

WELCOME TO THE CHAPMAN ESTUARY TIMES

The intent of this communication piece is to update and inform the community of the status of the recommended actions identified in the Chapman River Estuary Reserve Action Plan 2022-25. The newsletter will be uploaded to the City's website every second month.

It has been a busy year since the Management Plan was created. We have seen the new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 come into effect, and now waiting its repeal back to the 1972 Act. The City's Environment and Sustainability team have been busy behind the scenes organising work programs, submitting activity notices to notify the recognised traditional owners of our proposed program, and liaising with Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation (YSRC) and Department of Planning Lands and Heritage (DPLH) to ensure there is no harm to heritage.



UPCOMING EVENTS

The Aussie Bird Count 16-22 October find out more at <https://aussiebirdcount.org.au>

What's been happening in the Estuary?

Actions have started rolling out, including the installation of conservation fencing to protect the Threatened Ecological Community. The Chapman River Friends will soon "adopt" the "Reel-It-in" fishing tackle bins to be located at the designated fishing sites. These sites have undergone tree pruning to remove dead limbs to minimise fishing line entanglement and harm to wildlife. Trails along Nazareth house have been tidied, with the old steps on the eastern side being removed and hand railing installed to assist users navigating the slope.

In the wider Chapman River Regional Park community events such as a Boxthorn Blitz workshop co-hosted by Chapman River Friends (CRF) were held with a successful turnout. A community rehabilitation planting day held by CRF saw up to 300 native species planted around the Chapman Steps crossing. A successful clean-up day hosted by CRF was attended by 28 volunteers, City staff and Vestas Wind Farm staff who removed large amounts of rubbish between Green Street and Mitchell Street.

Recently, a strong storm hit Geraldton on Wednesday 13th September, resulting in seawater ingress into the lower Chapman River Estuary. Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) responded to public reports of fish kills observed at the Chapman Estuary. Staff took water samples and physical readings of the Chapman River with results indicating considerably higher than normal readings of salinity concentrations. This is likely the cause of the mass fish death.










BREAKING NEWS

Turtle Breeding Season

Turtles are on the move. The Chapman River is home to two turtle species the native Dinner Plate turtle (*Chelodina steindachneri*) and the naturalised Southwest Snake Long Neck Turtle (*Chelodina colliei*). Through September to November these turtles travel away from the wetlands in search of nesting sites. On their journey they are vulnerable to vehicles and predation.



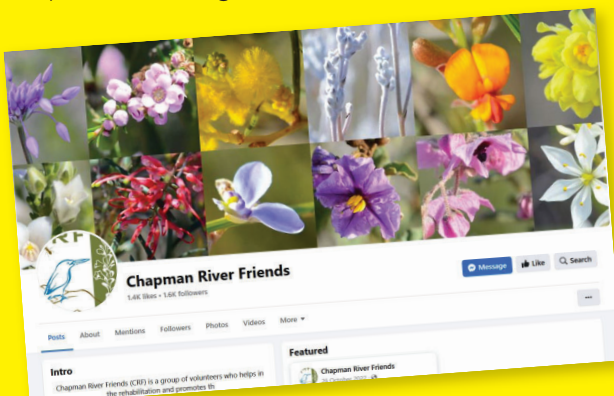
How to help the Turtles

-  They are not lost, be a turtle bodyguard. If a turtle is on the road, please escort it across without picking it up. If it is heading towards land, it may be searching for a suitable nesting site. If it is heading towards a river, it may be trying to migrate to water.
-  If you see a hatchling turtle, you can take it straight to the nearest wetland.
-  Please keep your dogs on leashes especially around rivers and in the Chapman River Estuary area.
-  Drive slowly around the river and Estuary to stop any animal vehicle strike.
-  Protect them from predators. It is best to keep your distance but if you see a turtle being attacked please assist where you safely can.
-  You can help our turtles! Record all sightings of turtles using the TurtleSAT website at www.turtlesat.org.au or download the TurtleSAT app and record your lucky sighting!
-  If you come across an injured turtle please contact the Wildlife Helpline on (08) 9474 9055

Chapman River Friends

Over August and September CRF have undertaken free educational guided walks at various location in the Chapman River Regional Park to show the community the spectacular wildflower species and wildlife that can be found within the park. Checkout their Facebook Page for any upcoming events if you want to join in on the fun.

