

Peel-Harvey Mussel Gardening Program- CSG Round 2 - 2022

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), with support from the Alcoa Foundation and in partnership with the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council, is embarking on the next part of the project to develop shellfish reef habitat in the Peel-Harvey Estuary. The goal is to help improve water quality, biodiversity and fish/crab populations, creating benefits to the waterways to be enjoyed by the local community.

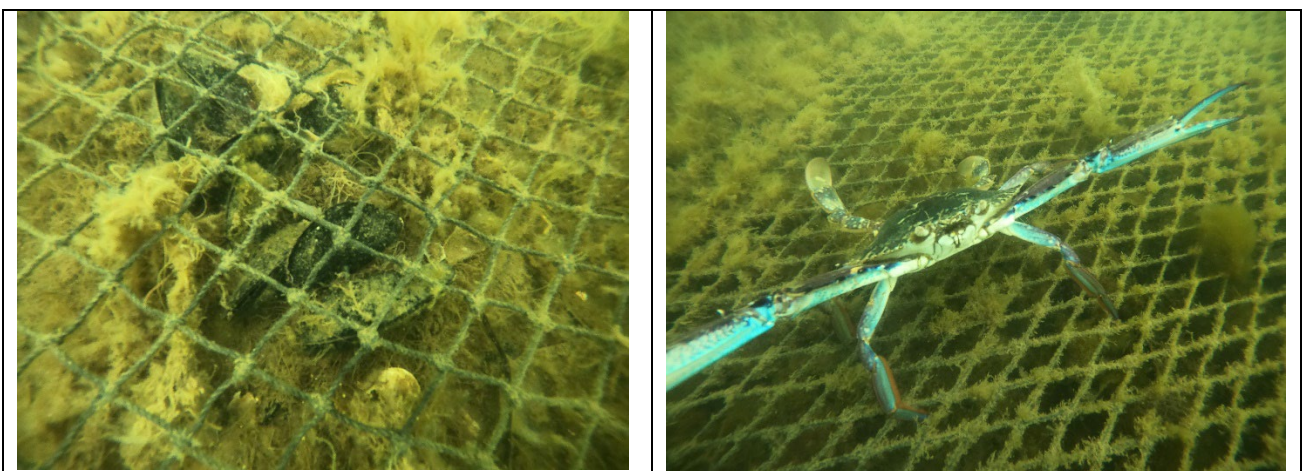
This project is part of The Nature Conservancy's national reef building plan to restore and protect 60 reefs across Australia, bringing shellfish reef ecosystems back from the brink of extinction for the benefit of people and nature.

Registration for CSG 2021

We hope you have enjoyed a great summer break and ready to roll again in 2022 with the Community Shellfish Gardens round 2! We are also hoping to prevail upon those of you who have inspired your neighbours, friends and fellow canal residents to adopt a basket a get involved. We are aiming to double the size of the program so please let them know that we are keen for their involvement and would like to sign them up through the email registration or they can contact us via phone if needed.

CSG 2021 – How it works

We have already established how well the community shellfish gardens can work with great support shown during our inaugural run in 2021. Whilst there was a steep learning curve for all of us in 2021 and a few moving deadlines for the mussels to go in the water, we managed to grow around 250 kgs of mussels from tiny spat over the year and then put these out into the estuary on the coir mesh beds in Peel Inlet in November last year. The Muster was a great success and a wonderful opportunity for all who could attend to see the project in action and realise the benefits of a community-based conservation project, congratulations to all. For those wishing to relive a bit of the action or to see what we achieved please see the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKLpzdFrty0>. And of course there was the World Record attempt by our very own Dr Al "Mussel" Cottingham from Murdoch University (see below). Big thanks to everyone involved and all our partners including Alcoa Foundation and Peel Harvey Catchment Council and the great work done in collaboration with the Bindjareb Rangers from Winjan Aboriginal Corporation. We are lucky to have further support from Alcoa Foundation and the State NRM program for the next round of mussel gardening.



Photos of the home grown mussels happily filtering away on the coir mesh beds in Peel Inlet with their protection from hungry blue swimmer crabs.

SHOW US YOUR MUSSELS !



WORLD RECORD MUSSEL DEADLIFT THE CUT, NOVEMBER 11, 2021

What's new

For this year's program we will give people the option of using a newly designed app on your phone, tablet or home computer to do the monthly monitoring. We would like people to use this method preferentially so we can streamline the data collection and more easily look at the patterns in growth and survivorship amongst the locations. We can also more readily summarise the data and show you gardeners in real time what's happening in the water. If you are more comfortable using the paper form and email then that's absolutely fine but we are more than happy to go through the online version with people to help out.

We are also setting up the baskets a little differently, there will be one length of special mussel rope loaded with mussels. We are setting them up in the large opening baskets so we don't have to deal with a basket swap and all that sediment cleaning. Also the later start means we have larger mussels and to start with and they will be better equipped to deal with the time out of water during the basket handover. Each basket will also get its own cattle tag ID. This is part of the online data monitoring and makes it easier to track and analyse.

