

Milestone partnership established

As part of the Riverplan process, the City of Swan and Swan River Trust in July entered into a milestone partnership that will see significant restoration work take place at Blackadder Creek.

Chairman Charlie Welker said through Riverplan, the Trust was working closely with local governments to define their role in protecting the rivers and evaluate current activities and opportunities for future partnerships.

"This partnership agreement is the first of its kind, and demonstrates the City of Swan's commitment to the Swan and Helena rivers," Mr Welker said.

"The Blackadder Creek and wetlands is an environmentally degraded area contributing unacceptable levels of nutrients to the Swan River, and the first initiative of this agreement will be to develop a restoration plan for that area."

Mr Welker said the Trust and the City of Swan would ensure a sustainable ecosystem was established and water quality discharging from the area met long-term targets for nutrients and other contaminants.

"We will also ensure the wetland is integrated with other components of the Swan Regional Riverside Park, providing greater opportunity for community participation and increased community benefit," he said.

A partnership agreement between the Trust and the Swan Catchment Council signed in November last year signalled the beginning of the Trust's Riverplan program.

Reports assessing the contribution of the cities of South Perth, Armadale and Swan to policy implementation have been finalised during the last financial year.

It is expected that the cities of Melville, Perth, Bayswater and Canning will be next to have their reports finalised.



(L-R) City of Swan acting chief executive officer Mike Foley, Trust chairman Charlie Welker, City of Swan mayor Charlie Gregorini and Trust general manager Rod Hughes (courtesy of City of Swan)

New board appointment

Ms Barbara Cook was appointed as Swan River Trust Board community representative on 23 June 2006, replacing outgoing member Bruce Hamilton at the conclusion of his contract.

She brings to the Trust strong skills and experience in community consultation following 18 years in the public service.

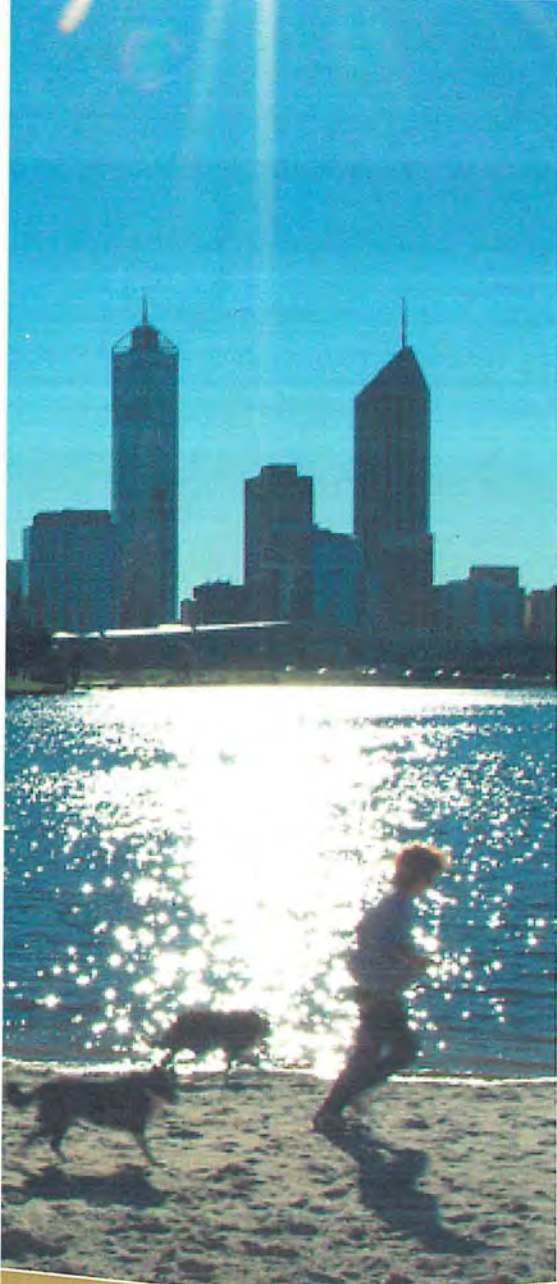
Now retired, Ms Cook has an environmental background in policy, planning, and community relations and has been an advisor to numerous government ministers in Western Australia.



