



Western Australian
Coastal & Marine
Network

South West Coast

Coastal & Marine Stewardship Needs Assessment: Fact Sheet Report



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

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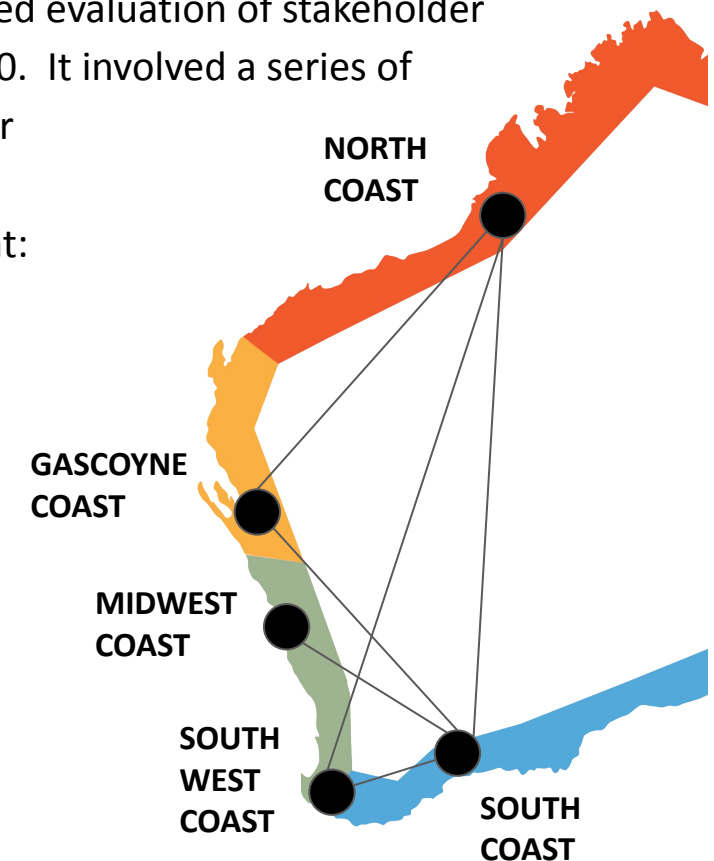
INTRODUCTION

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

SOUTHWEST



The Southwest region, extending from Binningup south to Walpole, lies within an internationally recognised Global Biodiversity Hotspot—one of the most biologically rich yet threatened areas on Earth.

With less than 30% of its original natural vegetation remaining, the region has also been identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as a global drying hotspot. Bordered by both the Indian and Southern Oceans, the coastline features a striking mix of white sandy beaches, rugged cliffs, and adjoining forests. It is a renowned destination for surfing and tourism.

SOUTHWEST – governance arrangements

Coastal management in the Peel-Harvey and Southwest is distributed among State and Local Government Authorities. The area includes nine²¹ coastal local governments; Cities of Bunbury, Busselton and Mandurah, Shire of Capel, Dardanup, Harvey, Augusta Margaret River, Murray and Waroona²².

From Cape Leeuwin to Cape Naturaliste the majority of coast and the adjacent Ngari Cape Marine Park is managed by DBCA^{23/24}. Further south, past Augusta the D'Entrecasteaux National Park from Black Point to Walpole²⁵ is also managed by DBCA. Traditional Owners in the Southwest are from the Noongar Nation who are represented by the Gnaala Karla Booja Aboriginal Corporation, Karri Karrak Aboriginal Corporation and part of Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar Aboriginal Corporation²⁶.

There are over 30 community Landcare organisations working in the area including Coastcare and catchment groups actively engaged in managing and protecting coastal environments²⁷.

21 City of Rockingham is not included here despite being part of the PNP due to the fact that it is encompassed in the Perth NRM management area.

22 Map of Regions and Local Government Authority Areas https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/maps/regional-western-australia.pdf?sfvrsn=c73b1576_0

23 Leeuwin Naturaliste Capes Area Park and Reserve Management Plan 2015, Government of Western Australia <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/plans/leeuwin-naturaliste-capes-area-parks-and-reserves>

24 Ngari Capes Marine Park Management Plan 2013, Government of Western Australia <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/plans/ngari-capes-marine-park>

25 Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks Management Plan 2012, Government of Western Australia <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/plans/shannon-and-dentrecasteaux-national-parks>

26 Map of South West Settlement Area, Government of Western Australia <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2019-04/Annexure%20A%20-%20Map%20of%20Settlement%20Area.pdf>

27 WACMN Stewards

SOUTHWEST – stakeholder engagement process

The findings reported on here are based on the **2022 - 2024 Coastal Conversations program** conducted by the **WA Coastal & Marine Network**.

