



Newsletter 1/22

January 2022

WA Wetlands Conference 2, 3 February 2022

The 18th annual WA Wetlands Conference will be held at the Cockburn Wetlands Centre on 2, 3 February 2022. This conference is held annually to celebrate World Wetlands Day which is observed on the anniversary of the signing of the International Convention on Wetlands in the Iranian city of Ramsar on 2 February 1971. This year's Ramsar theme is "Wetlands Action for People and Nature" and the conference speakers will address this topic and many others.

The Conference format consists of four half day sessions devoted to Leadership, Reconciliation, Sustainability and Partnerships. You may attend all sessions or just a few if you wish. The fee schedule provides options to suit your schedule.

This year's conference will be held in the recently refurbished and expanded facilities of the Cockburn Wetlands Precinct. It is a great opportunity for you to enjoy these excellent facilities while catching up with colleagues from all over the State.

Information about the program and enrolments may be found at <https://www.thewetlandscentre.org.au/conference/register/>

Outlook for 2022

After the McGowan Government's resounding victory in the 2021 election, we were hoping for good news for wetlands in this term of Government. They began well by deleting Roe 8 from the Metropolitan Region Scheme and followed up by releasing an improved State Planning Policy 2.9 on Groundwater Resources. This was followed by the Gnangara Mound Water Allocation Plan. While these initiatives are welcome, we would also like to see some progress on further Ramsar nominations and the completion of the Wetland Buffer Guidelines. The Government also appears to have dropped the plans for a strategic assessment of land use in the Perth and Peel Region, which could have secured the conservation estate as the City grows. The Regional Park system has not been expanded, despite frequent requests for the Peel, Lower Serpentine, Gnangara and Yule Brook Regional Parks. There is clearly still a lot of advocacy needed to complete our vision for conservation in this biodiversity hotspot.

Gnangara Groundwater Plan

The State Government has released draft plans to rebalance Perth and Mandurah's precious groundwater resources, which are at risk from the impacts of climate change and increasing use. This includes the draft Gnangara groundwater allocation plan and a proposal to align garden bore sprinkler rosters with the scheme sprinkler roster. Combined this will save 70 GL of water per year. The Gnangara groundwater system supplies up to 40 per cent of Perth's drinking water, as well as water for industry and horticulture, garden bores, parks and other green spaces north of the Swan River. It also supports significant environmental values including wetlands, caves and bushland, with lowered water levels now evident through the visible drying of wetlands such as Loch McNess and the loss of the unique Yanchep cave ecosystems. Since 1980, the watertable across the Gnangara Mound has fallen by up to 10 metres – a 1,000GL loss of aquifer storage, equivalent to 1,000 Optus Stadiums full of water. Over half of the 30 sites used to gauge the health of Gnangara's groundwater-dependent ecosystems are now breaching minimum water levels.

In addition, a proposal to align the domestic garden bore sprinkler roster with the two-days-per-week sprinkler roster for scheme water users in the Perth and Mandurah from 1 September 2022 is now open for public comment. Alignment of the domestic garden bore and scheme water rosters will save up to 30 GL per year, stabilising the watertable in urban areas and increasing water availability to street trees and important urban wetlands. It is estimated that garden bores collectively draw about one fifth (22 per cent or around 90 GL) of groundwater taken from the aquifers in the Perth to Mandurah area to use outdoors, mostly for irrigating lawns and gardens. Garden bore users generally use about three to four times more water on their gardens in comparison to scheme water users.

Public comment on the draft plan and proposed changes to the sprinkler roster is open until 28 February 2022. For more information visit: wa.gov.au/rebalancingourgroundwater

Subscriptions Due for 2022

A membership renewal form for 2022 is enclosed with this newsletter. Please renew your membership today and help us to maintain our campaign for wetland conservation in WA. A donation to our Wetlands Trust Fund would also be very welcome and it is tax-deductible. You may pay your subs by cheque or bank transfer.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy 2022

Philip Jennings

President

33/22 Windelya Road, Murdoch, WA 6150

Email: P.Jennings@murdoch.edu.au Phone: 9312 2778