



Rivers and Waterways

Council Plan 2024-2034

The community would like the health of the Lower Vasse River, Toby Inlet and wetlands restored for environmental conservation and improved recreation.

Council Plan Actions

- Work with key partners to improve the health of our waterways, including the Lower Vasse River and Toby Inlet.
- Complete the Lower Vasse River Sediment Removal Program (stage 3).
- Investigate further stages of sediment removal and the Living Streams approach for the Lower Vasse River.
- Through the Council's Waterways Management Committee, review the City's role as interim asset managers.

Current Situation

The Lower Vasse River (LVR) is subject to annual algal blooms, fuelled by excessive nutrient loads delivered from the urban and rural catchments, groundwater, and sediment. The City and other partners work closely to deliver water quality improvements, waterway management and flood mitigation in the Geographe region.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) undertakes water quality and phytoplankton monitoring in the LVR and has implemented various water treatment trials in the LVR as part of Revitalising Geographe Waterways and Healthy Estuaries WA. GeoCatch works throughout the urban and rural catchments to reduce nutrients from catchment sources entering our waterways, while the City focuses on delivering improvements to water quality through actions within the waterways themselves. As part of an ongoing program, the City and other partners have collectively invested millions of dollars over several years to dredge the LVR in an attempt to improve its health and amenity.

DWER has identified septic systems in the Busselton Light Industrial Area (LIA) as a major contributor of nutrients to the LVR via contaminated groundwater. Nutrients from LIA systems are considered to be sufficient to fuel annual algal blooms in the river. DWER plans to conduct further groundwater sampling to gain a better understanding of the impacts of LIA septic systems on groundwater and the LVR. The City and the Vasse Taskforce will continue its efforts to advocate for the installation of infill sewer in the Busselton LIA.

Waterway Management Governance

The LVR is a Western Australian Government asset, however, the City of Busselton voluntarily became the Interim Asset Manager of the LVR in 2014, and in 2023 the Council reiterated its commitment to performing this role contingent on continuing technical and financial support from the State Government and upon the State's continued commitment to broader waterway and water quality management in Geographe Bay and the Geographe Bay Catchment.

The City currently acts as Interim Asset Manager of the LVR and Toby Inlet (TI) as part of its role under the Vasse Taskforce. The Vasse Taskforce, established by the Western Australian Government in 2014, provides strategic direction and support to the local and state agencies responsible for delivering on projects under the Revitalising Geographe Waterways initiative.

Within this arrangement, numerous agencies work together to deliver waterway management across the region. For the City, these projects have included a range of works such as development of the waterway management plans for the LVR and TI, revegetation of foreshore areas, bar management at TI and sediment removal in the LVR. The Vasse Taskforce reports to the community on outcomes of activities undertaken to improve waterway health. The City continues to work with Vasse Taskforce members to improve the water quality and amenity of these waterways, but through the Council's Waterway Management Committee the City's role as Interim Asset Manager is currently under review.

For more information visit our website on www.busselton.wa.gov.au/waterways

For more information on the Vasse Taskforce, visit www.rgw.dwer.wa.gov.au/about-vasse-taskforce



Vasse Taskforce

Under the Vasse Taskforce, the following waterway management agencies work as asset managers for various areas within the Geographe Bay region. Each agency is tasked with producing documents and support for their designated area.

Asset Managers	Area of responsibility	Outputs & Programs
City of Busselton	Lower Vasse River (interim) and Toby Inlet	Develop and deliver Waterway Management Plans Toby Inlet bar management
Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands Partnership	Vasse Wonnerup Wetlands System	Vasse Wonnerup Operational Plan
Water Corporation	Rural drainage network	Drainage Management Plan Management of Vasse surge barrier & Wonnerup bar
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions	Broadwater Wetlands	Technical support
GeoCatch	Geographe Catchment	Nutrient reduction programs
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation	Revitalising Geographe Waterways - program coordination	Coordination of Vasse Taskforce Technical support