(L-R) Trust chairman Charlie Welker and Board members Barbara Cook, Jim Freemantle, Pat Hart, Neil Foley, Rod Willox, Steve Jenkins and Jane Chambers

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New legislation update

The *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Bill 2005* has now been introduced to the Legislative Council, having passed in the Legislative Assembly on 6 April 2006.

The Legislative Council resumed from its winter recess at the end of August.

For more information on the proposed legislation, contact the Trust on (08) 9278 0900 or visit www.swanrivertrust.wa.gov.au.

Department merger

In May this year the State Government announced the amalgamation of the departments of Environment and Conservation and Land Management.

The new Department of Environment and Conservation formally began operation on 1 July 2006, with former CALM executive director Keiran McNamara as director general.

Environment Minister Mark McGowan said the new department had the benefit of improved policy coordination and advice to Government.

"Merging the two departments has created a stronger and more robust agency better equipped to address new and emerging issues," Mr McGowan said.

"A 'single entry point' now provides improved and streamlined regulatory and approvals processes for the community and industry.

"Duplication and overlap have been eliminated, resulting in better services in the areas of scientific research, community information and education, mapping systems and databases."

Existing statutory authorities and boards within the Environment portfolio, including the Swan River Trust, remain unchanged.

Mayors have their say

A forum held by the Trust in May brought together 38 mayors and representatives to discuss key issues relating to management of the Swan and Canning rivers.

Environment Minister Mark McGowan opened the proceedings at the Old Swan Brewery.

Key topics covered throughout the morning included joint foreshore management and funding, passage through Parliament of the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Bill 2005*, and the development of the next generation of the Swan-Canning Cleanup Program Action Plan.

The forum provided the Trust with the opportunity to formally acknowledge the contribution local government makes in protecting the Swan and Canning rivers.

Critical factors for a successful working relationship were identified and agreed, including respectful and 'trusting' working relationships, clear roles and responsibilities and agreement on strategic priorities.

Attendees also called for longer-term planning to ensure projects were adequately funded and a streamlined approvals process.

It is anticipated the forums will be held on a six-monthly basis, with the next meeting scheduled by the Trust for October to include a river cruise in the upper Swan River.



Swan River Trust chairman Charlie Welker and Environment Minister Mark McGowan

New report cards launched

Foreshore report cards for the Melville and Perth waters section of an assessment project are now available from the Swan River Trust.

Trust environment programs manager Anthony Sutton said the report cards provided local governments and key stakeholders with easy-to-reference information relevant to their area.

"Swan River Trust officers assessed vegetation over 61 kilometres of foreshore from Fremantle to Mount Henry Bridge along the Canning River, and to Heirisson Island in the Swan River," Mr Sutton said.

"Key topics covered in the Section 1 report cards include shoreline type, the function and condition of foreshore structures, drainage outfalls, vegetation dominance and weed cover, and invasive weed species.

"By improving understanding of the condition and pressures affecting the foreshores, we hope to better prioritise and target Riverbank funding and improve the effectiveness of onground works."

The Foreshore Assessment Project is a partnership between the Swan River Trust and Swan Catchment Council and provides a baseline study of the condition of the foreshore and threats faced in the Trust's Management Area.

In time detailed foreshore information will inform management priorities for eight sections along the Swan and Canning rivers.

Further information about the project can be found on the Trust's website www.swanrivertrust.wa.gov.au.



One of the introduced cichlids found in Bennett Brook (courtesy of Ben de Haan, NMCG)

Feral fish

A partnership of agencies have been working together to control an outbreak of feral fish - the Pearl Cichlid - in waterways in Lockridge and Kiara.

The Pearl Cichlid is a common aquarium fish, which can have potentially devastating effects on the local ecosystem by eating native fish and competing for food.

Swan River Trust general manager Rod Hughes said officers from the North Metro Catchment Group (NMCG) discovered the outbreak, identified during a survey of native fish populations in the Bennett Brook.

