



Port Geographe Community Update

November 2011



Seagrass removal trial frees marina entrance

A short innovative trial to find a more efficient way to remove seagrass wrack from the channel into Port Geographe has had some success in clearing the entrance channel and an extension to the trial is being considered.

The accumulation of seagrass threatens safe navigation and limits the number and type of vessels able to access the marina. Traditionally, the seagrass wrack accumulation is removed as part of a larger and more expensive dredging operation.

In a bid to find a quicker, cheaper way to address the problem last month the Department of Transport (DoT) engaged the services of a fishing trawler to trial a range of measures to move the wrack.

Bad weather and the severity of the seagrass accumulation saw adaptations to the work plan and schedule – particularly to take advantage of the higher tides at night.

The size and power of the vessel helped break up the dense accumulations of wrack in the channel. The trawler performed numerous runs in and out whilst working with the outgoing tide to enhance the clearing effect.

The initial phase of the trial has seen improvements to the channel depths. However, deeper draft yachts in particular are urged to continue to navigate with care.

New hydrographic survey data will confirm the full extent of the trial's success. In consultation with the trawler operator, DoT will make a decision about a possible second

phase of work at the end of the month to make further improvements.

The seagrass trawling trial commenced in the same week as the annual program to bypass approximately 150,000 cubic metres of seagrass wrack and sand from the beach (adjacent to the western groyne) east to Wonnerup and an adjacent offshore location. This bypass work is progressing well and is scheduled for completion in late November ahead of the Busselton Ironman Event and the busy summer holiday period.

DoT, in consultation with the Shire of Busselton, has again coordinated the bypass operation because the joint venture partners for the Port Geographe are under administration, have ceased work on the project and have not met their coastal maintenance work obligations.

UWA Research a winner

Complex and innovative modelling studies underpinning the recommended structural changes at Port Geographe have received a national award for excellence.

At the Ports and Coasts 2011 Conference (organised by the Institution of Engineers Australia) held in September, the team from the University of Western Australia, engaged to conduct computer modelling to develop a more streamlined alignment of the groynes at Port Geographe, received the Institution of Engineers Kevin Stark Memorial Award for excellence.

The award specifically recognised the excellence in coastal and ocean engineering as developed and applied by the UWA to deliver recommendations for change to the coastal structures at Port Geographe.



Winners of the Kevin Stark Memorial Award – Prof Chari Pattiaratchi & Dr Sarath Wijeratne (also Cyprien Bosserelle, absent)

Steering Committee leads the way

The establishment of the Port Geographe Interagency Steering Committee led by DoT provides a whole-of-government perspective to finding solutions to the problems at Port Geographe.

DoT is undertaking detailed engineering designs and costings for the UWA coastal works proposal for Port Geographe and has entered commercial negotiations with the developer (via its administrator) and financiers to the project to ensure that these changes are encompassed in the next phase of development along with provisions to ensure that good water quality is maintained throughout the waterways of the development.

There is support for the work of this committee at the highest levels of government with its clear focus being to bring about a long-term improvements for the residents of Geographe and Wonnerup.

Working with the Shire and the community, DoT is committed to progressing plans to resolve the long standing problems associated with the Port Geographe development.

Recommended Coastal Re-configuration

Port Geographe, Busselton Current Configuration



1. Sand and seagrass traps
2. Exposed marina entrance
3. Eroding beach

Recommended Coastal Re-configuration



1. Curve the western breakwater to enhance the natural by-passing of sand and seagrass wrack
2. Establish a 50 metre wide navigation channel at the marina entrance to maintain safe navigation
3. Remove the 'Moonlight Bay' groynes to eliminate trapping of sediment and seagrass wrack
4. Straighten the foreshore alignment to enhance natural flow of sediment and seagrass wrack
5. Shorten and curve the eastern seawall to reduce the risk of erosion and wrack deposition at Wonnerup

Upcoming events

- Completion of bypass works by late November 2011
- Possible 2nd phase to the trawler trial to remove seagrass from the harbour channel
- Meetings of the Port Geographe Community Forum (Busselton) and the State Government's Interagency Steering Committee in December 2011.

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