



Acknowledgment of Country

South Coast NRM works on Noongar Boodja. Noongar people have cared for this Country for thousands of generations, and we work alongside them today, South Coast NRM respects Noongar rights, their knowledge, and their say in what happens on Country. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

CEO update

I hope this update finds you well.

Djilba, a lovely time of the year. I have been out and about a bit lately, and it has been wonderful to see the flowers emerging across our amazing South Coast. We do work and live in such a precious and beautiful place. Whilst the flowers are abundant, the rain has been sparse over recent months, and many catchments need a good drink. I hope some decent spring rain arrives very soon.

Many projects are being delivered across the South Coast region. Work continues in and around Lake Gore, currently our main project in Esperance, where revegetation works are underway. Community and local stakeholders have also completed the Quallilup Technical Action Report and are developing the Lake Gore Catchment Management Plan. That plan will guide the recovery of ecological resilience across the Lake Gore Ramsar wetland system and its catchment for the next 20 years. Our wetlands are such important places — for migratory shorebirds and for many other native plants and animals.

Our priority place Fitz-Stirling project is gearing up for phase two. This next stage will see more priority cultural land management activities led by local Noongar organisations, and will continue and expand integrated feral animal control, revegetation, and dieback management across farming, private conservation, and public land estate.

However, the busiest space currently is in the sustainable agriculture program, with two major projects kicking off with catchment and grower groups across the region. The Climate Smart Agriculture and Scaling Success projects have both commenced, and I am thrilled that these programs are bringing key land managers and grower groups together to better support agricultural industry and landholders.

Over the past month, South Coast NRM and partners have also run a series of roundtables on biodiversity offsets, nature tourism, and nature finance. The thread running through all three is a fairly simple question: how do we pay for nature protection, management and recovery at the scale the South Coast actually needs? Significant development is coming to our region: water supply, renewable energy, and transmission and the environmental offsets that go with it are still largely planned project by project. That is slow and uncertain for

proponents, and it rarely adds up to much for the landscape. Planned ahead, strategically and at scale, that same investment could do a great deal more for nature and give industry the certainty it needs. The nature finance round table asks a related question: what is actually stopping public and private investment from flowing into nature here in the West, and what would need to change? And nature tourism is perhaps the most tangible of the three; our wildflowers, our coastline, and our reserves already draw people from around the world, and there is real opportunity to do that well and return some of the value to the places people come to see.

What has struck me most is the range of people around the table: industry, government, Traditional Owner organisations, researchers, conservation groups, and landholders. There is far more common ground than you might expect once we get past the language. This is early work and none of it converts overnight, but we will keep convening these conversations, and I will keep you posted as they turn into better support for the regional groups doing this vital work on Country.

Also, in August the board said farewell to Andrew Bathgate, local horticulturist, board member for nine years, and our chairman. Andrew has been a key figure in leading the organisation through some challenging times and into a new era, and we owe him a great deal. Thank you, Andrew, for your hard work, vision and commitment to the region. Colin Ingram in Esperance is our Acting Chair.

As always, please do feel free to reach out.

Best Regards

Luke

Update from the Threatened Species Program

We're thrilled to announce that the Right Whale Tracker project is expanding and extending through to 2029, thanks to continued funding from State NRM and Water Corporation.

Since its launch in May 2024, the Right Whale Tracker project has been bringing together science, community and Traditional Custodians to improve our understanding and protection of endangered southern right whales along the south coast of Western Australia.

The next phase will build on this strong foundation, expanding monitoring and community engagement between Denmark and east of Esperance. Indigenous Rangers and trained community volunteers will continue to play a key role, undertaking both land- and vessel-based surveys to help track southern right whales and build knowledge about where and when they use our coastal waters.

This information will contribute to whale recovery planning, the identification of Biologically Important Areas and inform sustainable coastal development, helping ensure that decisions about our coast are informed by the best available knowledge. The project will also expand opportunities for the community to connect with and care for southern right whales through interpretive signage, workshops and cultural knowledge-sharing events. By combining scientific knowledge with local and cultural knowledge, the project aims to foster greater stewardship of these remarkable animals and reduce human impacts on whales and their habitat.

We're incredibly grateful to State NRM and Water Corporation for their continued investment and partnership. Their contributions will allow the Right Whale Tracker project to build on the momentum of the past two years and continue creating lasting benefits for southern right whales and our coastal communities.

