

WATERSHED Torbay

N E W S

No 4 News of Torbay Catchment Group & the Special Project: Watershed Torbay June 2003

IN THIS EDITION

Funds for onground action taken up

Feedback on Watershed Torbay positive

Bus tour shows progress

Weed happenings in catchment

How the drains are managed

Fertiliser workshop shocks!

New TCG Committee

Green Corps provides boost

Check out the Watershed Torbay website:

www.torbay.scric.org

**Contact: 9842 5760
W&RC or 9845 1081
Torbay Catchment Group**

Catchment Chairman's Message- Thanks!



Julie Pech, Andrew Marshall, Liz Marshall, Kevin Hopkinson and Maurice McCormick discuss allocation of Envirofunds monies for waterways protection works

What excellent work the Green Corps Team has been doing! There are some wonderful reports back from the landholders who have had the team working on their properties. One of the first jobs the team tackled was the cutting out of Sydney Wattle around the Torbay Hall - strenuous work which was all done in very hot weather! Well done to the team and their gallant leader Terry Davey.

Andrew Marshall

Landholders take up funds

So far the Torbay Catchment Group has supported 21 farmers with fencing material subsidies, trees for revegetation, and funding for watering points and stock crossings. Funding has come through the Federal NHT Envirofunds and the State Water and Rivers Commission.

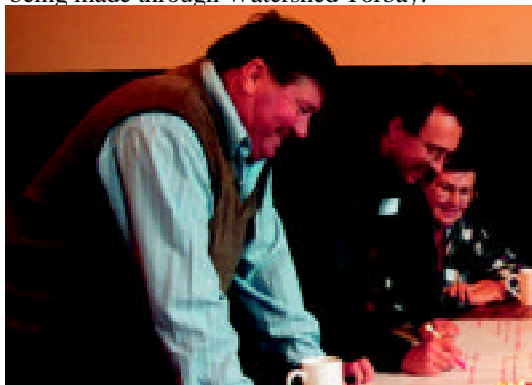
We are keen to allocate the money we have as soon as possible to get projects funded this year. There is also assistance with the labour from the Green Corps team of young people if landholders are ready soon. So far the team have completed over 10km of fencing on 7 properties and they have done a great job judging by the positive feedback we have received from the landholders.

A new application is currently being prepared to make sure there are further funds available. For more information about the funding or labour assistance available for waterway protection projects contact Kevin on 9841 0105.

Andrew Marshall

Report Card Positive!

The Board of the National Rivers Consortium, who are the major funders of the Watershed Torbay project, visited the region in April to review progress. Feedback from the Board was very positive, with particular mention made of the level of community involvement, and the planning framework being used to develop the restoration plan. Prof Peter Cullen, Chairman of the NRC Board, said he was delighted with the progress being made through Watershed Torbay.



John Simpson at work in Torbay

Nine members of the Board and staff of Land and Water Australia spent the day in the catchment.

The group tour included Chris Westcott's potato farm adjacent to Lake Powell, the Marbellup Plug and other parts of the drainage system, the artificial wetland on Phillip and Sheila Marshall's property, Martin's stream restoration site and a visit to 'Flushing Meadows' the Water Corporation's tree farm. At the Torbay Hall the group met local community members and agencies involved with the project and heard presentations. Thanks to the Torbay Fire Brigade for the delicious catering.

The first draft of the Torbay Catchment Restoration Plan is now prepared with full copies available on the website www.torbay.scric.org or from David Rushton on 9841 0108.

A summary is enclosed to make it easy for all to read!

John Simpson Chair Watershed Torbay Steering Committee



Bus Tour Shows On Ground Action



Bob Gretton, Green Skills consultant, showing the foreshore condition survey map recently completed for the Torbay sub catchment. Landholder Murray Bennett, on the left, is undertaking waterways fencing and revegetation projects

The bus trip on February 16 was another great event in the catchment, with 26 people jumping on the bus on an overcast but pleasant Sunday morning.

The focus of the tour was waterways management issues, with the morning sites guided by Bob Gretton. Bob is full bottle on the issues relating to the creeks and drains in the area, after recently completing the Torbay sub catchment foreshore survey.

Sites visited included a range of fenced and unfenced drains and natural creeks at Gary Wilson's, Betty Lucas' and Murray Bennett's farms, which generated a lively discussion as to how we can best manage these valuable areas. Stephen Biddulph outlined his extensive efforts to control *Taylorina* on his property.

During lunch at the Torbay Hall Bob presented a summary of the findings from the Torbay sub-catchment condition survey. Maps recently produced by the Water and Rivers Commission were hot off the press and gave a good perspective on areas of healthy remnant vegetation and hot spots within the catchment.

The afternoon included a visit to Lake Manarup and Westcott's potato farm. This highlighted industry and conservation reliance on management of water levels in the drains.

