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Project Dieback steps up the fight

South Coast NRM is to develop the first state-wide Dieback Information Management System to help protect Western Australia from further dieback infestations.

The web-based system, which will provide land managers with information on the dieback situation in their local area, was made possible this month after South Coast NRM received \$570,000 for its long-running Project Dieback initiative from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), through the state NRM program.

Project Dieback will focus on working with key stakeholders in priority areas surrounding Cape Arid and Fitzgerald River National Parks, as well as the Lesueur National Park in the Northern Agricultural Catchment Council (NACC) Region, to minimise the risk of disease spread by implementing dieback management strategies.

South Coast NRM chief executive Rob Edkins said the system would keep community, industry and government up to date with reports of new infestations.

“Project Dieback set the first benchmark in mapping dieback across all land tenures and NRM regions. This investment by the State Government will build on South Coast NRM existing achievements and help us protect vulnerable areas,” Mr Edkins said.

“The work of the Project Dieback team will also complement the recovery programs run by DEC for flora and fauna already hard hit by the disease.”

Project Dieback manager Annabelle Bushell said it was essential that Project Dieback integrated the products it had developed over the past five years into a system that would provide continuity for dieback management in the longer term.

Ms Bushell said Project Dieback’s consistency of approach across land tenures would be a key to its success.

“We will be working closely with regional stakeholders through the regional NRM network during implementation and will have representatives from each region steering the project along the way,” she explained.

Phytophthora Dieback is a microbe of the soil which kills plants by destroying their root system. This “biological bulldozer” has infested over one million hectares of the South West leaving few precious large tracts of land disease-free.

With the incidence of dieback very high along existing road and track networks around the South West, Project Dieback aims to stop soil movement in any form or quantity into disease-free areas by encouraging land managers and industry representatives to think more about the dieback threat when they plan operations or developments.

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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 not-for-profit organisation, we work with the community to improve the environment by preserving and protecting unique plants and animals, managing land and waterways sustainably, and sharing knowledge and skills in natural resource management.