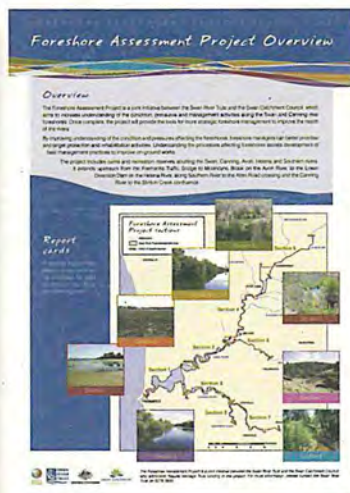
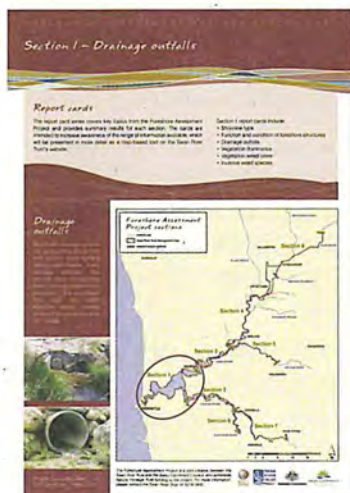
"The Trust, departments of Fisheries, Environment and Conservation, and Water, City of Swan, Murdoch University, Whiteman Park and the North Metro Catchment Group worked closely to develop a solution that would minimise the impact on the local ecosystem and other wildlife," Mr Hughes said.

"The Trust takes this matter very seriously even though there is no evidence that these fish have reached the Swan River."

In June the Department of Fisheries began a co-ordinated control program in the affected area consisting of shock waves, chemical application and netting.

Control methods were applied according to local conditions including water depth, local wildlife present, whether the area was man-made or natural and the amount of cichlids in the area.

Further information about the fish can be found at www.fish.wa.gov.au, and the phone number to report sighted fish is (08) 9432 8029. The NMCG's survey results are to be made public when sampling is completed.



Trust officers Alison McGilvray and Roweena Hart display the report cards



Help Keep our rivers healthy

Tips for householders

- Check with your local council how to dispose of paint, oil and chemicals properly. If they are tipped down the drain they can end up in the rivers.
- Dispose of plastic, glass, cans and paper responsibly – use your council's recycling facilities.
- Pick up your dog's waste and place in a worm farm or rubbish bin – it's full of nutrients that feed algal blooms.
- Use phosphorus-free detergents for your washing needs – phosphorus is one of the main nutrients that feeds algal blooms.



Photos courtesy of Perth Modern

Perth Modern rocks the Rock Eisteddford

Subiaco's Perth Modern School was selected as a finalist for the national 2006 Rock Eisteddford for their Swan River inspired dance performance.

In April, teacher Ms Melanie Wilcock from Perth Modern contacted the Trust to gain support for their plans to focus the school's dance routine on the protection of the Swan River.

The dance was designed by the students to highlight the issue of algal blooms and the positive actions that can be taken to prevent these occurring.

An activity-based field session was organised by the Trust at Liege Street Wetland for the group to help them gain a better understanding of issues relating to river health.

The State final was held 25 August 2006 at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre.

News in brief

- The Great Gardens program, supported by the Trust, was a finalist in the Banksia Awards 2006 held in July at Melbourne Park Function Centre. The Banksia Environmental Foundation is a national, not-for-profit organisation that promotes environmental excellence and is regarded as the most prestigious environmental awards in Australia.
- The Trust will present a paper on community involvement at the 9th International Riversymposium in Brisbane in September. Held as part of a river festival celebrating water and promoting environmental sustainability, the Riversymposium will explore the theme, 'Managing rivers with climate change and expanding populations' across a number of topics.
- The Swan Catchment Council recently appointed Mr Joe Collard to implement the Wetlands Indigenous Project. The project aims to provide an indigenous perspective to wetland management across the region and raise awareness of indigenous values in managing wetlands.



swan catchment
council

Skills for Nature Conservation Training Calendar 2006

September 9

Wetland Management on Private Property

September 23

Caring for the Canning

October 14

Beaches, Bays and Biodiversity –
An Exploration of Garden Island

October 21

Perth's Coastal Hotspots

November 4

Knowing and Managing
Native and Introduced Grasses

November 18

End of Year Evaluation and Celebration

For more information, contact the Swan Catchment Council on (08) 9374 3309.



(L-R) Department of Environment and Conservation Aquatic Science Branch manager Malcolm Robb discusses some of the issues affecting the rivers with Professor Bill Dennison and Trust chairman Charlie Welker

Good science leads the way

More than 100 people attended a River Science Community Forum in May to hear from leading scientists from around the world.

International experts attending the forum were impressed by the wealth of water quality data available in Western Australia and endorsed the Trust's management approach.

Trust general manager Rod Hughes said long-term commitment was required to reduce nutrient loads to the rivers by better managing land uses in the catchment.

