



Drain experiment to trial new algal bloom intervention

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A new WA created phosphorus-binding clay designed to fight algal blooms in regional waterways is being trialled in a large agricultural drain in the Peel-Harvey catchment.

Nearly a quarter tonne of the clay will be used during the trial to treat around 3,200 kilolitres of phosphorus rich water, the equivalent of about 80 backyard swimming pools.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, as part of the Regional Estuaries Initiative, will closely monitor changes in phosphorus levels before, during and after the treatment.

If successful, the clay may prove a cost-effective measure to reduce phosphorus loads and help prevent algal blooms in rivers and estuaries.

Punrak Drain in Keralup has been selected for the trial because it carries one of the Peel-Harvey catchment's more concentrated phosphorus loads and drains into the Lower Serpentine River.

"Nutrients are one of the main causes of algal blooms in rivers and estuaries," Department of Water and Environmental Regulation environmental officer Dr Svenja Tulipani said.

"Laboratory tests and a small trial in Lower Vasse River using the clay product have shown promising results, however large scale use in a fast flowing phosphorus rich agricultural drain has never been tried.

This trial carries on the tradition of the State Government's innovation in tackling algal blooms, with State agencies and CSIRO developing the nutrient binding clay product Phoslock, which is now a commercial product used worldwide to reduce algal blooms.

The new clay is considered a next generation product that provides a potentially lower cost and more versatile application than its predecessors.

"Water treatment techniques like this provide options to support the health of rivers and estuaries while longer-term nutrient reduction activities in the catchment are being worked on," Dr Tulipani said.

Contact: Peter Collins

Phone: 63646848 or 0434603441