How exciting! Recently the Chapman River Friends uncovered a new orchid species *Caladenia crebra*, Arrowsmith Spider Orchid never recorded in the Chapman River Regional Park before.



MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UPDATE

The implementation of the new ACH Act 2021 has been challenging causing delays in undertaking some of our management plan actions. However, a lot has been achieved please see actions below.

E1 Rabbit Control

Recommended Action: Rabbit control.

Action to Date: The City's Environmental team have located the rabbit warrens. These warrens fall within a registered Aboriginal Heritage site. City staff are awaiting advice from YSRC on how to proceed with treatment without causing any harm to the ACH. Staff are exploring other options to minimise ground disturbance so this task can be undertaken.



E2 Weed Control

Recommended Action: African boxthorn and prickly pear control.

Action to Date:

Prickly Pear - The City's Environmental Team have GPS mapped most prickly pear populations located upstream from the Estuary. A small number of plants fall in a registered Aboriginal Heritage site. A permit will be required to treat any of the larger plants. The City has engaged a contractor to treat all smaller plants which is scheduled for early next year. If you find plants within the estuary area please make use of the "SnapSendSolve" App to report weeds.

Boxthorn - The City's Environmental Team has engaged a contractor to locate and treat all boxthorn in the Estuary area to be undertaken April-June 2024

E3 Investigate Storm Water Infrastructure

Recommended Action: Maintain water testing, review Health Warning signage, and investigation into stormwater discharge solutions.

Action to Date: The City's Environmental Health team conduct regular monthly water quality testing in the Estuary water over summer months. The City will install signage, and notifying the community, when bacteria and amoeba levels are at dangerous levels.

Investigation into stormwater solutions is on-going.

E4 Fencing

Recommended Action: Installation of fencing to protect the Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) and to formalise recreational trails.

Action to Date:

Fencing was installed the week of September 4th. The steps east of Nazareth house were removed, and hand railing installed along the trail adjacent to improve accessibility for users.

Fencing will not be installed west of Nazareth house near the river mouth. The river mouth is a dynamic and consistently changing environment due to sand bars, seaweed build up, storm events etc. Fencing is not viable in this location as it will cause unnecessary disturbance plus it is not visually appealing.

E5 Monitoring of the Threatened Ecological Community



Recommended Action: Collaborative effort to implement and continue long term monitoring of the Threatened Ecological Community.

Action to Date: Central Regional TAFE students have conducted a baseline health check of the TEC. This included undertaking vegetation identification transects, water and soil sampling during August and September. TAFE lecturers and students are developing a strategy for the ongoing monitoring of the health of the TEC. All results will be provided to the City Environmental team who will be the custodian of the data and monitor the TEC health over time.

CRF will continue to observe, monitor, and report issues on the Chapman River Estuary to the City.

The City's Environmental Health team conduct regular monthly water quality testing in the Estuary water over summer months to detect any dangerous levels of bacteria and amoeba.

E6 Managing Recommended Fishing Spots

Recommended Action: Designate fishing spots with appropriate signage, bins and tree pruning.

Action to Date: The Environmental team has received four “Reel it In” fishing tackle bins. These will be installed in the coming months. CRF are adopting the fishing tackle bins and undertaking the first trial of the “Reel-it-in” bin initiative in the City of Greater Geraldton. CRF will regularly empty and monitor the bins. They will record debris deposited and upload the data to the Australian Marine Debris Initiative Database (AMDID). CRF will assist the City in the promotion and community education of the program. The education campaign will focus on responsible fishing practices, waste management, and encourage environmental responsibility.

The Environmental team and CRF met at Chapman River Estuary to discuss pruning dead branches of identified trees around three known fishing locations. The Environmental team engaged the contractor to complete works in early August.

E7 Opportunities for Rehabilitation

Recommended Action: Revegetation opportunities north and south sides of the river, including rehabilitation techniques such as brushing and erosion control.

Action to Date: CRF have kindly agreed to co-host a community rehabilitation planting event to infill bare areas within the fenced sections along Swan Drive. The Environmental team is organising local provenance plants to be grown at the City’s Community Nursery. The revegetation day will be undertaken in June-July 2024.



