risk of degradation. The project was developed by South Coast NRM to strengthen participation and engagement of the Noongar people, and to promote greater understanding of the legacy of our traditional land custodians among the wider community.

South Coast NRM chief executive Rob Edkins said Restoring Connections was a worthy winner and the award recognised the need to bring Aboriginal people into NRM activities.

"This is great recognition of a project that truly engages and works with the Aboriginal people of the South Coast to restore connections between people, culture and country," he said.

"We look forward to continuing this great project and working in partnership with Aboriginal people to protect sites of significance."

Mr Edkins also congratulated the two other Landcare Award winners from the South Coast- the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee and Narrikup local Bill Hollingworth, who was awarded the WA Tree Farmer of the Year.

Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee deputy chairperson Arthur Patterson was thrilled to hear the committee's efforts had been recognised and were appreciated by the wider community.

"Our success in this case can be attributed to the dedication of our staff and the great rapport that they have with the rural community. This, combined with the willingness of our landholders to invest their own resources in a range of activities dedicated to improving the environment for current and future generations, has led to some remarkable achievements," Mr Patterson said.

For more information on the Landcare Awards' selection criteria and winner summaries, visit <http://wa.landcareheroes.com/2009-wa-winners>

**ENDS**

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**South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc. is the leading regional group for natural resource management on the South Coast of Western Australia. As an independent non-profit organisation, we work with the community to improve the environment by preserving and protecting unique plants and animals, managing land and waterways, and sharing knowledge and skills in natural resource management.**