

ISSUE 4, NOVEMBER 2021

# SUSTAIN-A-BULLETIN

FITZGERALD BIOSPHERE GROUP



## Spring Field Day Wrap Up

This year's Spring Field Day was held on 8<sup>th</sup> September in the Jacup area. A perfect day for spending outside looking at crops, we had sixty local farmers plus industry in attendance. We kicked the day off with a bacon and egg brekkie sponsored by Lawson Grains at the fantastic facility that is the Jacup Fire Shed.

We heard from Ian Donaldson from Rabobank who gave an insight into current rural land prices which provided plenty of discussion and food for thought. Interesting to hear that the WA market is still underdone relative to the East Coast.

From there, we jumped on the bus or into utes and headed down to Mal and Mel Smith's farm on Quiss Road. Mal talked about his experience in seeding using the Alpha Disc 2.0 designed by Mic Fels. The disc seeding units were bolted onto a Seedhawk frame. This year was his first seeding program using the units. He had been looking at changing from a tyne to a disc system for some time and had found the conversion to the Alpha Disc system to have worked really well in his cropping system.

We then headed north to Brad and Jess Bailey's farm on Fence Road where we looked at some Nutrien trials in barley, as well as discussing variable rate inputs with insights provided by local agronomists Kyran Brooks (Foreman Rural, Nutrien Ag) and Graham Laslett (Combined Agronomic Services).

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# 2021 Overview

At the risk of tempting fate, the last twelve months have seen a welcome reprieve from the drought years of 2018-20 and the Covid-induced anxiety and restrictions of 2020. In this breathing space we have turned our attention in recent months to determining our priorities for the immediate future.

## Operational Plan 2022-2024

The FBG operates under three themes: Healthy Ecosystems, Sustainable Agriculture and Vibrant Enterprises and our activities have been guided by our Strategic plan 2015-25. With limited resources and capacity and a tight and very competitive funding environment, we cannot achieve all we aspire to in our plan. We held a facilitated workshop in September to develop an operational plan and having recently reviewed the workshop report the FBG Board has decided to focus on salinity management for the next three years.

The Board has been concerned about salinity throughout the shire for some years. In the September workshop it was identified as a wide-spread issue, impacting productivity across a significant portion of the landscape. Our objective is to support landholders to manage existing salt affected areas and to prevent more production land being lost to salt.

The FBG is currently implementing the first year of a three-year salinity project funded by State NRM. Our intention is to source additional resources to expand on this project. It will take some time to build our resources and capacity and we ask that you bear with us while we do this. To help us achieve this objective we have asked Advisory Committee members to become our steering committee.

The fact that we do not have a source of core funding remains a significant issue for the group and because of this we will still need to assess all funding options that are presented to us. We want to assure our members and our current funding partners that we will continue to deliver all of our existing projects to a high a standard and will continue to seek funding in these projects.

Thank you to all of our members who provided input into this process. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated.

## Projects and activities

We are currently running six externally funded projects and we have two funding applications pending. Our current projects are:

- Regional Land Partnerships Years 2-5 (South Coast NRM from federal NLP funding)
- Regenerating Saline Land (State NRM)
- Building Resilience in the face of Increasing Climate Variability. (Smart Farms Small Grants)
- Reclaiming Marginal Land (Smart Farms Small Grants)
- Increasing groundcover to build resilient soils (Future Drought Fund)
- Strategic Control of Priority Environmental Weeds in Bremer Bay (State NRM)
- Bremer Bay Regional Trails Masterplan (Building Better Regions)

We completed two projects in 2021; One Paddock Challenge 2020 and the Bremer Bay Weed Action Group project. We have two pending applications; one for solar panels on the FBG building, the other a community engagement project around

the Wellstead Estuary.

Our annual events ran successfully this year without the same level of uncertainty caused by Covid-19 in 2020: the Spring Field Day; Fitz Fox Shoot; Cat Sterilisation Clinic and the Clean Up Bremer Bay Day in May. The main impact we experienced from Covid-19 this year was interstate border restrictions limiting access to presenters from the Eastern States and our travel to other states.

Our second Dancing in the Dirt Ball, held pre-seeding in March 2021, was a sell out success and once again a highlight of our year.

