

Putting the 'wild' back into the west



Collaborating for conservation

In an ambitious project, five groups at the forefront of conservation have banded together to protect 1.2 million hectares on South Australia's west coast.

Designed to conserve rare and threatened plants and animals, the WildEyre project is a partnership between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board, the Wilderness Society, the Nature Conservation Society of SA and Greening Australia.



The WildEyre project is not just another plan. The team has assessed the different ecological communities along South Australia's west coast and is conserving these habitats based on their individual needs.

Using a globally tried and tested conservation planning method – the Nature Conservancy's 'Conservation Action Planning' approach – the WildEyre team is identifying natural assets in the landscape, ascertaining threats and developing specific, measurable strategies to conserve them. It's the flexible, iterative nature of this approach that's the key to its success.

According to the Department's Emma Coates, Project Officer for the East Meets West NatureLink, the idea is simple; to encourage everyone on this magnificent coastline to play a part in the future of the region's environment.

"The WildEyre project takes in coastal and scrubland, including some of the largest tracts of bush in the State's agricultural districts," Emma said.

"This part of the world is truly spectacular, so it's important we protect it.

"With the help of land managers, community members and traditional owners, we've identified 12 diverse natural assets worthy of conservation.

"They range from limestone mallee to Sheoak grassy woodlands and sub-coastal wetlands.

"We plan to protect remnant vegetation, reduce grazing pressure, revegetate degraded sites with endemic species and fence sensitive coastal areas."

Protection of this unique western landscape is a long-term vision and the team is undertaking these projects in stages with help from the local community, volunteer groups and other partners.

Andrew Freeman from the Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board said the WildEyre project is a fantastic opportunity to assist landholders who have found conservation activities hard to manage in the past.

"This part of the world is truly spectacular, so it's important we protect it."

"Achievements to date include the establishment of 50 bushland condition monitoring sites, weed control, community workshops, landholder interviews and attracting Federal and State investment into the region," Andrew said.

"An alliance like this one is rare in that it brings together so many groups that normally have vastly different agendas, but who share an ecological vision for the landscape.

"The partners have put politics aside to focus on conservation outcomes for the area.

"It has multiple benefits for the whole community, which reinforces the efforts landholders, volunteer groups and local organisations have been making over the past 20 years or more."

Future focus

In 2010-2011 the WildEyre project team will focus on sheoak grassy woodlands, sub-coastal wetlands, coastal dunes and cliff tops. They will also investigate incentives to assist landholders to protect remnant vegetation on their properties.

A WildEyre website is in development to provide online resources for those interested in WildEyre, or wanting to be part of the project.

With an enthusiastic team committed to collaborative conservation, the health of this precious landscape is in good hands.

Diamond Firetail (left),
WildEyre team at Lake Newland (top),
Western Yellow Robin (right),
Aerial photo of Western
Eyre Peninsula (far right)