A total of 42 stakeholder groups were identified and profiled for the Southwest²⁸. Of these, 24 were community groups; 2 NGOs; 8 Local Coastal Managers (LGAs) and 1 state government department (Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions - DBCA). Four First Nations stakeholders were identified in the region and five private organisations.

Key engagement with Southwest stakeholders included interviews and face-to-face discussions with:

1. **Local Coastal Managers (LGAs and Peron Naturaliste Partnership).**
2. **NRM Landcare WA.**
3. **Catchment Management Groups (GeoCatch).**
4. **Local Community and Coastcare Groups (Geographe Bay Yacht Club; Southern Forests Community Landcare, Friends of Cape to Cape Track, and the Friends of Meelup.**
5. **Environmental NGOs - Nature Conservation Margaret River Region (NCMRR); Dolphin Discovery Centre; Tangaroa Blue.**
6. **First Nations group the Undalup Association.**
7. **Peron Naturaliste Partnership.**
8. **Oz Fish WA.**
9. **local Coastcare groups.**
10. **CoastSWoP.**

All participants were invited to participate and attend the October 2024 Statewide Coastal Stewardship forum.

²⁸ Map of Regions and Local Government Authority Areas
https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/maps/regional-western-australia.pdf?sfvrsn=c73b1576_0

SOUTHWEST – what are the key issues?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

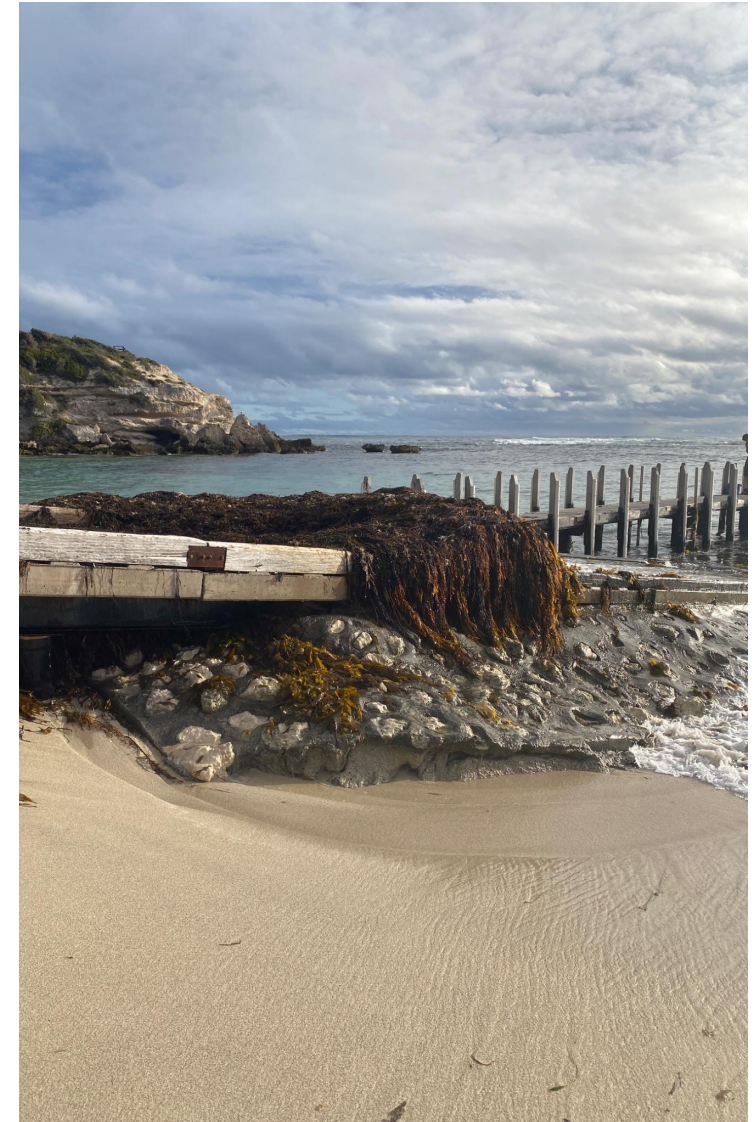
Stakeholders consulted cited growing resident and tourist populations and their subsequent use of and access to the coast; physical coastal processes and hazards; and climate change impacts as their ‘top 3’ existing issues.

