WICC Past Projects

Watermans Road Catchment Project

ACHIEVEMENTS

Protect remnant vegetation, waterways and revegetated areas through fencing to exclude livestock. 31kms of the proposed 47kms of fencing were completed. A total of 21.5ha of natural bush and creek lines were protected.

Difficulties in meeting project objectives included some farms going to commercial tree plantations, a major landholder pulling out of the project. Other business activities taking up time of two landholders. Unfavorable climatic conditions. Major fire in 2000. Photographic records were taken of most sites.

Prevent erosion, stabilisation of waterways and increase water use through revegetation 50ha of the original 58ha of revegetation was completed. Including a total of 57628 seedlings were planted. Difficulties as above. Photographic records were taken of most sites.

The project has contributed to achieving the objectives of Southern Prospects (a strategy for managing natural resources and developing rural communities on the south coast of Western Australia), the South Coast Regional Land and Water Care Strategy for the Albany Hinterland sub region and the Wilson Inlet Action Plan as they apply to the Watermans Road sub-catchment

Albany Hinterland Bushcare Devolved Grant Scheme

ACHIEVEMENTS

To make significant progress towards enhancing the macro-corridor network in the Albany Hinterland sub-region.

A total of 66 sites were funded within the Albany Hinterland; all sites enhanced the macro corridor network in the sub-region. The late withdrawal of two large projects meant that the project was not fully expended. All sites were assessed using the Macro Corridor Network to prioritise sites, which were assessed on quality of remnant bush, rating in Macro Corridor network, linkages to other remnants and size of remnant.

To protect and enhance areas of high value remnant vegetation in the Albany Hinterland sub-region as identified by the Albany Remnant Vegetation Inventory Project.

To have a community that is well informed, values the region's biodiversity and, enthusiastic and supportive about protecting it. The publicity surrounding the grant increased awareness in the values of protecting remnant vegetation.

To fund strategic on-ground works that protect and enhance remnant vegetation in the Albany Hinterland sub-region through a transparent community based assessment panel.

Community members made up half of the assessment panel, which together with the technical expertise from Government agencies made a balanced assessment panel.

To demonstrate the value of regional plans/projects, such as the Macro-corridor Network Project and the Albany Remnant Vegetation Inventory to make strategic decisions and prioritise the use of funds 66 sites were funded within the Albany Hinterland, all sites enhanced the macro corridor network in the sub-region.

The Albany Remnant Vegetation Inventory Project was found not to be accurate enough at the farm level so was not used in the assessment of sites. All project locations were assessed using the Macro Corridor Network to prioritise sites, which were assessed on quality of remnant bush, rating in Macro Corridor network, linkages to other remnants and size of remnant.

To increase the awareness and understanding of the regions biodiversity and the urgency of protecting it through the involvement of landholders in the assessment process.

The publicity surrounding the grant increased awareness in the values of protecting remnant vegetation. The grant also gave CLCs the opportunity to discuss the biodiversity value of remnant bushland with landholders. The number of enquires about protecting remnant bushland on farms was used to measure the achievements of the grant.

It is interesting to note that a number of enquires were prompted not be publicity of the grant but by word of mouth from farmers already participating in this grant or similar projects.

To demonstrate a small scale devolved grant scheme in the south coast region and to establish a workable model for regional administration. A workshop was held at the conclusion of the project to assess the devolved grant and suggest improvements for subsequent devolved grants.

Albany Hinterland Landcare Coordinators Project

1. To provide coordination and technical assistance for the three Land Conservation District Committees (LCDC) that represent farmers tackling severe land degradation problems in the eastern, broad acre portion of the Albany Hinterland Region.

These issues include a rising water table (regional), wind erosion, waterlogging and flooding, declining native bushland and poorly managed public reserves. Field days workshops and meetings have been coordinated by the CLC's covering the various issues listed, but in the Albany Hinterland the LCDCs are no longer the key landcare bodies.

Most of the work of the CLCs has been through three major catchment (Oyster Harbour, Wilson Inlet and Albany Eastern Hinterland) and sub-catchment groups within the hinterland.

2. The CLCs assisted subcatchment groups to apply for funding for on ground works, for example: Olympic Landcare, Potters Creek NHT application, Lake Matilda NHT application and Lake Eyrie Lotteries Commission Grant. Due to the size of catchments most work was done with sub-catchment groups.