Other sites visited included stream restoration at Gary and Sunita Martin's, and a nearby roadside *watsonia* control project that will be planted with native seedlings later this year.

The day finished with a stroll around the recently completed walk trail near the Torbay Hall led by Robin Phillis. The short circuit favoured by the group took 45 minutes to complete, and meandered through some lovely and diverse bushland.

Kevin Hopkinson

The Torbay Inlet Subcatchment Foreshore Condition Survey Report is now on the Watershed Torbay website www.torbay.scric.org

Weed Happenings in the Catchment

Our top priority target weed, *Watsonia*, is gradually being attacked thanks to the great efforts of some 15 volunteers, the City of Albany Bushcarers and the Green Corps team.

Watsonia is a weed of southern African origin. Flowers appear in spring and are commonly orange, but there is a range of varieties with red, white, pink or mauve flowers. *Watsonia* have wide, flat, strap-like leaves arising from the base. The worst infestations of *Watsonia* appear in wet areas. Regions like Torbay with high annual rainfall and an abundance of moist sites make it ideal for *Watsonia* to establish and spread.

The main aim of our program is to cover the lower infestations of *Watsonia* first – these are mostly in the upper reaches of the Catchment. We will then concentrate our efforts on the high infestations that are mostly in the lower catchment zone.

Action So Far!

In spring 2002, over 60 km of road verge in the upper Marbelup Brook area, minor roads off South Coast Highway and stretches of the Lower Denmark Road were patrolled and treated. Infestations ranged from heavy down to nil. Some of the areas have been treated for 3 years and areas now free of *Watsonia* are due to be revegetated in the coming months.

The Green Corps Team has done a great job in woody weed control and removal of introduced stands of

bullrushes (invasive combungi).

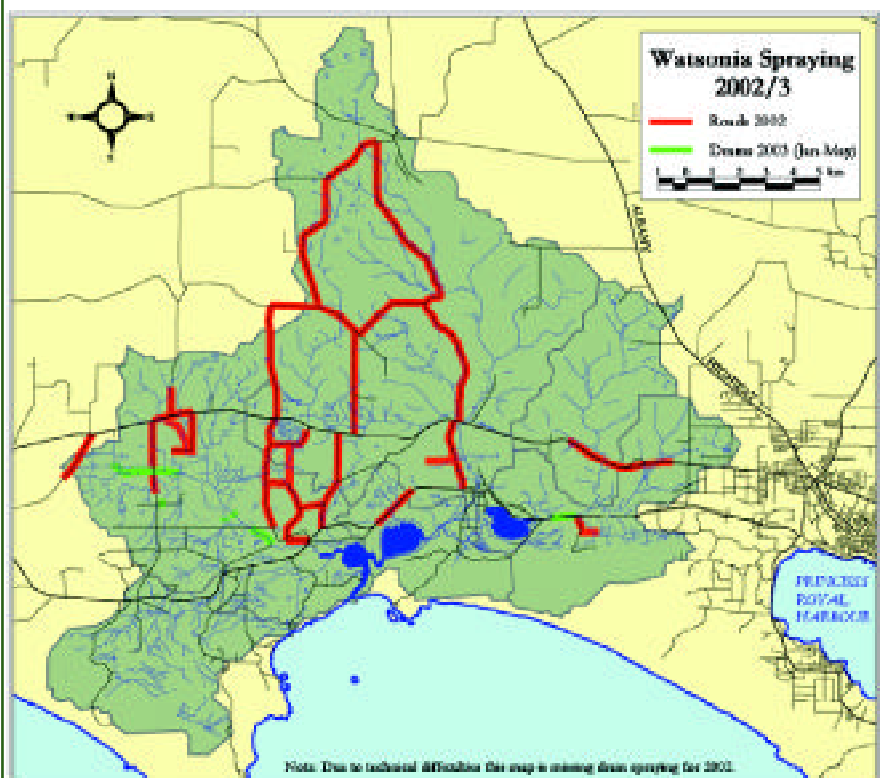
Maurice McCormick is liaising with Woodbury Boston Primary School who are growing a few seedlings for planting out in the catchment.

The Group has recently acquired a 200 litre spray unit suitable for going on the back of a ute, through *Envirofund*. This unit is available for anyone living within the Catchment for use in weed eradication. Just ring Andrew on 98 451 081 if you would like to borrow it. Suitable chemical is supplied by the City of Albany for *Watsonia* control. There will also be a knapsack sprayer available for use in the spring.

Coming Up!

- Enclosed is a leaflet detailing what sprays to use and how to apply them - stick it up on your fridge!
- It is hoped to run a workshop later in the year for native seed collection and propagation.
- The *Watsonia* spraying program continues this coming spring, when the *Watsonia* is actively growing. **Volunteers are urgently required!!**

More help is needed as we get closer to the high infestation areas particularly around Elleker. If you can help in any way for just an hour so, it would be very much appreciated. Heavy infestations of *Watsonia* beware – we are getting closer! Please phone Phil Mellon on 98 446 371 or Andrew Marshall on 98 451 081 and put your name on the list. Thanks to everyone's help we are starting to see a difference!