For the Peel Harvey area, key issues for the coastal and nearshore areas have been identified as:

- Land-use development
- Management and buffering of the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar System
- Improvement of riverine and estuarine health
- Recreational pressures and management

In the Southwest NRM region, extensive previous consultation and community meetings have identified a wide range of issues to be addressed such as:

- Attitudes towards fishing and diving
- Four-wheel-driving
- Coastal access and pathways
- Pest and weed control
- Erosion management
- Impacts of a drying climate on coastal ecosystems



SOUTHWEST – what are the key issues?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Other issues/concerns or barriers to effective coastal and marine stewardship in the region that stakeholders identified included:

- Lack of wider community awareness
- Volunteer participation (burnout and need to attract new members)
- Multiple tenure and lack of coordinated management
- Marine debris and other litter
- Funding (grant based and tenuous)
- Lack of understanding of cultural heritage considerations at coastal sites



SOUTHWEST – how are they being addressed?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

The Southwest region has well established, long-standing, networks that include NGOs, NRM groups, Community Coastcare groups and local government working together (e.g. through CoastSWoP, Peel Harvey Catchment Council, Peron Naturaliste Partnership; GeoCatch, Nature Conservation Margaret River Region).

Groups active in the area have a mature community of practice, often spanning more than 20 years and in some cases, up to 40 years. They run regular planting, brushing and volunteer coast care days, and support community groups, schools, volunteer and coastal groups with coastal restoration projects. Many citizen science projects are active, monitoring seagrass, shore bird populations and coastal erosion on beaches.

Citizen Science

- Continued scientific monitoring of marine debris (Tangaroa Blue)
- Peron Naturaliste Partnership are working on Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Planning and a citizen science project CoastSnap photo monitoring beaches as well as the training of Aboriginal Rangers in the use of Drones as a tool in remote data collection to assist coastal management efforts
- Shorebird census volunteer training and participation (Peel Harvey Catchment Council)
- Seagrass Monitoring (GeoCatch)

SOUTHWEST – how are they being addressed?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Coastal and Dune Rehabilitation and Restoration

- Restoring coastal ecosystems (eg. planting, brushing, consolidation trails)
- Extensive and ongoing efforts by engaged community and Coastcare groups

Education and Awareness Raising

- Developing a 'coastal code' to guide visitor use and behaviour (Nature Conservation Margaret River)
- Raising awareness of coastal issues (ongoing events, information nights, talks, engagement opportunities across multiple groups)
- Environmental education for schools including the Adopt-a-Spot program

Working Together

- Fostering connections with Traditional Owners through workshops and events
- Working collaboratively and strategically for cross tenure management



SOUTHWEST – what is working?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Working collaboratively and establishing partnerships; long term funding; community engagement.

- Working collaboratively and establishing partnerships – many groups are well connected to each other given their relatively long histories of establishment.
- Innovative and multifaceted funding models – e.g. paid membership base; corporate sponsorship with ‘volunteering’ programs in built; philanthropic sources with more freedom to pursue low or no intervention solutions to coastal issues.
- Community umbrella organisations such as Margaret River Nature Conservation facilitating partnerships between government and community stakeholders.
- Community engagement and citizen science projects – generally a well engaged, enthusiastic, motivated community with high level of buy-in from families and younger people.

SOUTHWEST – what is not working?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Lack of strategic approach; lack of funding; poor understanding of coastal and marine issues.

Lack of Easily Accessible, Medium to Long-Term Funding

Ongoing funding to continue or instigate worthwhile projects that protect the natural environment and build resilience for climate change (not related to restrictive, grant-based, funding models)

Lack of Strategic Approach / Siloed Approaches

Coastal stewardship across tenure requires communication and shared objectives. Many groups report a will to work together, but the lack of an effective mechanism to do so.

Poor Understanding of Coastal and Marine Issues

A general poor understanding from the community and visitors resulting in damage to coastal ecosystems and poor user/disrespectful practises. Lack of standardised messaging, education and awareness raising to motivate behavioural change across coastal and marine issues.

SOUTHWEST – what will help?

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Funding for Coastcare positions and projects; communication, strategic approach to regional management; collaborative agreements; leadership.

- More effective capacity to measure and demonstrate impact of coastal conservation work as a means to reinforce the value proposition of community based efforts
- Increased collaboration and partnerships among community groups and organizations facilitated by opportunities to connect, share experiences and learn from each other
- A real time communication hub to connect the community of practice and leverage skills and expertise
- Ongoing funding to continue or instigate worthwhile projects that protect the natural environment and build resilience for climate change (not related to restrictive, grant-based, funding models).