## FBG Staff

We maintain a great team of people working at the FBG and I can't thank these incredible ladies enough for the commitment, good will and expertise they bring to their roles, to the FBG membership and the wider farming community. It's a great pleasure to work with:

Tash Brown: Finance Officer

Jess Brown: Communications Officer

Jess Bailey: Administration Assistant

Maddy Wylie: Soil Projects Coordinator

Carrie Taylor: NRM Project Coordinator (Salinity Project and RLP Program)

Jolene Daniel: Groundcover Project Coordinator

As indicated last year, two of our staff members, Therese Bell and Reaghan Shalders, left during 2021. Both Therese and Reaghan were very committed and supportive employees who achieved a great deal during their time with us. With two new projects, the Salinity and Groundcover projects, starting in 2021, we were extremely lucky to recruit Carrie Taylor as our new NRM Officer and Jolene Daniel as Project Coordinator of the Groundcover Project. They have been very welcome additions to the FBG team.

## FBG Board 2021 and 2022

As always, I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the FBG Board - Dave Turner, Mick Lester, Rex Parsons, Kyran Brooks, Craig Hall and Laura Wishart - for the commitment, advice and the support they continue to provide amidst their many other commitments. At our October AGM all of the above-mentioned Board members were re-elected. Congratulations and thank you.

## Advisory Committee, Members, Sponsors, Funders

And again, a sincere thank you to our Advisory Committee and to the farmers who participate in our trials and host and attend our events. We greatly appreciate your time, effort and involvement. Likewise, I'd like to thank our Gold Sponsor Rabobank, the Shire of Jerramungup, Agrimaster, our supporters, funding partners and agency representatives for your on-going commitment to the FBG.

## Christmas Season

From everyone at the FBG we wish you a safe and successful harvest and a relaxing Christmas break.

This year our office will be closed from Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December to Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February.

Leonie McMahon  
Executive Officer  
Fitzgerald Biosphere Group





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# Spring Field Day

The next stop was at Viridis Ag “Amarinya” on Jacup North Rd where Ops Manager James Lyall took us through their Illabo wheat crop and Jeremy Curry of DPIRD Esperance discussed different wheat varieties and some of the trials and research he is involved with along the South Coast.

Back at the Fire Shed, after a delicious lunch provided by Jerramungup District High School P&C, Svetlana Micic, DPIRD Albany, discussed a few insect-related issues and research she is involved with. This included red legged earth mite research, and insect and vertebrate pests to look out for, such as Russian wheat aphid, mice and plague locusts.

Mic Fels then joined us via Zoom to discuss some technical aspects of his disc system and we then heard from Kyran Brooks and Graham Laslett on a range of agronomic issues for this season and heading into 2022. A key take home message

was the importance of forward planning inputs but also ensuring timeliness of operations.

We then ended the day with CBH – Rodney Scott (Business Relationship Manager for Albany Port Zone South) encouraged farmers to attend their local bin meetings ahead of the expected big harvest, and Trading Manager (Protein & Oilseeds) Dane Robertson gave some insights into canola prices and current market influencers in general. We also thank CBH for once again sponsoring the sundowner.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the day – all attendees, host farmers, sponsors, Kemp and Bev Brooks for the bus, and Jacup Bush Fire Brigade for the use of the shed.

Maddy Wylie



Taking a look at Mal Smiths Alpha Disc set up.



Nutrien Ag Barley Trials at Brad and Jess Bailey's.



Viridis Ops Manager James Lyall chatting about their Illabo Wheat crop.



Svetlana Micic chatting about insect related issues.



Industry Rep and Farmer Panel discussions.



# Regional Land Partnerships Project Update

Unseasonably wet conditions led to a number of our Regional Land Partnerships project's deliverables being delayed from year 20/21 to 21/22. The majority of these on-ground works have now been completed, and we are very pleased with what we have achieved in year three of this project.

## **EPBC (Environmental Protection, Biodiversity, and Conservation)**

Our EPBC project focuses on conserving and adding value to mallee fowl and chuditch habitat around the corridor between the Fitzgerald River National Park and Lake Magenta Reserve. 20/21 revegetation and fencing for this project was conducted by the Lester family. Over 7,000 native tree and shrub seedlings were planted within a 10ha area alongside the corridor, which was then fenced off. Further fencing (3.5km) took place south of this area, along the corridor.

The EPBC project also funded 6ha of weed control along the corridor boundaries, to prevent the incursion of agricultural weeds. The 2021 fox shoot also formed part of the EPBC project, resulting in 190 foxes, 4 cats, and 186 rabbits being culled. Looking ahead to the rest of 21/22, we are investigating the possibility of an on-going pest and weed control program inside the corridor itself, to maximise the benefits to the unique flora and fauna within.