How are the Drains Currently Managed?

Management of the Drainage District has been the responsibility of the Water Corporation for more than 50 years. Operational changes to the system are made by the Corporation's Regional District Manager and Maintenance Officer.

There are currently no formal communication protocols in place to communicate these critical operational changes to other stakeholders in the community.

Under the Watershed Torbay project a drainage committee has been appointed to review management of the drainage district. A major research project is underway to model the current system. Five management alternatives will be examined using the model.



Drainage Committee: Phil Reddin local resident, Andrew Maughan W&RC, Terry Walshe UWA, Julie Pech W&RC, Terri Harwood local resident, Phil Mellon local resident, Bill North local resident, Richard Plowman local resident, Louise Everett UWA, Aditya Jha W&RC researcher. Members not present: Chris Westcott local resident, Graham Wright & Danny Burkett Water Corporation, Peter Collins CALM

The system is currently managed to meet the original purpose for the Drainage District, that is, to minimise flooding of land within the drainage district.

Since the drains were established in the 1950's other uses have increased and are taken into account. These secondary objectives are to minimise flooding in residential areas, restrict the occurrence of fresh 'black water' outflow to Torbay Bay during the commercial fishing season, increase the depth of water in

Lake Manarup and reduce bad smells from Marbellup Brook downstream of the Marbellup Brook.

Decision processes do not currently include environmental requirements for wetlands.

Current Summer Strategy

The aim is to maintain water levels in Lake Powell at 0.8 meters to maintain groundwater levels to adjacent land during the potato growing season of October to March. The control mechanism is the Bridge 45 penstock.

The water level in Lake Manarup is maintained at a low level during the potato growing period so the low level system can function to minimise flooding in the event of a rain storm by using Lake Manarup as a compensating basin. Lake Manarup penstocks are kept closed so that saltwater intrusions to horticultural land in the North Creek catchment do not occur if the Bar is breached.

Where possible, artificial opening of the bar is avoided during the proclaimed fishing season February-April as preferred by the Torbay Bay commercial fishing industry.

Current Winter Strategy

The aim in winter is to avoid flooding and minimise water retention in Lake Manarup and Torbay Inlet. To achieve this, the bar is opened after each filling of Torbay Inlet. This usually occurs between May and November each year. This may mean opening the bar 5 - 10 times during this period.

Lake Manarup is kept as low as possible so that it has adequate capacity to hold run-off from the low level system during the potato growing season by regulating the penstocks at the lower end of Lake Manarup.

The bridge 45 penstocks are also kept open all winter to drain excess water from Lake Powell by automatic operation of floodgates. This occurs when the water level on the Torbay Inlet side of Bridge 45 is lower than the Lake Powell side.

The bar has recently been opened on Thursday 29 May 03.



Fertilizer Workshop Shocks Participants!

Did you know that as little as 25% of your applied phosphate is absorbed by the plant! This was a key message from Rob Summers (Department of Agriculture), one of a team of presenters at the Bornholm soil and fertiliser workshop held on the 31st March.

The day was kicked off by Craig Russell from the Centre of Excellence for Natural Resource Management Albany, explaining pathways of soil nutrient cycling. Dave Weaver then spoke about phosphate leaching processes in high rainfall areas, and used his impressive looking rainfall simulator to show that even the best quality soils can leach phosphates. The demonstration showed how soils with a long history of fertiliser application can leach phosphates, even with no additional fertiliser applied, after as little as half an hour of moderate rainfall. Workshop participants were shocked at the speed with which the phosphates leached.

Rob Summers discussed several existing and experimental soil fertiliser products before going on to demonstrate how to analyse soil tests. Rob circulated a series of tables from farmnotes that use soil test results to produce fertiliser application rates. Participants who brought in samples had soil tests analysed. Participants commented that the exercise made them realise how important it is to treat each paddock and soil differently.

Tim Overheu discussed soil testing with key messages revolving around sampling depths, patterns and implements. Use of a core sampler or pogo is highly recommended, however the implement must be clean! Tim said that local soil testing facilities were very good and comparable with any in Australia. The Department of Agriculture can aid growers in verifying their analysis.

Dave Weaver completed the presentations by outlining his nutrient simulation model for the catchment. Alternative practices like efficient fertiliser usage, greater use of perennials and riparian vegetation were shown to have a dramatic impact on nutrient movement. Perennials and efficient fertiliser usage are especially important for phosphate leaching.