We can't thank our partners and collaborators enough for their incredible support, expertise and contribution to this project, with its success truly being a team effort! A huge thank you to our partners:

- South Coast Cetaceans
- Oceans Blueprint
- Edith Cowan University
- National Environmental Science Program
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation
- Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar Aboriginal Corporation
- Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation
- Nowanup
- Southern Aboriginal Corporation

- Kadadjiny Aboriginal Corporation
- Albany Historic Whaling Station
- Space Whale Studio
- Albany Whale Tours
- Albany Ocean Adventures
- Citizen scientists

Photograph captured by Space Whale Studio



Right Whale Project

South Coast NRM's Right Whale Tracker Coordinator Laura Bird had an amazing day with the team from Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation on Tuesday 25 August, joining Tjaltjraak Elders, Senior Cultural Advisors, Sea Country Rangers, Healthy Land and Sea Rangers, and Junior Rangers, along with Tjaltjraak Sea Country Coordinator Kirsty Alexander, Oceans Blueprint Professor Chandra Salgado Kent, DBCA Marine Operations Officer Jay Hayes and filmmaker Javier Delgado Esteban, aboard Esperance Island Cruises to explore Wudjari sea country in search of the endangered southern right whale.

Activities focused on identifying key characteristics of southern right whales, including their unique callosity patterns and range of behaviours, alongside the sharing of mamang stories. The group was fortunate to see dolphins, sea lions, humpback whales, and a southern right whale mum and calf — great opportunities to put camera skills to the test and carry out reports and surveys using the Marine Fauna Sighting app.

This vital work is made possible through the collaboration of South Coast Cetaceans, South Coast Natural Resource Management, Oceans Blueprint and Edith Cowan University, with support from the Western Australian Government State NRM Program, the National Environmental Science Program, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, and Water Corporation.

Want to help protect these endangered whales or learn more about the research?

Contact Laura at laurab@southcoastnrm.com.au or visit southcoastnrm.com.au/southern-right-whale

Photographs captured by Space Wahle Studio



Yakamia Primary School Planting Day

A beautiful sunny August day, almost 500 native seedlings, and a whole lot of energy - what a planting day at Barnesby Drive!

We were thrilled to welcome students from Yakamia Primary School to our Barnesby Drive Stage 2 site on Yakamia Creek, where they helped plant almost 500 local native seedlings.

Students from Kindy through to Year 6 planted around a dozen different species, including Banksias, Marris, Bottlebrushes, Kangaroo Paws, Sheoaks and Acacias. To make things even more fun, we turned planting into a treasure hunt! Each species was colour coded, so students had to find the right coloured spot before planting their seedling.

There was plenty of enthusiasm, lots of great questions and some very keen little planters. By the end of the day, every student in the school had planted at least one seedling and the site was looking considerably greener!

This planting is part of our broader restoration work along Yakamia Creek, which is helping to stabilise the creek line, reduce erosion and sediment movement, improve water quality in the creek and ultimately benefit the estuary downstream in Oyster Harbour. As the riparian vegetation grows, it will also provide valuable food, shelter and habitat for local wildlife, including black cockatoos and western ringtail possums.

A huge thank you to the Yakamia Primary School teachers and staff, parents, grandparents and all the other helpers who came along to support the students. We'd also like to thank the teams from Green Skills Inc, The City of Albany, and the Southern Aboriginal Corporation Female Rangers for helping make the day such a success.

It was fantastic to see the next generation getting their hands dirty and playing a part in restoring their local environment. We can't wait to watch this little forest grow!

This project is funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust under the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program, with support from The City of Albany. This project is a part of Healthy Estuaries WA - a State Government program that aims to improve the health of our South West estuaries.



For Peat's sake! Landholders learn more about the hidden treasures on their properties.

There was a great turnout at our recent “For Peat’s Sake!” information session at Parryville Hall on 2nd September, with local landholders coming together to learn more about peatlands and the opportunities available through the PEAT Southwest project. Not sure what Peat is? Check out this website for more information <https://peatsouthwest.com.au/>.

The session provided an opportunity to explore what peat is, why these unique ecosystems are important, and some of the threats they can face — particularly on privately managed land. The event also opened up discussion about practical ways landholders can help protect peatlands on their properties.

Dr David Edmonds, a Walpole farmer with extensive knowledge of the region’s peatland ecosystems, started the morning by taking us back to basics: What exactly is peat? David explained how peat forms, what makes peatlands so special, and some of the key threats facing these ecosystems. His local knowledge and practical perspective helped demonstrate why understanding and protecting peat is important for landholders and the wider landscape.

Emma Sommerville, PEAT Southwest Project Coordinator at South Coast NRM (SCNRM), then introduced the PEAT Southwest project, outlining its goals and the roles SCNRM and the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee (WICC) are playing in supporting peatland conservation across the region.