## **Climate Action**

The aim of the Climate Action project is to support farmers in our area to adapt, innovate, and address market demands for sustainable food production. The Daniels are carrying out 20/21, and 21/22 revegetation and fencing. 10ha of Tedera, a herbaceous perennial pasture legume, has been sown, and 2km of fence line is set to be repaired along a creek in the same area. The 20/21 Climate Action project also funded June's Drainage Workshop, which was well attended and received positive feedback.

## **TEC (Threatened Ecological Communities)**

Satisfying the 'removing weeds' deliverable of the TEC project, Victorian Tea Tree has been removed from four sites across Bremer Bay; Mary Street, Progress Drive, Short Beach, and Dillon Bay. This deliverable requires 16ha of weed removal, though the work conducted by the contractor (John Alaouze) over these sites totals significantly more than 16ha. A 2ha revegetation site at Meechi Rd (carried out in co-operation with the Jerramungup Shire) continued to be infilled throughout 2021. All species were locally sourced, and were planted using various methods, including tubestock plantings, banksia burning, transplantation, and brush mulching. Evidence of native wildlife utilising this habitat has already been observed by the Shire of Jerramungup Environment Officer Steve Elson, which is very pleasing. Site preparation has been carried out for a further 1ha of Kwongkan revegetation in Bremer Bay, on the Wisharts' property, for which seed is also being collected locally.

We would like to thank all the landholders, contractors, Shire staff, volunteers, and everyone else who has contributed to the success of this year's RLP activities.

Carrie Taylor





# Salinity Project Update

The early stages of the salinity project, which began in April, have focused primarily on gathering information about salinity in the Jerramungup area. The purpose of this, along with allowing us to observe trends over time and predict the extent of salinity into the future, is to inform on-ground works in years two and three of project, and strengthen our future funding applications for further on-ground works. To date, this stage of the project has involved working with DPIRD to access their data, such as previously mapped salinity in the area, ag bore locations and records, height above valley floor risk, topography etc., which has been developed into a QGIS map along with local farm boundaries, catchments, waterways, and EM maps provided by local farmers. This map, which will soon include more up-to-date mapped salinity, is scheduled to be analysed alongside a DPIRD hydrologist, with a number of criteria in mind, including the hydrological responsiveness of the landscapes in question, to select priority areas for on-

ground works. We are currently assisting DPIRD in the development of a groundwater model for the Cameron-Jacup sub-catchment, with the aim of observing water table and salinity trends over time, and predicting likely patterns in the future. A survey has been conducted to establish the extent of salinity across the various catchments of the Jerramungup region, the opportunity for bore monitoring, as well as general attitudes around salinity. The river monitoring element is also underway, as we work towards building a better understanding of the current state of the Fitzgerald, Bremer, and Gairdner rivers. Following the completion of the prioritisation process, work will commence on other on-ground components of the project, including revegetation, fencing, and bore monitoring.

Carrie Taylor



natural resource  
management program



*This project is supported by funding from the Western Australian Governments State NRM program.*

## Trials of locally relevant spring/summer crops for water logged soils

The objective of this project is to provide growers with a range of spring/summer sown cropping options to address the impacts of excessive winter waterlogging and explore summer production opportunities.

Stirlings to Coast Farmers is coordinating the project, which is funded by GRDC. FBG, Southern Dirt and Nutrien are participating. Jolene Daniel is coordinating the FBG's part of the project, which runs from October 2021 to December 2022. The FBG is establishing a 5-treatment Summer Forage Crop Demonstration Site and 1 Grain/Silage Site. Peter and Jolene Daniel will seed the Forage Crop Demonstration Site into a failed, waterlogged lupin crop and also sow a new Sorghum variety that is designed specifically for silage or grain into another wet area.

At least one field walk will be conducted at the sites. Soil tests, leaf and feed tests etc will be taken throughout the project.

### Background information

Summer crops are not new to the south coast of Western Australia, having been grown with varying degrees of success for more than 50 years (Tennant, 2004). Previous GRDC investment has found summer forage crops to be successful, not only due to the summer/autumn livestock grazing opportunity presented but also by reducing recharge (delaying onset of salinity) and successfully providing nitrogen to the following winter crop where a summer legume has been sown. Spring sown grain crops can also be profitable when sown into soils at field capacity, as they are now across much of the South Coast of WA. This new investment will locally validate previous R&D investment relating to spring sown crops (albeit include newer crop types and varieties where suitable), building local grower and adviser knowledge to inform decisions when managing excess soil moisture.

