



Western Australian
Coastal & Marine
Network

Midwest Coast

Coastal & Marine Stewardship Needs Assessment: Fact Sheet Report



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

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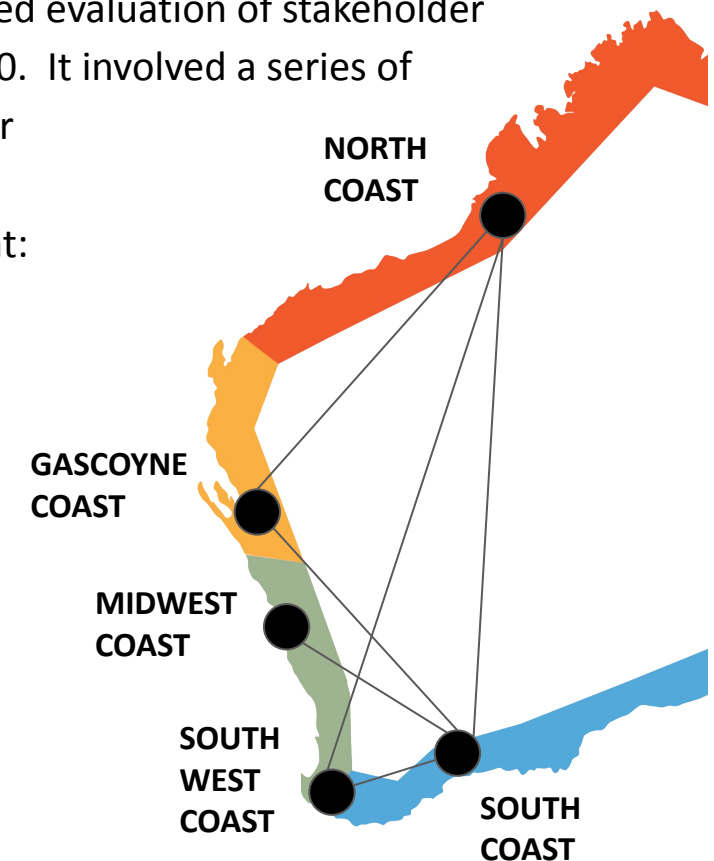
INTRODUCTION

Coastal & marine stewardship needs assessment

In 2024, WACMN conducted a regional needs assessment and strategic action planning as part of its community consultation program. This initiative engaged five state bioregions to identify local needs and explore opportunities for collaboration with WACMN. The work undertaken included a multifaceted evaluation of stakeholder engagement outputs and outcomes since the genesis of the Network in 2020. It involved a series of targeted stakeholder interviews, surveys and direct engagement through our *Coastal Conversations* series which ran through 2024.

Coastal Conversations was guided by three pillars of community engagement:

1 ENGAGE	Meet local, on-the-ground stakeholders from the five regions on the map (right) and find out who they are.
2 CONNECT	Engage in a needs assessment with the local stakeholders and gather data and knowledge.
3 RETAIN	Support the key needs identified in the assessment by developing future strategic plans and sharing knowledge gained with others around the state through storytelling.



View [WACMN's stewardship campaign](#) webpage with a link to the [Coastal Conversations program](#) >

INTRODUCTION

A range of engagement strategies were utilised during the needs assessment and strategic planning.

Stakeholder engagement included:

- Targeting stakeholders in WACMN's community database and meet new stakeholders
- Conducting face-to-face interviews via phone, video conferencing, and during on-ground site visits
- Sending out online surveys via email
- Hosting online meet-ups
- Sharing 'Spotlight on' stories to feature local community stories statewide
- Engaging in ongoing meetings with WACMN's Core Strategic Group (CSG) for direction
- Hosting targeted working sessions in our 2024 Statewide Coastal Forum which brought together regional stakeholders consulted through our needs assessment process and allowed them to discuss key concerns and themes to inform ongoing strategic action planning (to address their identified needs)

All consultancy including phone calls, surveys, meet-ups and interviews, were framed by the following six questions:

1. **What are key issues of concern for you in your local coastal and marine environment?**
2. **How are they currently being addressed?**
3. **What works?**
4. **What does not work?**
5. **What would help?**
6. **Are you connected to other people who are dealing with similar issues/concerns in other places (who/where)?**

These engagement methods and questions frame the findings presented here.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

MIDWEST COAST



The Midwest region considered here corresponds to the Northern Agricultural NRM region which extends southward from the Zuytdorp Cliffs, near Kalbarri¹³ to Green Head¹⁴ and Guilderton.

It has long stretches of coastline with occasional limestone cliffs, sand plains and breakaways¹⁵ encompassing the Houtman Abrolhos Archipelago and Jurien Bay Marine Park. It includes coastal town centres of Kalbarri, Geraldton and Dongara, Leeman, Green Head (and Jurien Bay, Lancelin, Ledge Point, Seabird, Guilderton. The proximity to Perth attracts weekend visitors as well as creating a pop. The Midwest coast experiences hot dry summers with seasonal annual rainfall of 400 – 600 mm.