S1 Develop Heritage Agreement

Recommended Action: The City to develop a Cultural Heritage Management Plan in collaboration with YSRC and to develop interpretive Aboriginal cultural signage.

Action to Date: Cultural Heritage Management Plan – Due to the confusion around the new ACH Act and identifying which managing bodies will assist with the development of the plan the Cultural Heritage Management Plan is ongoing.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Interpretive Signage - The Environmental team were advised, by YSRC, to engage Bundiyarra Language Centre which occurred in 2022. The City is seeking the correct language and stories from the appropriate traditional owners. The Environmental team are waiting to receive the requested information from Bundiyarra Language Centre.

S2 Trail Renewal & Closure

Recommended action: It is recommended that the closure of the southern trail between Charles St and Chapman Rd be formalised, as this section of trail runs through private property, and is no longer appropriate to remain a public walkway.

Action to Date: The pathway crosses private property and due to property owner concerns the City has had to close the access for the foreseeable future. Through the Chapman River Estuary Reserve Action Plan community consultation process, there was a strong desire within

the community to retain connectivity in this area. The community consultation process put forward the idea for a boardwalk which would avoid private property and provide connectivity. However, consensus was not reached with voices for and against the boardwalk. The City can revisit the boardwalk option in the future but there is significant Aboriginal Heritage located in this area. The recommended management action, can be found in the Final Chapman River Estuary Reserve Action Plan 2022-2025, is for the formalisation of the trail closure between Charles Street and Chapman Road – as this section of the trail runs through private property and is no longer appropriate to remain as a public walkway. This action will be revisited later.

S3 Signage – plan/review signage and install/remove as required

Recommended Action: The development of a signage plan.

Action to Date: All actions are ongoing. The Environmental team engaged Bundiyarra Language Centre in 2022 to request that traditional owners are consulted to provide correct language for interpretive signage for that area. We are awaiting the outcome.

The Environmental team will engage CRF for consultation and feedback for new educational signage once we receive the correct language. The City’s Environmental team is working through the issues with the conflicting sign messaging with the environmental health team. Old signage has been removed.

S4 Develop a Communication Plan

Recommended Action: Development of a two-way communication plan.

Action to Date: The Environmental Team have developed an internal Communication Plan. This communication plan provides clearly defined expectations and responsibilities of the City, and other local stakeholders, to achieve the outcomes identified in the Chapman River Estuary Reserve Action Plan 2022-25.

One of the actions listed is the development of a bi-monthly newsletter to update and inform the community of the status of the recommended actions identified in the Chapman River Estuary Reserve Action Plan 2022-25

The two-way communication plan is currently being developed. The plan will provide clearly defined expectations and responsibilities of the City and other local stakeholders. It will describe how the City will inform community with clear messaging for developing community awareness of the environmental values within the area. The plan will include best City contact methods to inform staff of any concerns in the Chapman River Estuary.

Once finalised the two-way Communication Plan will be uploaded to the City's website. The City will inform community once this action is complete.

S5 Install/ Renew Seating

Recommended Action: Install and renew bench seating.

Action to Date: The Environmental Team have procured one seat to replace the broken seat adjacent to Nazareth House. The installation of the new recreational seat at the pontoon will be completed next financial year. The Environmental team are investigating the renewal or upgrade of the pre-existing seat at the end of Charles Street.

P1 Investigate Reserve Status/ creation of 'Regional Park'

Action to Date: Investigation of Reserve Status or the creation of 'Regional Park' is ongoing.

Application to have Vacant Crown Land vested to the City is ongoing.

ONE FINAL NOTE

Together we can enhance and protect this beautiful location. If you have any feedback on the first edition of this newsletter your comments are welcomed. If you have any information on upcoming community events, a great photograph, or a good news story, please share and we would be happy to include in our next edition. Please email your information to the City at council@cgg.wa.gov.au and make sure to address it to the Environmental and Sustainability Team.

Our first edition of this newsletter is very lengthy. In future the newsletter will be shorter outlining actions undertaken within that two-month timeframe.

Right: White Faced Herron CRF