It will focus on the key management aspects raised by growers at the 2021 winter National Grower Network meetings, namely weed and erosion control in waterlogged areas, making use of the excess water to produce additional grain and/or forage and understanding impacts on the following winter crop (soil moisture/salt levels, root architecture and biomass, soil nutrient levels and distribution). It is proposed this investment include an economic and market analysis component and be local grower and adviser driven so that solutions demonstrated in the field are both practical and locally relevant.

Jolene Daniel



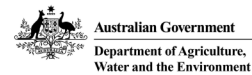


# Increasing Groundcover to build resilient soils Project Update



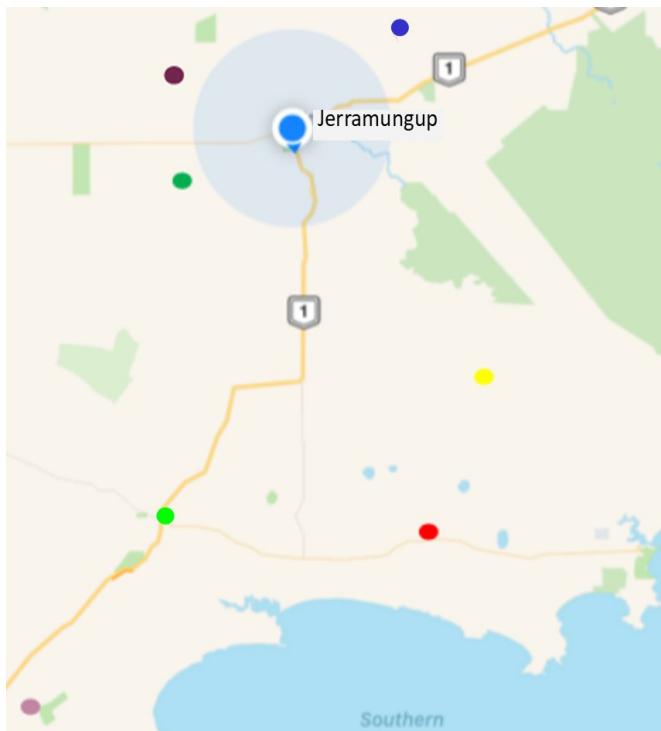
- Several summer forage sites have/are going in as we go to press, these mixes for groundcover include many species untried in the area so it will be quite exciting to see how they go after a wet spring. Plants include corn, sunflowers, cow pea, lab lab, tillage radish plus several types of sorghum and millet.
- There is still opportunities for anyone who would like to do a 10ha demo site with perennial grasses, salt land fodder, perennial temperate pasture species etc. Anything novel that increases groundcover! These site can be planted anytime suitable from now until July 2022
- Seed is available ready for early plantings next year.

Please contact Jolene on 0439353069  
or email [projectofficer@fbg.org.au](mailto:projectofficer@fbg.org.au)



*This project received funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund*

## Jerramungup district rainfall



## Expression of Interest

Under the Future Drought Fund Groundcover Project we have funding for a grazing management course in 2022. Would you be interested in a workshop on grass feed budgeting, ruminant nutrition, etc?

Please send your expression of interest to Jolene Daniel- [projectofficer@fbg.org.au](mailto:projectofficer@fbg.org.au)

## MERRY CHRISTMAS

### FBG office hours over the Christmas Break

The FBG Office will be closed from Friday the 17th of December until Tuesday the 1st of February.

Location		Jan-Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Total YTD
Jerramungup	●	430.5	31.1	46.0	59.1	566.7
Needilup Nth	●	296.0	29.5	24.0	44.0	393.5
Needilup Sth	●	372.5	36.0	49.0	53.5	511.0
Jacup	●	385.5	19.0	29.0	47.7	481.2
Bremer Rd	●	506.0	30.5	61.0	56.0	653.5
Gairdner	●	430.0	25.0	52.5	61.5	567
Boxwood	●	507.6	29.6	45.4	52.1	634.7
Mettler	●	581.3	37.5	60.5	79.9	759.2

Contact FBG for more details ph. 9835 1127

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