

Traditional artefacts provide a connection to country.
PHOTO: South Coast NRM.



SOUTHERN PROSPECTS 2011-2016

Cultural Heritage

CULTURAL HERITAGE

This section describes the importance of cultural heritage in the management of natural resources. The main components of cultural heritage are described and factors affecting it are discussed. Aspirations (25+ years), Goals (10+ years) and Outcomes (one to five years) are outlined in a Program Logic Summary (See section 9.6).

ASPIRATION: *All NRM actions in the South Coast region recognise and respect natural cultural heritage values. Aboriginal practices, spiritual and cultural values are considered across all NRM themes, to support conservation and protection of our natural environment.*

9.1 Principles

The principles which guide our approach to cultural heritage are:

- recognition of cultural knowledge
- respectful involvement and use of information
- building capacity for culturally appropriate processes
- identification of areas of key interest
- communication using agreed protocols, with openness and transparency.

Sustainable and responsible NRM can only be achieved through acknowledgement and understanding of the region's cultural heritage. For the purpose of the strategy, cultural heritage will cover both Aboriginal and non-indigenous assets and values and the threats from degrading processes identified in other theme areas. The cultural heritage values of significant places can influence the use and conservation of environmental assets in these areas. Aspects relating to Aboriginal culture are highlighted in some places as consideration of this aspect has been identified as a gap in the past.

9.2 What we know – values and threats

The natural land and waterscapes of the region have a high significance for non-indigenous cultural practices. The use of these natural assets is an important part of the lifestyle for both people living and visiting the region. The cultural attachment to the natural and built environment for non-indigenous Australians, while different to Aboriginal connections, should not be excluded, both are affected by the same degrading processes.

At a national level, the Australian Heritage Council is an independent body of heritage experts established through the Australian Heritage Council Act (2003). The Council's role is to assess the values of places nominated for the National Heritage List and the Australian Government Heritage List, and to advise the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Heritage on conserving and protecting listed values.

The Department of Indigenous Affairs is the WA State agency responsible for administering legislation that affects the well-being of Aboriginal people. Amongst the legislation administered by the Department is the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*, which details specific responsibilities related to the management and protection of heritage sites.

There are more than 600 registered sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the region. Land tenure for these sites varies from private freehold to public land held for reserves, national parks and the like. Unregistered sites are still being found, documented and registered on both private and public land.

More than 285 cultural heritage sites are recorded on the Register of National Estate (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, n.d.).

Through the Australian Heritage Commission Register of National Estate, the Heritage Council of WA and DIA, sites can be nominated to be included on the relevant cultural heritage databases.

Under the *Heritage Act of Western Australia 1990*, the Heritage Council of WA was set up as an advisory body on heritage matters for the WA Government. The main functions of the Council are to establish and maintain the State Register of Heritage Places, to ensure that any development of heritage places

is in harmony with cultural values and to promote awareness and knowledge of our cultural heritage.

Aboriginal people hold generational knowledge of significance sites that are both recorded and unrecorded. Unregistered cultural or archaeological sites are not officially registered for reasons of cultural importance and integrity and remain known only to the custodians. It is therefore important not to confine the management frameworks to sites and areas "registered" with State and Australian Government databases.

Aboriginal cultural heritage exists throughout the lands and waters of Australia and all aspects of the landscape are important to Aboriginal people. The rights and interests of Aboriginal people arise in their heritage through their spirituality, customary law, languages, original ownership, custodianship, developing traditions and recent history. The effective protection and conservation of this heritage is an important asset in maintaining our Australian identity, and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people. Maintaining Aboriginal heritage will ensure a continuous role for anyone interested in caring for country, and this is beneficial to everyone. Prioritisation of cultural heritage assets and actions requires additional consultation with Aboriginal groups. This will happen through the development of funded projects and continue with the implementation of *Southern Prospects*.

An ongoing threat continues to be the lack of time and resources necessary to carry out meaningful involvement and consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders.

There are a variety of issues, problems and circumstances that affect Aboriginal communities and land managers participating in NRM. These include:

- in many areas the passing of Aboriginal Elders is resulting in the loss of traditional knowledge at an alarming rate
- there is often a lack of community awareness, skills and capacity to deal with existing new and emerging problems
- there is a perception in the Aboriginal community that when consultation for NRM issues occurs the recommendations made by the Aboriginal community are not acted on. This has a negative impact on future involvement in NRM.
- there is limited commercial base to support NRM. Traditional owners and managers need funding and other resources to deal with these issues.