Importantly, the session also provided information about what the project can offer landholders. This includes opportunities to work with landholders to identify and better understand peat on their properties, contribute to data collection, and potentially access fencing support to help protect suitable peatlands from threats such as stock access.

The strong turnout and lively discussion demonstrated the growing interest in peatlands across the South Coast. We’re looking forward to continuing conversations with landholders and working together to better understand, protect and care for these remarkable ecosystems.

Think you might have peat on your property? Get in touch with the Emma (emma@southcoastnrm.com.au) or Tim Gamblin (bio@wicc.org.au) to find out more about the project and how you could get involved.

The PEAT Southwest project is proudly supported by Lotterywest, the Ian Potter Foundation, The University of Western Australia and Edith Cowan University, with additional contributions from Jane Fenwick, the Australian Amphibian and Reptile Genomics Initiative, the Australia and Pacific Science Foundation, Wettenhall Environment Trust and the Australian Academy of Science.



Dalyup River Riparian Revegetation Enhancement

On the 25th and 26th of August 2026, South Coast NRM worked alongside the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation's Land Enterprise Team to deliver three hectares of revegetation in the Lake Gore catchment. This activity was delivered as part of the Lake Gore Project, to improve the condition and extent of riparian habitat benefiting the Lake Gore Ramsar Wetland, approximately 35 km north-west of Esperance.

Located in the central reach of the catchment on the banks of the Dalyup River, the site was initially revegetated with 8,000 native seedlings during the winter of 2025 with the assistance of Wongutha CAPS Conservation and Ecosystem Management students and rangers from ETNTAC's Junior Ranger, Healthy Country Program, and Land Enterprise programs. Whilst many of these seedlings survived, a portion were impacted by the grazing of western grey kangaroos and feral herbivores such as rabbits and deer. The feral deer have been utilising the Dalyup River to migrate northwards away from DPIRD's recently completed Thermal-Assisted Aerial Cull, which was highly successful in reducing feral deer populations in the Esperance coastal corridor. To counter this, the decision was made to protect the seedlings using tree guards.

A year on from the initial planting, South Coast NRM Lake Gore Project Coordinator Kahree Garnaut and three ETNTAC Land Enterprise Rangers planted 2,588 seedlings, comprising 17 species of endemic riparian flora, including the iconic Swamp Yate (*Eucalyptus occidentalis*). We will monitor the change in vegetative cover for the remainder of the Lake Gore Project using flora surveys within the revegetation zone. In the long term, the enhancement of vegetation condition and extent within the riparian zone of the Dalyup River and other tributaries of the catchment will contribute to improved water quality within the Lake Gore Ramsar Wetland, further protecting internationally significant habitat for migratory shorebirds.

This project is funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by South Coast NRM, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners Panel.

Photographs 1 and 2: ETNTAC and SCNRM vehicles parked with the seedling trailer ready to commence infill planting. Following planting, tree guards were installed around the infill plantings to provide protection and support successful establishment.



Sustainable Agriculture update September 2026

The past two months have seen growth in the Sustainable Ag team and in our projects, as we embed new work and meet new members of our team. Just as the seeds sown in our cropping regions before winter are now in full bloom, so too the groundwork laid for some exciting new projects is now coming to fruition.

In our last newsletter we shared the exciting news that the South Coast Drought and Climate Resilience Consortium had been successful in receiving funding via the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund's (FDF) Scaling Success Program. We are now working with the other 10 members of the consortium to get this project underway, with the first events for this project scheduled for early October and on-ground work to follow soon after. The project includes drought-resilient pasture trials (see article below for more), drought planning, water security and water quality improvements. Make sure you follow South Coast NRM on Facebook or Instagram to stay in the loop with upcoming events and opportunities for landholders.

We are delighted to welcome two new staff to the Sustainable Ag team. Kia Nelson, based on Albany, started as our Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator (SAF) in mid-August. Kia will be out and about over spring attending field days and providing support in sustainable agriculture where needed. Jess McNamara, based in Esperance, is taking over the reins coordinating our Know Your Southern Soils project, a collaboration with DPIRD. Jess will also support Kia in the SAF role. To contact any of our team, please email ag@southcoastnrm.com.au

Our Program Lead, Suzannah Macbeth, attended the Great Southern Farmer Awards in Denmark on Friday 21 August. Minister for Agriculture Jackie Jarvis opened the awards night, which was a fantastic celebration of some of the leading farmers in the Great Southern. We were also delighted to see our former staff member and now Livestock Officer at Stirlings to Coast Farmers, Victoria Surridge, recognised as a semi-finalist in the Great Southern Female Farmer of the Year for her business Western R B Angus Stud. Have a listen to some of the winners talking in the first story on ABC WA Country Hour for Monday 24 August here: <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/wa-country-hour/wa-country-hour/107061740>

Photograph of September canola near Mt Barker. Captured by Rosie Boyhan



Paddock-scale pasture trials – EOIs open

Local farmers will meet to kick off Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee's paddock-scale pasture trials on Tues 29th September in Marbelup. Independent agronomist and multi-species specialist Mark Tupman will run an introduction, planning session and field walk for those keen to trial innovative, drought-resilient pasture types for our region.

