Government of Western Australia
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

Winter rains provide summer study opportunity in Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands

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Good winter rains have provided scientists with an opportunity to study the influence of higher than usual water levels on the health of the Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands.

“We are often asked by the community to retain more water in the wetlands at the end of winter, which is something that requires some assistance from nature,” project manager for the Revitalising Geographe Waterways program Dr Kath Lynch said.

“Improved streamflow over the 2016 winter, leading to higher water levels at the beginning of summer has provided us with the opportunity to study how, at this time of year, retaining water impacts system water quality.”

Dr Lynch said retaining higher water levels in the wetlands at the end of winter is one of ten different management scenarios being investigated in the wetlands over the next two years.

She said extensive monitoring and modelling will be used to assess which management scenarios best meet management objectives being developed in collaboration with the community.

“To retain higher water levels in the wetlands the Wonnerup Inlet sand bar opening will be delayed until early January,” Dr Lynch said.

Water quality monitoring is being undertaken by the Department of Water three times a week in the channel upstream and downstream of the Vasse surge barrier.

“We will compare this year’s results to the previous two years to see if the higher water levels result in better water quality,” Dr Lynch said.

“The channel in front of the Vasse surge barrier is the area that experiences the poorest water quality over summer and is the area we receive most complaints.”

Improving water quality in the Vasse-Wonnerup estuary channel is a major focus of the Revitalising Geographe Waterways program, made possible by Royalties for Regions.

For more information on Revitalising Geographe Waterways go to www.water.wa.gov.au (http://www.water.wa.gov.au)

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