In the Albany Eastern Hinterland it was found that farmers did not relate well to catchment boundaries so groups were formed around existing community and producer groups. Number of sub-catchment groups formed including developing catchments, focus catchments and implementing catchments. Worked with Government agencies to develop catchment plans.

3. The CLCs out in the field were the key reference point for landholders with difficulties/problems and the CLCs were able to refer landholders to appropriate agencies if required. CLCs attended community forums and shire planning workshops to keep up to date with landuse issues in the region, eg aerial spraying of Bluegums, City of Albany Rural Landuse Forum.

4. The CLCs had a lot of direct one on one contact with landholders as well as with catchment and sub-catchment groups, which has raised the level of awareness of land degradation issues as well as solutions amongst the farming community and the community in general.

The CLCs assisted catchment groups to successfully apply for funding for on ground works, including NHT Bushcare and waterways funding.

5. The CLCs coordinated numerous landcare events eg shows, field days, revegetation projects and fencing projects.

6. The CLCs organised workshops/training courses for landholders including Better Business Workshops, Soils Workshops and Pastures Workshops.

7. The CLCs worked with government agency staff, including the Shire Environmental Planning Officer over landuse planning issues (eg public land), and to strengthen the cooperation between government and the local farming community of the region.

Hay Sheepwash Sub Catchment Project

All the planned on the ground projects were completed or expanded with the exception of one where the landholder had to withdraw due to ill health.

However, all projects generally took longer to complete than anticipated. The human factor and finances were sometimes more difficult to manage than the land degradation issues being addressed.

As other landholders showed an interest in the various NRM activities within the catchment they were linked to various other projects including waterway rehabilitation and protection and Bushcare related programs in the area.

The assistance of the Landcare Coordinator employed by the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee was invaluable at this stage.

1. To combat land degradation and rehabilitate salt affected land 21kms of fencing and 16ha of revegetation of creeklines, wetlands, and recharge areas was completed. Feedback was given to improve community uptake of waterways protection (crossings, watering points).

Water harvesting and a program of deep-rooted perennial pasture planting and some salt tolerant species in susceptible areas has commenced.

Some engineering solutions are also being investigated. Critical shallow water drainage to combat inundation was completed including shallow drains, ‘w’ drains, interceptor drains, stock crossings (culverts, fords), a sediment trap pond and strategic placement of water catchment dams. All drains were surveyed. Bore monitoring.

The Dept of Agriculture placed piezometers at different sites within the catchment. A slight overall drop (see attached) has occurred since their installation in January 1999. Likely as a result of overall increase in vegetation cover including plantations. Seasons have been average. Surface water salinity readings have been conducted in the catchment at least biannually since the beginning of the project.

Water is fresher higher in the catchment and saltiest at the saline seeps from dykes in the hillside. No information was available on source of ground water flow patterns. Although soaks and creeklines lower in the catchment are saltier, they are flushed quite well in the wetter months. . Salinity readings were taken lower in the catchment but follow up readings will not

be completed until perennials become well established.

No noticeable change in the volume of surface water flowing down the hillsides has been noted in the catchment. Salt Seeps - there has been no reduction in the size of salt scalds from hillside seeps.

From historical data it appears likely there has always been a certain amount of poorer country in the saline seep areas where vegetation has been sparser. Eider nose pumps were trialed as an alternative watering point but were found to be not reliable. Photograph points have been established throughout the catchment. Demonstration sites have been used to show management techniques.

2. To improve the productivity and profitability of farming land through the establishment of perennial pasture. This project has had the widest adoption in the shortest amount of time within the catchment. It requires a small outlay of project funds versus farmers' outlay for the proper establishment of the pasture. The landholders have agreed to share their establishment techniques with the larger community on a field day.

It has a profitability link for the landholder whilst providing a high water use strategy for the catchment.

Farm Diversification.

A number of properties have been assisted in development and marketing strategies for niche markets and alternative production eg wildflowers, horticulture, plantations Fifteen farmers will establish over 300 ha of perennial pasture this year.

Agreements have been signed to ensure farmers maintain pasture for agreed period. A follow up field day will be organised in 2003 to share experiences and inspect pastures. The project is to be linked with an ongoing water quality monitoring project with the assistance of Water & Rivers Commission.