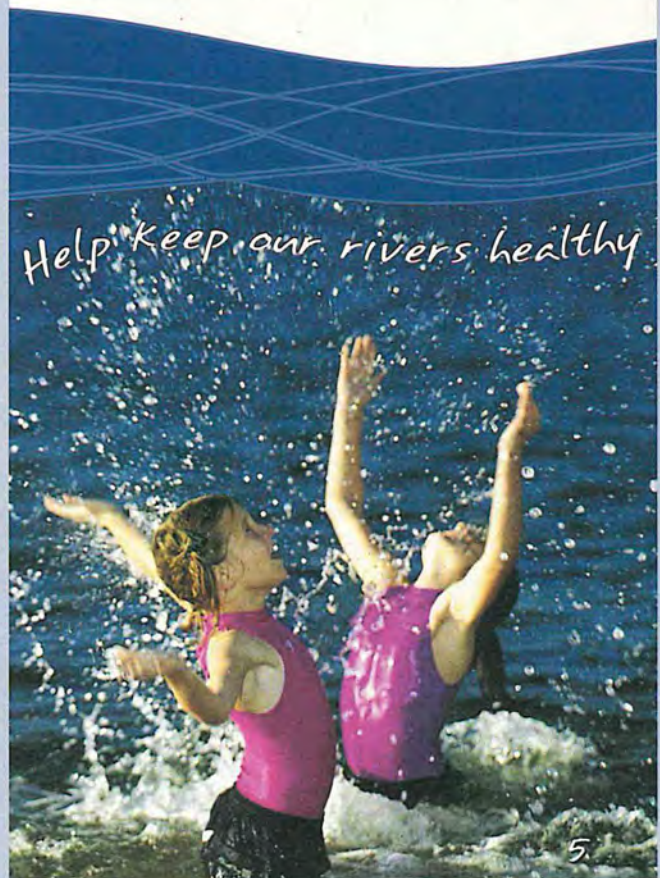
"As nutrients continue to be added to the system, we will continue to see a suite of symptoms common in many parts of the world," Mr Hughes said.

"These symptoms manifest themselves as algal blooms or fish kills creating the temptation to manage symptoms rather than the underlying cause."

University of Maryland Professor Bill Dennison said the health of the rivers relied upon a better integration of existing scientific knowledge and community involvement.

"Science can improve the existing monitoring program by helping to identify, measure and interpret cost effective indicators and targets, which reflect community values for the system," Professor Dennison said.

The forum was organised by the Department of Environment and Swan River Trust, with financial support from the Swan Catchment Council.





New publications

The Trust has prepared a new Strategic Plan 2006-09 to guide implementation of new management programs.

A new brochure about the Trust's Drainage Nutrient Intervention Program, which includes a map and project information is now available by calling the Trust on (08) 9278 0900 or visit www.swanrivertrust.wa.gov.au.

Swanland and Scumbook!



Two publications about the estuaries and coastal lagoons of south-western Australia and their algae and aquatic plants are available for purchase through the Trust.

Ernest Hodgkin's Swanland is a fusion of the many years of research on the estuarine environments from the Murchison to Esperance, with more recent and widely sourced research.

Extensively illustrated with colour maps, figures and photographs Ernest Hodgkin's Swanland provides an important and comprehensive study of estuaries and their surrounding landscapes.

Scumbook! is a guide to common algae and aquatic plants in wetlands and estuaries of south-western Australia.

Funded by the Department of Environment, Swan River Trust and the Water Corporation, the guide aims to provide a user-friendly resource for practitioners in the aquatic environment and the community.

To purchase either publication, contact the Trust on (08) 9278 0900 or email info@swanrivertrust.wa.gov.au.

Trust's new trailer offers greater flexibility

A new semi-trailer will now be used to transport the Swan River Trust's front end loader.

The Trust regularly uses the loader to carry out work such as major cut and fill projects, excavation operations and bulk weed removal.

The new equipment gives the Trust the capability to dispatch heavy machinery at short notice to any location requiring service.

The trailer is also used to transport damaged vessels and vehicles, or cart various materials to sites or landfill as required.



The new trailer gives the Swan River Trust heavy operations greater flexibility

Yacht club audits completed

Trust audit and enforcement staff recently conducted environmental audits of the 12 yacht clubs and marinas located in the Trust's Management Area.