Aboriginal communities and their organisations have limited resources to undertake NRM because their generally scarce resources are focused on meeting more immediate and other local priorities (such as maintenance of community infrastructure, overcoming housing shortages and health issues).

Recognising cultural knowledge is important to managing the environment sustainably.



PHOTO: South Coast NRM.



PHOTO: Charlotte Powis.

The Esperance Aboriginal community is assisting with NRM.

9.3 Achievements

Involvement of Aboriginal communities of the South Coast NRM Region in activities has been a major achievement leading to on-ground restoration and preservation works at sites of cultural and natural significance. The following provides a short summary of achievements for the Cultural Heritage theme (a more complete description of achievements has been compiled in a status report [South Coast NRM, 2011]):

- a cross-regional project, *Restoring Connections between People and Land*, was initiated and largely developed through the Aboriginal NRM Facilitators of South Coast NRM and South West Catchments Council, with substantial consultation with DIA, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council and Goldfields Land and Sea Council, training institutions and a number of other organisations

and individuals within the two regions. The project links Aboriginal Elders and youths and strengthens traditional connection to country and knowledge of NRM. This project has supported the restoration and protection of highly significant cultural sites including support to purchase, handover and manage Lake Pleasant View (at Many Peaks) by the Indigenous Land Corporation. This project addressed both cross-regional and cross-cultural needs and is fundamental in strengthening the capacity for Aboriginal people to increase their role in culturally appropriate NRM. While this project initially focused on southern WA, it has developed approaches and elements that have application in adjacent regions. Restoring Connections was the National and State Landcare Award winner for Indigenous Project in 2010.



- NRM projects with the Aboriginal community in Esperance have included restoration and protection work at Bandy Creek, Cape Arid, Stokes National Park, Mt Ridley and other locations as well as Culham Inlet survey and Stockyard Creek mapping (including Dieback training). The training provided through these projects is building community capacity for future involvement in NRM work. Two cultural project officers are employed in the eastern part of the region.
- since commencement in 2006, the Gondwana Link Partnership has facilitated Aboriginal involvement in:
 - management of properties at Nowanup, Yarrabee and Chereninup, including training for Aboriginal people
 - construction of a meeting place where Elders exchange cultural information
 - awareness raising events with over 500 participants, strengthening of community NRM and heritage capacity
 - cultural mapping of selected river systems
 - exploration of business enterprise opportunities
 - facilitation of cross regional cultural exchanges and field days
 - participation in Biodiversity Week educational activities to encourage cultural knowledge transfers with regional schools.
- the Sustainable Land Management Program assists eight Aboriginal-owned properties with NRM projects, training and capacity building. This program will be expanded to include on-ground restoration and revegetation projects. On ground works have been conducted, field days promoted and six environmental property management plans developed to assist funding applications.
- identification of 24 priority heritage sites threatened by degrading processes (e.g. Bandy Creek in Esperance) resulted in preparation of management plans by a project officer employed at the Department of Indigenous Affairs through South Coast Heritage Restoration Project. The second phase of this project saw the implementation of recommended on-ground works to protect and restore the sites. The Indigenous Biodiversity Project coordinated by the Department involved a work team of six young Aboriginal men to restore five sites in the region. This assisted the participants in obtaining Level II Certification with TAFE. Cultural awareness and heritage training program was undertaken to increase knowledge and capacity about cultural sites planning and legislation. This has been delivered on an as needs basis and continues to be delivered.
- the Indigenous Environmental Practices students at North Albany Senior High School were selected as finalists in the United Nations Association of Australia World Environment Day 2007 Awards, and highly commended by the judging panel. This project will be extended to other schools across the region in the future. Manypeaks Primary School contributed to the Lake Pleasant View project and won a United Nations Association of Australia World Environment Day 2008 Award.
- an archaeological survey and training research partnership project is based in the Pallinup area. This project included cultural and family mapping for the Central part of the region.
- the Indigenous liaison officer at the Department of Environment and Conservation (2008/09) worked toward joint management of the Lake Pleasant View property at Manypeaks and adjoining reserves. The officer also delivered Cultural Awareness training for Department of Conservation staff and the wider community.
- the restoration of the Aylmore Springs site in Gnowangerup linked with activities undertaken by the Gnowangerup Heritage Centre to deliver NRM outcomes through the Restoring Connections Project. This included development of plans for a native plant nursery with on ground training in seed collection and species identification. The nursery has been built with links to Ongerup Heritage Trail.
- an Aboriginal employment initiative funded a pilot project to develop a strategy for Aboriginal employment and training. Aboriginal employment in the South Coast NRM Region has included the roles of a facilitator, project coordinator, project officers, support officers and administrative support. Positions funded at other organisations have included project officers, liaison officers and implementation officers, as well as casual employment in work such as fencing, weed removal and survey work has also been created.
- formation of an Aboriginal Reference Group to have input into NRM planning processes across the region.