¹³ Fisheries Bioregions, Government of Western Australia <https://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Fishing-and-Aquaculture/Recreational-Fishing/Recreational-Fishing-Rules/West-Coast-Bioregion/Pages/default.aspx>

¹⁴ Mid West Development Commission Regional Overview, Government of Western Australia <https://www.mwdc.wa.gov.au/our-region.aspx>

¹⁵ Mid West Development Commission Regional Overview, Government of Western Australia <https://www.mwdc.wa.gov.au/our-region.aspx>

MIDWEST – governance arrangements

Local Government Authorities are the primary coastal managers along much of the Midwest coast with eight coastal LGAs in the NACC NRM region: Shires of Northampton and Chapman Valley, City of Greater Geraldton, Shire of Irwin, Carnamah and Coorow¹⁶ and Dandaragan and Gin Gin.

The State Government DBCA is working in joint management arrangements with Nanda Traditional Owners¹⁷ at Kalbarri National Park and Zuytdorp Nature Reserve and working towards this in other areas with the Yamatji Nation, under the Yamatji Nation Land Use Agreement on selected coastal areas from Kalbarri National Park to Leeman¹⁸. From Leeman southward is the Noongar Nation which operates under the Yued Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). DBCA are managers of the Houtman Islands National Park and Jurien Bay Marine Park. The Department of Fisheries manage the Houtman Abrolhos Islands Fish Habitat Protection Area¹⁹.

There are over 20 community Landcare organisations working in the area, including an active Coastcare network. NACC provide a key role in coordinating and supporting these community-based efforts through their involvement in initiatives such as regional Coastcare forums the Turquoise Coast Management Group (not currently operational) and the Batavia Coastcare Network.

16 Map of Local Government Authorities in the Mid West https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-07/MWT-Midwest_region_location_plan.pdf

17 News Article for Kalbarri National Park 29 July 2024, National Indigenous Times Gover

<https://nit.com.au/29-07-2024/12772/nanda-traditional-owners-celebrate-joint-management-and-creation-of-new-national-parks-in-was-mid-west>

18 Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Area (ILUA) Map <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2020-03/Schedule%201.pdf>

19 Houtman Abrolhos Fish Habitat Protection Area Management Plan 2022, Government of Western Australia [Houtman_Abrolhos_Islands_FHPA_Mgt_Plan_2022-2032.pdf](https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2022-03/Houtman_Abrolhos_Islands_FHPA_Mgt_Plan_2022-2032.pdf)

MIDWEST – stakeholder engagement

A total of 36 stakeholder groups were identified and profiled for the [Midwest](#). Of these, 20 number were Community groups, 8 Local Coastal Managers (LGAs) and 2 State Government departments (Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions and Department of Fisheries) involved in marine protected area (State Marine Parks and Fish Habitat Protection Areas). Five First Nations stakeholders were identified in the region and 2 Private Organisations engaged with.

At the Coastal Forum '24 the regions collaborative projects on 'Managing 4WD Impacts' was shared by the Northern Agricultural Catchment Council (NACC) and Tending the Track Alliance (TTA) with input from Anthony Seymour (Turquoise Coast 4WD Masterplan).

A summary of Midwest stakeholder identification and consultation activities is provided in Appendix A & B with key findings reported here based on engagement through the 2022 - 2024 Coastal Conversations program as follows:

1. **2022:** Coastcare forum held at Lancelin, convened by NACC and attended by Coastcare Groups including Friends of Lancelin Coast, Greenhead Coastcare, Ledge Point Coastcare, Friends of Moore River Estuary, Jurien Bay Regional Herbarium Group, Seabird Progress Association, and the Fairy Tern Conservation Group.
2. **2023:** Geraldton Chapter of Waves of Wisdom: Coastal and Marine Perspectives across WA
3. **2024:** On-ground field visits to Lancelin, Jurien and Geraldton and consultation with NACC; City of Greater Geraldton, Coastcare groups, Turquoise Coast 4WD Masterplan Manager; Tending the Tracks Alliance; Batavia Coastal Network.

All participants were invited to participate and attend the October coastal forum conference.

MIDWEST – what are the key issues?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Stakeholders consulted cited 4WD impacts; coastal erosion and climate change as the ‘TOP 3’ issues affecting coastal and marine environments in the Midwest with expanded explanations as follows. On-ground groups are currently dealing with:

- **Coastal Processes and Hazards:** Coastal erosion, particularly in fragile dune areas, is a major concern, exacerbated by uncontrolled 4WD access and tourism pressures. 12 of the States 55 coastal erosion hotspots identified in this area including ‘high’ management concern areas at Sunset Beach, Drummond Cove, and Point Moore.
- **Visitor and Recreation Impacts:** Unregulated 4WD access has been identified as a significant threat to fragile coastal ecosystems, leading to increased erosion and habitat degradation.
- **Climate Change:** The region is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including sea level rise and increased storm intensity, which contribute to coastal erosion and damage to marine ecosystems.
- **Invasive Species:** Coastal weeds like African Boxthorn and Pyp Grass and invasive animal species are increasingly disrupting native ecosystems

MIDWEST – how are these issues being addressed?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