The purpose of the audits was to provide the Trust with baseline information on the clubs' environmental performance and to give feedback on where improvements could be made.

Environmental Management Systems (EMS), which are tools to help organisations manage environmental risks, were recommended to improve the environmental performance of clubs.



Hardstand area and slipway of one of many of the yacht clubs on the Swan River

Upgrades of slipways and hardstand areas used for maintenance were also recommended to reduce the impact of clubs on adjacent marine environments.

Trust officers are now working with a number of clubs to develop and implement an EMS, and progress will be audited annually.



Demonstrating techniques for investigating acid sulfate soils in the field

Protecting our rivers from acid sulfate soils

Acid sulfate soils occur naturally in our landscape, but have the potential to cause long-term impacts on rivers, infrastructure and the local environment.

When left undisturbed below the watertable, these soils are benign and not acidic. However, if drained, excavated or exposed through lowering of the water table, sulfides in the soils will react with oxygen to produce sulfuric acid.

To address the problem, the Swan Catchment Centre recently hosted a workshop for local government officers to demonstrate how acid sulfate soils can be managed.

Experts from the Department of Environment and Conservation's Land and Water Quality branch provided an overview on investigation methods.

The use of risk maps was also discussed to help planning and management techniques and a practical field assessment session was provided.

The workshop was supported by the Swan River Trust's Swan-Canning Cleanup Program and the Natural Heritage Trust delivered by the Swan Catchment Council.

The Swan Catchment Centre coordinate and deliver natural resource management training and education to groups throughout the Swan Region.

Upcoming local government workshops include Stormwater Management and Sustainable Landscaping. Contact the Centre on (08) 9374 3333 for more information.

Trust responds to sewage spills

Trust officers attended two sewage spills in May and June, near Saunders Street in Mosman Park and between the Bath Street Jetty and Clarkson Reserve in Maylands.

At the spill in Mosman Park, a blocked pipe caused five to 10 kilolitres of sewage to overflow into the river from an access chamber. Tests revealed slightly elevated bacteria levels at the site following the spill but sunny weather assisted in breaking down the bacteria.

At Maylands in June an estimated 13,500 litres of sewage spilled into a section of the Swan River between the Bath Street Jetty and Clarkson Reserve. It is believed a build-up of fat in a pipe caused the sewage to overflow. Warning signs advising people not to take part in direct water contact activities such as swimming or fishing in the affected areas were erected at both sites.

Visit the Department of Health's Healthy Swimming website at www.healthyswimming.health.wa.gov.au for information on bacterial water quality. The community is encouraged to report any activities that may be harmful to the rivers and shorelines by calling the Swan River Trust on (08) 9278 0900 or after-hours on 0419 192 845.



A warning sign at Mosman Park



(L-R) Environment Minister Mark McGowan, City of Perth mayor Peter Nattrass and Trust chairman Charlie Welker at the funding ceremony

Ongoing focus on foreshores

More than \$1 million funding for eight new foreshore protection and rehabilitation projects was announced in Round 2 of the 2005-06 Swan River Trust Riverbank funding.

Environment Minister Mark McGowan presented cheques to funding recipients at a stakeholder function held in June.

"Funding has been delivered to projects that protect and enhance vegetation along the foreshores and mitigate riverbank erosion," Mr McGowan said.

"Where possible projects are based on partnership arrangements and seek to involve community participation.

"For example, bank stabilisation and revegetation works will be carried out at Goodwood Parade in Rivervale, while the City of Canning received \$21,350 to help protect a priority area from erosion and loss of natural vegetation.

"The City of Perth was allocated \$825,000 to replace a 410 metre section of wall along Mounts Bay Road.

"Other projects include weed control, seed collection, planting, and restoration works."

A list of funding recipients can be viewed on the Trust's website www.swanrivertrust.wa.gov.au.

The Round 1 funding for 2006-07 will be announced in November.

what's on

September

4-9 9th International Riversymposium
Brisbane

Mid-September

Great Gardens spring series begins

30 Perth Royal Show begins

October

1-7 Perth Royal Show

28 Murdoch Challenger TAFE Open
Day Great Gardens presentation

November

17 Western Australian
Environment Awards

19 Red Bull Air Race – Swan River

For more information on these activities, please contact the Swan River Trust on 9278 0900 or email info@swanrivertrust.wa.gov.au.

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