Some key achievements have been made through the identification of non-indigenous culturally significant places and recognition of social values of natural resources through the following projects:

- the assessment of Western South Coast water resources by Department of Water which included the assessed of social values of the 45 river systems from Deep River to the small coastal creeks flowing into Cheyne Bay. This assessment is an important piece of work that will be used to guide the development of the South Coast Regional Water Plan to ensure that ecological, social and Aboriginal cultural values are properly recognised and supported in decision making.
- community survey values and resource use attitudes and perceptions of the Ravensthorpe Range was conducted to inform future land use planning of the range. The study provided a framework to consider the concept of connection to place and local communities multiple relationships with the environment.
- the development of the Mt Hallowell Reserve Management Plan 2008, Wilson Inlet Foreshore Reserves Management Plan 2008 and Culham Inlet Management Plan 2008 documented and considered management actions for the European History and community values of both of the reserves and Inlet
- the assessment of European cultural heritage values of regional estuaries by UWA has provided information on non-indigenous heritage cultural values that can be used in the management of priority estuaries. This project has established a methodology that can systematically be used to describe, evaluate and rank the heritage values of priority estuaries, and sites on/or immediately adjacent to these estuaries on a landscape scale. This methodology should be readily extended to other estuaries, rivers and wetlands, and to link with existing mechanisms of heritage evaluation.

Significant progress has been achieved in the following areas:

- recognition and acceptance of the Noongar belief that there is no distinction between natural resources and cultural values
- comprehensive, transparent and inclusive engagement across the region guided by a reference group including Aboriginal land managers, corporations, families and Elders

- empowerment of the community to make choices and decisions about the management of their natural and cultural resources
- flexible approach to managing community capacity to work within expected timeframes. Capacity has been strong enough for groups to deliver and drive projects.
- integration of the cultural heritage theme with other NRM themes
- documenting and considering social and Cultural Heritage values (indigenous and non-indigenous) in management plans for reserves and waterways on the South Coast.

9.4 Current community capacity

The acknowledgement and understanding of the region's cultural heritage values and their management (both Aboriginal and non-indigenous) has increased over the last five years. Cultural heritage values and social values of assets have been specifically assessed and addressed in many of the management plans. There is a raised level of awareness and willingness in the community to incorporate cultural heritage values into management projects. In some circumstances this can be limited due to lack of skills and resources, or suitable funding to undertake assessments. However, the region benefits from a core body of research organisations and individuals with the necessary skills and capacity to undertake this work when funding permits.

In the context of NRM in the South Coast region, the utilisation of Aboriginal knowledge of land and cultural landscapes is important to maximise the benefits to all themes within this strategy and presents opportunities for Aboriginal involvement in NRM. The continued contribution of Aboriginal people in NRM will be vital to the cultural identity of Western Australians, and needs to be nurtured through its early stages and reviewed to assess its progress, successes and failures. The Cultural Heritage theme has focussed primarily on developing the capacity of Aboriginal people within the region to manage priority natural resource sites of cultural significance. Our current focus is to identify streams of funding to continue cultural projects which will help to build greater Aboriginal involvement and cultural understanding of NRM on the South Coast.

Aboriginal involvement in NRM has greatly expanded over the last few years with active engagement of the Aboriginal communities of the



PHOTO: South Coast NRM.

