

where the trickle starts

FIVE RIVERS: RESTORATION AND RENEWAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL FLOWS IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH COAST REGION

what WE WILL ACHIEVE

Life on Land
Empowered Communities
Collaboration
Thriving First Nations Connections
Mobilise Resources

how WE WILL ACHIEVE IT

Standing Together
Supporting Local Efforts
Partnering with First Nations Peoples
Advancing Knowledge Systems
Focusing on the Future



Planting native tree seedlings in Gnowangerup. CREDIT: Alison Bennett Taylor

The Five Rivers project is an innovative collaboration between Noongar communities, catchment partners and the agricultural sector.

This broadscale, inter-linked project will bring together partners from across the Five Rivers catchment areas to restore cultural pathways and ecosystem integrity.

REGIONAL VALUE

Rivers are integral to the ecological, social and economic values of the South Coast community and are of immense cultural significance to the region's First Nations communities and peoples. Across the South Coast region's highly fragmented landscape, rivers serve as vitally important connecting corridors for cultural pathways, biodiversity, and ecosystems.

There are five prominent rivers in the South Coast region: the Pallinup, Frankland, Kent, Kalgan and Gairdner Rivers. The Five Rivers project will target waterway restoration works to repair nature across the catchments of these priority rivers. The project will be achieved through collaboration across the landscape that honours and respects cultural guidance and contributes to broader scale protection and restoration of rivers in an agricultural landscape.

"noongars know what has happened to the land and we know what needs to be done to start to heal it. We just need a chance to begin." **Gnowangerup Noongar Elder**

THE CHALLENGE

The impact of extensive landscape clearing throughout the upper catchments of the central South Coast region's largest rivers has been two-fold. Land clearing has enabled prosperous and productive agricultural communities and economies to establish, however unique cultural and ecological values have been significantly damaged. This ecological and cultural damage includes loss of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity, disruption of essential natural processes and ecosystem cycles, and the dispossession and disconnection of Noongar peoples from ancestral Country and culture.

The impacts are not constrained to the headwaters as threats such as salinity, sedimentation, and contamination magnify as they flow on downstream. Similarly, for Noongar people, damage flows from desecrated landscapes into communities under sustained stress as

intimate links forged over generations on Country fragment.

There is a need and desire by multiple partners across the Five Rivers catchments to do more to protect and restore the ecological function and cultural values of rivers at a scale that makes a difference for generations to come.



THE OPPORTUNITY

The Five Rivers project will deliver remarkable, inter-linked opportunities for Noongar people to reconnect to culture and Country, whilst building capacity to lead significant, regional scale nature repair works. Cultural pathways will be rebuilt whilst re-establishing ecological integrity by restoring key biotic and abiotic components including native bushland, riparian buffers, in-stream structures, habitat augmentation, and connectivity.

THE APPROACH

Five Rivers is a major First Nations led project which will reaffirm cultural pathways and cultural sites, generating significant opportunity to strengthen community capacity and governance for the region's Noongar communities.

Through this project, a detailed Five Rivers zone map will be built, providing a landscape scan of significant cultural and ecological components. This map will guide a comprehensive regional restoration action plan. Development and delivery of an action plan will provide a unique opportunity for a deep collaboration between First Nation's, catchment and Landcare groups, and farmer groups.

Targeted cultural restoration works on sites, stories, and knowledge will be delivered in combination with targeted ecological protection and restoration works across both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

As a major collaborative undertaking, the Five Rivers project provides a significant vehicle for sustained alliance building between Noongar participants, land managers and project partners capable of supporting development of the region's first natural capital account. The project will create the opportunity for Indigenous employment, training and education.



In summary, the five key principles of the Five Rivers project are:

- Identification of key sites and activities;
- Cultural and ecological mapping;
- Capacity building, Noongar Ranger upskilling and training;
- Comprehensive catchment and waterway restoration works;
- Advancing and deepening knowledge.

PARTNERSHIPS

Five Rivers is a landscape scale, collaborative, nature, and cultural repair project. As the project develops, partnerships will be confirmed and will include local regional Noongar groups and local Noongar corporations, governments and relevant departments, catchment/ Landcare groups, production groups and private landholders.

NEXT STEPS

Key next steps to develop the Five Rivers project include stakeholder mapping, targeted consultation, co-design and attracting resources to support the development and implementation of this project.

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