- **4WD Management and Erosion Control:** The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC), Tending the Tracks Alliance, and several LGAs within the region have instigated a number of projects and programs, including a recent Turquoise Coast 4WD Masterplan, to control access and mitigate damage from off-road vehicles. This includes community engagement efforts to map and rehabilitate tracks and consolidate access points.
- **Wildlife Conservation:** The protection of vulnerable species like the Australian Fairy Tern is a priority for local groups. The community-led *Fairy Tern Conservation Strategy* has been initiated by groups like the WA Fairy Tern Conservation Network.
- **Beach and Dune Rehabilitation:** Several Coastcare groups, such as Seabird Progress Association and Friends of Lancelin Coast, have been involved in dune restoration and coastal protection efforts with demonstrated positive outcomes at key sites.
- **Catchment and Water Quality Management:** The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council continues to support sustainable land use and water quality management projects that benefit both coastal and marine ecosystems.
- **Education and Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge:** NACC have recently completed a series of locally-based school curriculum packages on the topics of Coastal Biodiversity, Protecting our Coastal and Yued Aboriginal Connection to Coast. These packages were informed by guidance from local teachers and are currently being used in the regions schools.

MIDWEST – what is working?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Working collaboratively and cross-regionally to tackle ‘big’ issues; Strong leadership through NACC and its associated partners; Well-developed Network of Coastcarers carrying out Coastal and Dune Rehabilitation and Restoration

- Working collaboratively and consulting with stakeholders. The 4WD master plan currently in progress across the Turquoise Coast is an initiative of the Turquoise Coast Management Group, funded by the SNRM grant program, and is a cross-region strategy. While work is still in progress, the community survey element of had 346 responses and the initiatives provides a positive example of the power of a strong collaborative network to tackle ‘whole or region’ issues.
- The City of Greater Geraldton successfully rehabilitating coastal erosion sites assisted by vehicle closures. Efforts to engage community have been successfully undertaken (e.g. Point Moore Beach Usage Survey nearly 800 community members participate) and while opinions are often polarised, communication between CGG and local community groups is strong and effectively facilitated through coordination with NACC and groups such as the Batavia Coastcare Network.



MIDWEST – what is working?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

- The Tending the Track Alliance project on the Wanagarren Track provides a valuable case study of the success of a co-managed, closed 4WD track.
- Awareness raising and sharing information – a recently produced infographic on 4WD use and coast impacts through a collaboration between NACC and Batavia Coastcare Group was financed by CGG and demonstrates ongoing commitment of on-ground groups to look for innovative solutions to shared problems that can add value across the region.



MIDWEST – what is not working?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Lack of funding; poor understanding of coastal and marine issues; inability to monitor/manage 4WD impacts due to scale of problem and absence of policing/enforcement mechanisms.

- **Diminished support for Coastcare Groups:**

Volunteer fatigue, an aging volunteer population, lack of funding, and limited insurance for Coastcare groups hinder effective stewardship efforts in some areas.

- **Uncontrolled 4WD Access and Visitor Management**

On-ground management efforts are, generally speaking, not achieving positive environmental outcomes. While there are some 'success stories' and Regional Initiatives underway, state-led investment into behaviour change is considered essential as well as gaining buy-in from industry partners and users who are often 'tourists' visiting from out of the region.

- **Lack of Long-Term Funding**

Constraints of grant-based project cycles and lack of ongoing investment in personnel; difficulty in maintaining whole-of-region connectivity and fostering an integrated, cooperative approach in absence of strategic investment. An example of this is the lack of ongoing engagement through the Turquoise Coast Management Group, largely due to the absence of a (paid) coordinator to maintain momentum.

MIDWEST – what will help?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Increased visitor understanding of 4WD and coastal environment; track consolidation; continued support for regional Coastcare Officer.

- **Increased Funding and Resources:** Many community groups are struggling to maintain momentum due to limited financial resources. Resumed funding for regional Coastcare support officers and easier access to grants for community groups would greatly benefit stewardship efforts. A paid facilitation service between Coastcare groups and LGAs/coastal managers (collectively coastal stakeholders) is needed to achieve integrated on-ground coastal management. Coastcare support would come under that umbrella but the facilitation is more important.
- **Stronger Visitor Management and Education:** Top down management of 4WDs should be state-led (while regionally applicable) There is a need for more comprehensive visitor management strategies, particularly for 4WD access, to protect sensitive coastal areas. Expanding education programs on sustainable tourism practices would help mitigate the negative impacts of increasing visitor numbers.
- **Volunteer Engagement and Support:** Securing greater volunteer participation remains a challenge, particularly in small coastal towns. Providing better support, including insurance coverage and incentives for volunteers, would improve engagement.

MIDWEST – what will help?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

- **Policy and Regulation Strengthening:** Better enforcement of existing coastal access restrictions and more robust policy development on marine and coastal protection are needed. This requires an explicit Coastal Policy, supported by a Coast Act, for Western Australia.
- **Data and Monitoring Programs:** Expanding monitoring programs to better track environmental conditions, particularly in relation to climate change and coastal erosion, is essential for adaptive management. Increased funding for scientific research and data collection would help inform evidence-based policy decisions.