Business Expo eg two wildflower businesses, two horticultural businesses and two fertiliser enterprises were assisted. Farmers were encouraged to attend. Prograze course run by the Dept of Agriculture.

3. To stimulate landholders in the hay River LCDC to form action groups. A total of six sub catchments have formed within the Hay River LCDC since the beginning of the project. A bus tour and Expo (assistance through International Years of the Volunteers) of the sub catchment was held to showcase the achievements of the group.

Field days and workshops held for the group were open to all landholders in the area to promote better management techniques to landholders in surrounding catchments, as well as benefit our own landholders. Six groups have been formed. Over 80 landholders have been involved in groups and

over half of these have been involved in actual on ground activities. Over 60 people from neighbouring sub catchments attended the bus tour.

The following Expo was also an opportunity to display the diverse farming business enterprises in the Narrikup district, and the latest computer modelling at the Catchment level and other NRM research in the catchment area. Various groups and agencies attended.

4. To plan on a catchment basis to assist landholders to understand how their actions have an effect on other landholders and the health of the environment. The Hay Sheepwash Sub Catchment Plan was completed in 2000, with the help of all landholders and the catchment support team made up of technical staff from the Department of Agriculture, Water and Rivers Commission, CALM and Bushcare support officers.

A Farm Business Planning Workshop was held to help farmers put together financial and physical farm plans. There were 10 foundation families that attended the property planning workshops. Six completed physical farm plans for accreditation. This process was assisted by selection in the Focus catchment process.

The group met in addition to this at least 4 to 5 times per year and is still networking through an established communication tree and database. A completed catchment plan was distributed to all landholders in the sub catchment. There were 6 attendees at the farm business-planning workshop that completed physical and financial farm plans.

A number of field days and workshops were held in the planning stages for the landholders within the catchment eg. Better Business Course, developing farm plans, drainage techniques, farm diversification.

The property business planning course was very difficult to coordinate because of some part time farmers, but produced the most dramatic results. Succession planning, financial management and an Internet introduction were the most popular sessions.

The sessions were the catalyst for some major business restructuring.

5. To integrate strategic revegetation projects, with water management techniques 16 ha of revegetation completed along drains waterways and recharge areas. Establishment of over 300 ha of deep rooted perennial pastures in low lying and recharge areas.

Hot Spot sites have been identified and mapped in the Hay Sheepwash sub catchment. A survey and mapping process has been developed from this project to use for other catchments.

The standards for data input have been also negotiated with the Regional Information Centre, and a local GIS operator employed to capture the data. Data included was project sites, priority 1st and 2nd order streams, and

significant remnant bush sites

6. To improve the biodiversity of flora and fauna species in our area for future generations. Over 12km of fencing to protect of remnant vegetation in addition to other Bushcare projects promoted throughout the region. A seed collection and revegetation workshop was held. Revegetation techniques and understanding improved.

Direct seeding improved, use of local species and importance of understorey species emphasised.

The advent of more technical officers in the field, in both Rivercare and Bushcare later in the project led to more detailed technical advice at project sites.

An annual vermin control program has been conducted including a calici virus release last year. Weed awareness program was conducted and a weed coordinator appointed. A bridal creeper program is being conducted in the upper catchment, and a containment program for Patterson's curse in the lower Catchment and a dock moth program.

Other potential weeds have been identified and information distributed on management techniques. Fauna and Flora surveys have been completed. 91 bird species have been identified, and three herbarium volumes of native flora have been compiled. Three farms have 'Land For Wildlife' status. Three rare or endangered species have been identified within the catchment in conjunction with CALM, and this is an ongoing program. Direct seeding demonstration sites.

Community Landcare Coordinators Supporting On-Ground Works Across the Albany Hinterland

1. Provide Coordinated technical assistance for the 3 major catchment groups

2. Motivate farmers in catchments and neighbourhood groups to formulate and implement coordinated action.

Started up 21 sub catchment groups (7 WICC, 8 OHCG, 6 AEH) worked with Government agencies to develop catchment plans

3. To facilitate resolutions to local land disputes

4. Raise awareness of the land degradation issues and implement practical solutions

5. Assist the 3 catchment groups with coordinating hire of equipment and running major events

6. Organise training courses for farm and business planning

7. Work with government agency staff on field days, courses and working with catchment groups to develop catchment plans