The open panel discussion at the end of the day was very popular. Participants felt that all farmers who had not attended one of these workshops, should make a real effort to attend the next. The Torbay Catchment Group and Department of Agriculture are planning another for February 2004 with the same speakers (and a field soil pit demonstration). For further information contact Monty Walker 9844 6040 or Maurice McCormick 9845 1044.

News!

Thank You Julie



Carl Patrick (Paddy) Ryan and proud mother

We would like to thank Julie Pech very much for all her invaluable assistance and devotion to our cause since the inception of the Torbay Catchment Group. Her wonderful encouragement, wisdom and sense of humour has helped to keep us all on track and focused on what we are hoping to achieve.

Congratulations to Julie and husband Jerome on the birth of their son at 6.32pm on Sunday 4th May 2003, weighing 7lb 9oz. Julie was in a hurry and had her healthy baby boy three weeks early!

Andrew Marshall

Letter to Editor

More Consideration Please!

The lower catchment drainage system presently operates quite successfully on a system which requires separate parts of the drainage system to be kept at different levels. During April this year prior to Easter, water from the Torbay Inlet (the high level) was released into Lake Manarup (the low level). This was done without authorisation or knowledge of the Water Corporation which manages the entire drainage system.

This action caused water concentrated with salt over the summer to flow into adjacent farm land via the North Creek drain. It also increased the possibility of flooding in nearby residential and horticultural land if early opening rain had occurred during April.

Part of the vision for the Torbay Catchment is to support a prosperous community in which people respect each others use, unfortunately this is not happening due to actions by some individuals.

Chris Westcott

News!

Welcome Dave Rushton



Dave has moved to Albany to continue the great work done by Julie Pech. He worked for the Water & Rivers Commission, Perth, on water resource allocation and land use planning. He has also been involved with the development of environmental flows for the Canning River. This included liaison with catchment groups and members of the community within the Canning River Catchment to help restore the environmental and social values of the Canning River.

He has great skills to offer the community and looks forward to meeting people as soon as possible! Contact Dave at the W&RC office on 9841 0108.

Torbay Catchment Group - New Committee

The AGM in February elected the following members onto the committee.

Chairperson Andrew Marshall 9845 1081

Deputy Maurice McCormick 9845 1044

Secretary Dale Holley 9845 1026

Treasurer Graeme Heighton 9841 4114

Committee Members

Phillip Marshall, Chris Westcott, John Kratochvil, John Blaney-Murphy.

A big thankyou to all those retiring members for their efforts for our region.

Please send all correspondence to Torbay Catchment Group Inc c/-RMB 9055 Albany 6330.

Update on Fox Baiting

The catchment group is making a real effort to control fox numbers across the catchment area. The best time to bait is from October to December when the foxes are breeding. I was disappointed with the number of farmers who joined in our last baiting. While we had ten to twelve farmers that did bait and had good

take up of baits, we are looking for 30 – 40 farmers to be involved.

It is much more effective if we can bait in a wide area so that overall populations are hit. If you only bait in an isolated area foxes will just move in from adjoining properties. It is not much effort for good returns. We will be doing another one later this year and will advertise widely. *Monty Walker*

For Sale

Shadehouse: Pipeframe 3.5m x 2.5m x 2.5m high. Complete with shadecloth cover and door. \$450 ONO. Monty Walker 9844 6040.

Green Corps Provides Local Boost!



Green Corps team proudly showing off work done in Torbay Catchment. The project, run by Green Skills, started in February and continues until August 2003

A view from the Green Corps!

Most people I know don't enjoy their jobs. But then most people I know have never found themselves waist deep in water and smelly mud, cutting and hauling bullrushes as part of a day's work. Likewise hacking down wattle trees and feeding them through a wood chipper near Torbay Hall or constructing kilometres of fence along picturesque gullies and drain areas. The difference is that I signed up for a Green Corps team!

Our team's project is in the Torbay Catchment area where fencing is a big part of our project. The hard bit of our job is digging, dragging, pounding and perspiring to get the job done. The useful bit is learning the ifs and buts of different types of fencing. The fun bit is meeting a lot of farmers and their dogs. The satisfying bit is knowing that the work we do is so important. All the fencing we have put up will stop a lot of sediment and nutrients making their way into our lovely waterways. The weeding we have done will allow native plants room to reclaim their territory.

So far we have received heaps of good feedback and cake from the people we have worked with. Our ambition is to erect the perfect fence to Team Leader Terry's farming standards. In the meantime however, we can feel proud to be helping to restore such a precious area to all its former weed free glory!

We will keep you informed of our progress. Proud to be a Green Corps participant –

Rose Petal Bishop

If you do **not** want to receive this newsletter

ring Louise Duxbury, newsletter editor on 9848 1019. Articles, poems, photos, and other contributions welcomed - mail to: Green Skills PO Box 577 Denmark WA 6333 • louisduxbury@greenskills.green.net.au