The location of artefacts gives an insight to previous cultural practices.

region in NRM activities. Better communication channels have been established, including the formation of the Aboriginal Reference Group. A range of policy initiatives, legislation and regulations in the area of Aboriginal Affairs are designed to provide opportunities for members of the Aboriginal community to pursue economic, social, cultural, linguistic and environmental benefits of land-associated activities. Mainstream government programs also provide land and NRM opportunities, particularly in the areas of agriculture, environmental restoration and conservation. Examples of WA Government commitments to the involvement of Aboriginal people in NRM include:

- joint management of protected areas (including the establishment by the Department of Environment and Conservation of Demonstration National Park Councils) and Memorandums of Understanding with regional Aboriginal Land and Sea Councils
- the active development and delivery of traineeship programs by the Department of Agriculture and Food (WA) and the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Over the last five years there have been many more opportunities for the Aboriginal community to

engage in NRM. The involvement of Aboriginal NRM officers has assisted Aboriginal land managers, members of community based organisations and individuals to have a greater role in the on-ground actions across all themes (Land, Water, Biodiversity, Coastal and Marine). There are approximately 13 Indigenous Land Corporation properties (of less than 15,000 ha) in the region, and approximately nine Aboriginal Lands Trust properties (of 10 ha - 10,000 ha) that can have a significant contribution to achieving NRM outcomes. The Aboriginal NRM officers and others engage key stakeholders such as Land and Sea Councils, together with managers of Aboriginal lands, and State agencies with Aboriginal interests or responsibilities. Most importantly, partnerships will be coordinated with NRM groups throughout the region. The implementation of the regional Aboriginal consultation framework will expand the existing cultural knowledge within regional communities and therefore enhance NRM within the region.

Aboriginal outcomes improve when Aboriginal representation is involved in the decision making that will affect the lives of their communities and the lives of non-Aboriginal people. Effective Aboriginal participation is dependent on the capacity to engage and negotiate to effect these decisions.

9.4.1 South Coast NRM involvement

A Cultural Program Leader, Cultural Project Leader and project officers are employed by South Coast NRM. These positions are responsible for:

- involving Aboriginal people in planning and management of natural resources
- building linkages between Aboriginal groups and the South Coast community, government agencies and local governments
- encouraging and assisting Aboriginal people to implement sustainable land use practices on Aboriginal properties, including through the incorporation of traditional practices and the further development of industries based on bush products
- developing training opportunities for Aboriginal land managers to increase their land management skills
- providing employment and training opportunities through Aboriginal work teams in partnership with an employment company.
- education and ongoing skills development in NRM with recognition of traditional learning to provide opportunities for other/ongoing employment
- joint management approach to natural resources between the Department of Environment and Conservation and relevant stakeholders
- investigation of the potential for Indigenous Protected Areas across the region, including the employment of Aboriginal rangers by the Department of Environment and Conservation at key cultural locations
- enterprise development opportunities need to be explored to foster long-term sustainability of indigenous NRM and continuing economic and social benefit are sought
- Restoring Connection type projects that allow the community to protect and restore places of cultural significance need to be developed
- funding sources for the cultural heritage theme may not necessarily be available in NRM programs. Alternative sources of funding will need to be sought to progress Aboriginal consultation on the South Coast region
- a need to explore opportunities to protect and restore places of cultural heritage significance (e.g. sites listed on the National Heritage list) where values relate to NRM.

9.5 Gaps

The following gaps have been identified:

- a general need for a strong focus on implementation due to lack of NRM funding streams

Aboriginal people are encouraged to share their stories with the wider community.



PHOTO: Bireli Ibbister.



9.6 Program logic summary – Cultural Heritage

ASPIRATIONS (25+ YEARS)

All NRM actions in the South Coast region recognise and respect natural cultural heritage values. Aboriginal practices, spiritual and cultural values are considered across all NRM themes, to support conservation and protection of our natural environment.

- Protected natural cultural heritage places
- Community recognises and values Aboriginal traditional ecological knowledge, land management practices and connection to country
- Aboriginal community with capacity to engage in all areas of NRM.

GOALS (10+ Years)

Goal H1. Capacity Enable the South Coast Aboriginal community to apply traditional and contemporary knowledge, and have the capacity and skills to restore and protect cultural heritage landscapes

Goal H2. Traditional knowledge Respectful integration of traditional ecological knowledge and cultural heritage values in all NRM projects with recognition of intellectual property rights.