WICC's Kylie Cook will be looking after the trial: "It's a great opportunity for farmers to see what works for us locally, how to apply new varieties, seed mixes, perennials and fodder shrubs successfully, and to help with the financial costs of trialing new crops. I'm looking forward to seeing how the trial paddocks develop, and how the input costs and nutrition stack up at the end of the growing season."

Farmers selected for the trial will receive seed mixes tailored to their enterprise, seeding allowance and agronomic support for a 5-hectare paddock to compare against a "business as usual" paddock. Farmers interested in being part of the trial can express their interest here: wicc.org.au/farming-for-the-future
This project is part of the South Coast Drought and Climate Resilience Project, supported through funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.

Photograph of Multi-species pasture crop captured by Victoria Surridge



WA Wines Sustainability Advancement Program

The Western Australian Wine Sustainability Advancement Program (WAWSAP) is now underway, supporting practical improvements to vineyard dams across the Great Southern and Margaret River regions. Delivered in partnership with Wines of Western Australia, the program aims to strengthen water security and sustainability outcomes for participating vineyards. Working closely with property owners, the project team is planning new

fencing to reduce livestock access to dams, along with native seedling plantings that will create windbreaks, help reduce evaporation, and provide valuable habitat for local biodiversity. We look forward to sharing updates as these properties continue to flourish over the next 18 months.

This project is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program under the Natural Heritage Trust. The project is also supported by the WA Government through the Wine Industry Partnership.

Image: A dam site at Shepherds Hut Wines in the Porongorups that will be enhanced as part of the project.



Developing a Collective Approach to Biodiversity Offsets in South Western Australia

On the 18th of August, South Coast NRM and the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) co-hosted an industry roundtable in Perth. We brought together government trading entities, industry, NRM organisations and peak bodies for a candid, solutions-focused conversation about the future of biodiversity offsets in WA.

The timing for this roundtable was critical - with policy reform under development at both state and federal government levels. Reform to the EPBC Act has shifted the national settings from "no net loss" to "net gain," and Australia needs an estimated \$7 billion a year in additional nature investment to halt biodiversity decline. Offsets alone won't close that gap. However, there is an opportunity to leverage biodiversity offsets to deliver better ecosystem connectivity at a landscape scale and improve environmental condition beyond defined project areas. If used strategically and implemented well, advanced biodiversity offsets could be a meaningful part of the solution.

Facilitated by Lee McIntosh (former Deputy Chair of the WA Environmental Protection Authority and current Co-Vice President of the National Environmental Law Association), the day surfaced strong alignment across the requirements that would underpin certainty in offset supply and demand for advanced biodiversity offsets. These requirements included:

- Confidence that regulators will clearly recognise advanced, restoration-based offsets
- Tenure security and fair incentives for landholders to bring supply online
- Proponents require cost certainty, legal defensibility and the ability to aggregate demand
- Need for clear governance, transparency and a system built for landscape-scale outcomes, not fragmented, ad-hoc delivery

Participants described 'good' offsets as absolute net gain and ecological uplift delivered at landscape-scale, coordinated and monitored, with consistency between State and Commonwealth settings, and grounded in trusted partnerships.

Independent, on-the-ground organisations like NRMs were repeatedly named as the credible, neutral partner that could help make this work. South Coast NRM has played this role across the South Coast for three decades.

Thank you to everyone who brought their expertise, candour and goodwill to the room. We look forward to building this collective model together.



Avian Influenza (H5 Bird Flu) Update

Important message for our community

H5 bird flu is a virus that has spread quickly around the world. Overseas it has caused major impacts on wild birds and even mammals like seals and cats.

The good news is there are simple actions we can all take to help reduce risks for pets and our communities, while supporting our native species.