Goal H3. Representation and participation Regional Aboriginal representation and participation in planning and implementation processes.

Goal H4. Protection of heritage places Aboriginal cultural significance of National Parks and reserves are formally recognised and protected by 2020.

Goal H5. Protection of places of high cultural natural heritage significance Identify and protect sites and locations of high cultural natural heritage significance at risk from degrading and threatening processes by 2020.

OUTCOMES (1-5 Years)

MEASURES AND MONITORING

Outcome H1. Improved information Survey of the Aboriginal community and other sources to gather information on traditional ecological knowledge, connection, interest and land management practices for use (respecting intellectual property) by the community by 2012.

ON GROUND ACTIONS

Outcome H2. Protection of heritage places Identification and protection of three significant cultural natural heritage places per year, as prioritised by the community.

Outcome H3. Landscape scale approach Identify, plan and implement a landscape scale cultural natural heritage project by 2015.

Outcome H4. Establishment of sustainable enterprises Support the establishment of two sustainable enterprises based on NRM principles by Aboriginal communities by 2015.

Outcome H5. Application of traditional knowledge Apply the use of traditional ecological knowledge to South Coast community projects by 2015.

OUTCOMES (1-5 Years) (continued)

CAPACITY BUILDING

Outcome H6. Improved community capacity The Aboriginal Reference Group has the on-going capacity to be actively involved at every level of the planning processes at South Coast NRM.

Outcome H7. Improved communication The wider community understands, respects and is involved in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage by 2015.

Outcome H8. Improved training and career pathways Support the development of training resources and career pathway identification in NRM for Aboriginal people by 2012.

PLANNING AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Outcome H9. Agreed protocols Protocols for Aboriginal engagement in NRM developed and endorsed by 2011.

Outcome H10. Improved knowledge Increased knowledge of cultural heritage asset values and their management enhanced and embraced by the development (2012) and implementation of a regional cultural heritage education program by 2015.

Outcome H11. Improved Aboriginal employment An Aboriginal Employment Policy for South Coast NRM is developed and implemented by 2012.

9.7 Measures and indicators

Use of the following indicators and measures (Table 12) as a guide will assist in setting targets for projects and programs and allow for standard

approaches to measurement. Indicators should be selected according to the principles of cost, simplicity, consistency, practicality and capacity to deliver information across the region.

Table 12: Measures and indicators – Cultural Heritage

ASSET	INDICATOR HEADING	RECOMMENDED INDICATORS
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage (knowledge and places)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal cultural heritage considered and incorporated into NRM planning and projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Aboriginal people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involved in NRM activities consulted about NRM activities. Number of oral histories recorded Number of cultural projects, training sessions undertaken Number of jointly managed areas
Other Cultural Heritage (knowledge and places)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other cultural heritage considered and incorporated into NRM planning and projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people and organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involved in NRM activities Consulted about NRM activities Number of oral histories recorded Number of cultural projects, training sessions undertaken

(Based on Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2007)



PHOTO: Shandell Cummings.

Elders sharing knowledge.



PHOTO: Shandell Cummings.

Restoring the land.

9.8 Trade-offs

There is a diversity of cultural heritage sites, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, across the region. To date Aboriginal involvement in NRM has been strengthened by the formation of the Aboriginal Reference Group and efforts to engage with the Aboriginal community. For increased involvement, projects resulting from the strategy need to be culturally aware when it comes to Aboriginal issues, which may impact on project timing and actions. Few surveys have been conducted on the risk to culturally significant sites from degrading processes, and as a result many sites may already be highly threatened.

Actions to protect these sites could be seen as addressing symptoms of the threats as opposed to causes, and hence may be prioritised lower than actions that address causes of threats. Due to the significance of cultural heritage sites, the possibility of addressing symptoms of threats rather than causes of threats needs to be considered carefully.

Significant social and economic implications would result from the loss to degrading processes of cultural heritage sites, knowledge and connections to country. Consideration will need to be given to where and/or how cultural heritage assets fit in the scheme of NRM within the region.

Heritage sites are at risk of degradation without proper management.



PHOTO: South Coast NRM.