Here are some simple ways you can help:

- ✓ keep shoes and clothes clean before/after visiting National parks, nature reserves or farms.
- ✓ Don't feed wildlife to help them with their social distancing.
- ✓ Keep pets away from wildlife to reduce disturbance and spread of disease.
- ✓ If you see a group of sick or dead wildlife:
 - ! Avoid Contact and keep your distance.
 - ! Record the date, time, location and take photos.
 - ! Report it to the emergency Animal Disease Hotline: 1800 675 888

Learn more information at birdflu.gov.au or visit <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-primary-industries-and-regional-development/h5-avian-influenza-h5-bird-flu-resources>


WA's weekly bird flu update

CURRENT AS OF
28 August 2026

CURRENT RESPONSE:

Level 2 under WA's State Hazard Plan

Bird flu tests undertaken:		Positive bird flu cases:	
This week:	47	This week:	0
Since 19 June:	412	Since 19 June:	10

- There have been no additional positive cases this week.
- All previous detections in Western Australia have been in migratory seabirds.
- The first round of the Bird Flu Wildlife Resilience Grants have been awarded, with eight recipients receiving a total of \$50,000.
- The first meeting of the Environment Minister's Bird Flu Wildlife Advisory Group was held on 27 August.
- Government agencies participated in a local government desktop exercise focused on planning for response and recovery efforts.
- Training in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use and sampling techniques continues to be delivered to biosecurity officers, fisheries officers, and rangers across the State, with sessions this week in Carnarvon and Denham.
- PPE is being distributed to wildlife rehabilitators to support their work with wildlife through avoiding biosecurity measures.
- Private veterinary practices are being engaged to help inform response planning and prepare veterinarians to continue to provide care for wild and domestic birds.
- WA Health continues to monitor the situation, and the risk to humans remains low.
- Properly prepared chicken meat and eggs are safe to eat.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
 If you see dead or sick birds or mammals showing signs of bird flu, you should:


AVOID
 Contact and keep your distance


WELCOME
 The date, time, location and take photos


REPORT
 If to the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 226

For more information and resources: wa.gov.au/birdflu

South Coast events update

There's something for everyone this Djilba season, from sustainable agriculture events to opportunities to participate in a citizen science program tracking Southern right whales, or to venture out and enjoy the wildflower displays.

September 10th: [Esperance Downs Research Station Field Walk – FAR Australia](#)

September 10th: [Frankland River Crop Technology Centre Field Day – FAR Australia](#)

September 11th: [Weed ID and Management Workshop - Torbay Catchment Group](#)

September 11th: [Congingup-Beaumont Field Day - SEPWA](#)

September 15th: [Benefits of Dung Beetles workshop – Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee](#)

September 15th: [Fitzgerald Biosphere Group Spring Field Day & AGM](#)

September 16th: [Southern Dirt Spring Field Day](#)

September 17th: [Stirlings to Coast Farmers Spring Field Day](#)

September 17th: [ASHEEP & BEEF Spring Field Day](#)

September 7th-19th: [Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show | Bringing you the best Wildflower Show in the world](#)

September 19th-23rd: Djilba Wildflower Festival, Esperance WA. [Djilba Wildflower Festival | Esperance WA, Australia](#)

September 22nd: [North Stirling Pallinup Natural Resources AGM & Sundowner](#)

September 22nd: [GRDC National Grower Network Forum – Tambellup](#)

September 20th: Seagrass, Seaweed and Shorebirds Workshop 11am - 12pm, Esperance WA (Wildflower festival)

September 29th: [Monitoring your soil health, building your confidence with Jake Ryan \(Manjimup, WA\)](#) - Soils for Life (online webinar - 1 hour).

September 30th: [Albany Red Card Workshop - Wheatbelt NRM](#)

October 10th: World Migratory Bird Day 2026 Workshop 9am-11:30am, Esperance WA

October 10th: Hooded Plover Conservation Workshop, Birdlife Australia, 10am-12pm, Albany Public Library. Please register through the link: [Albany Hooded Plover Conservation Workshop](#) (Free Event).

October 10th: Oyster Harbour Miaritch Showcase 10am-2:30pm, Emu Point Marina, Albany WA
[Oyster Harbour Miaritch 2026 Showcase - Oyster Harbour Catchment Group](#)



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development





Have your say!

Help shape WA's fuel future

Are you an Esperance or Ravensthorpe farmer?

Tell us how you currently manage crop stubble and share your views on its potential role in renewable fuels.

- Only takes 10–15 minutes
- confidential
- skip any question
- your input will help inform WA's Advanced Stubble Strategy

Help influence how crop stubble is valued in future industries!



Scan the QR code to start the survey

Note: Participation is entirely voluntary, and all responses are confidential. This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC2020-0120).

PHOTO: JIM VANDERKAM

dpird.wa.gov.au

All The Latest News

Looking for more? To stay up to date with all our latest news, head to our website or social media channels.



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