We are also open to the idea of return gardeners having 2 baskets instead of one if they want.

Building the reefs

Blue Mussel reefs or beds will be developed by installing substrate on the estuary bed using a mixture of limestone and coir matting. The substrate is then seeded with juvenile mussels and over time develops into a reef ecosystem, providing habitats for many fish species and other marine life. The pilot reefs are planned to be constructed in March/April 2022 and will be seeded with up to 2 million Blue Mussels shortly after.

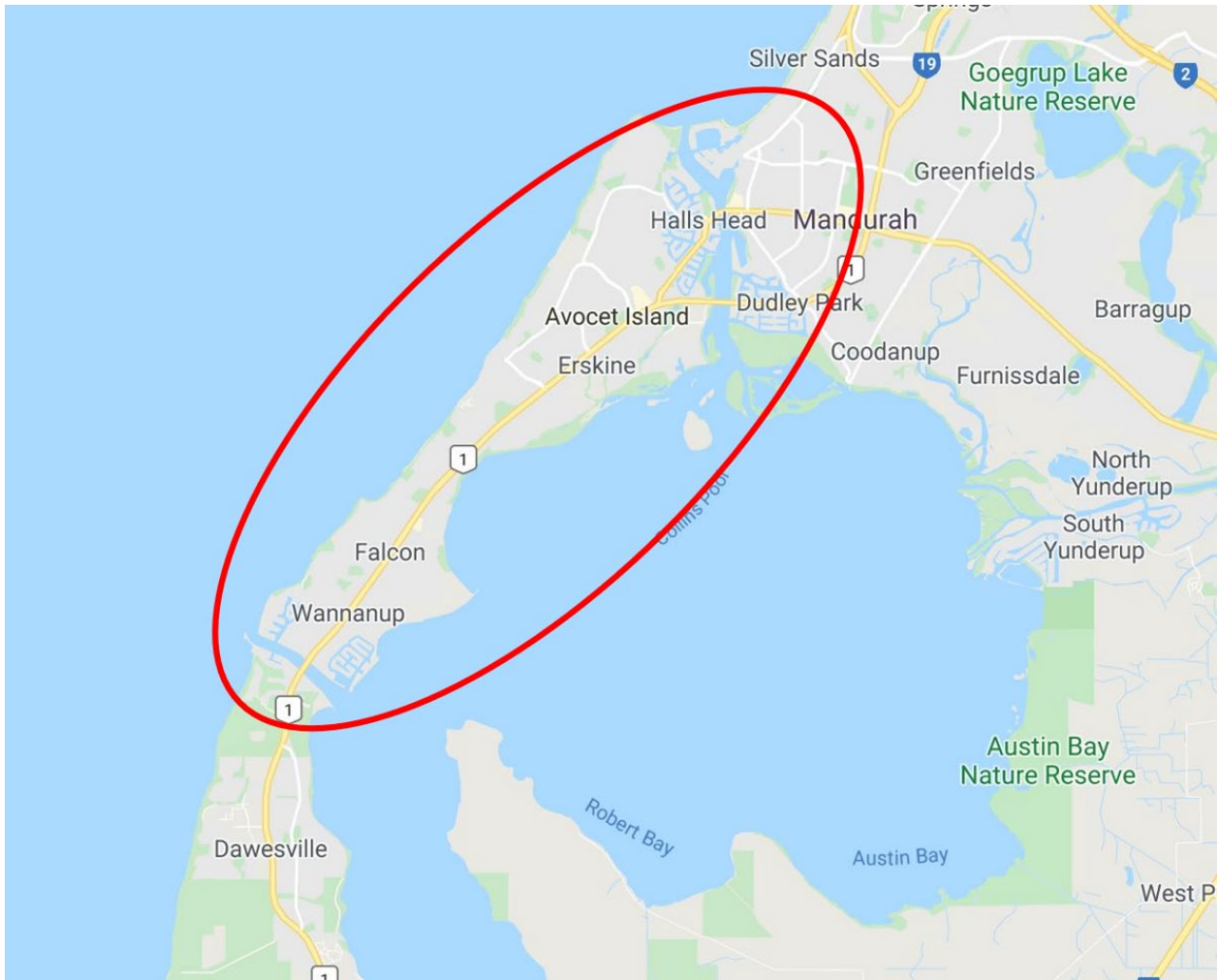
We need your help

We are keen to get as many of the original gardener's back into the program again in 2022, so please sign up by return email as instructed in the email text. We are also keen to follow up with your neighbours, friends and community members living on the canals

Community shellfish gardening describes the process where local residents volunteer to grow shellfish in specially-designed 'baskets' and maintain and monitor them at regular intervals. The Peel-Harvey Community Mussel Gardening program will rely on volunteer landholders within canal estates between Dawesville and Mandurah to grow mussels in baskets beneath private jetties. We will also be working with a number of school groups to grow mussels in various waterside locations and share knowledge about the lifecycle and ecosystem benefits that shellfish provide.



A mussel basket under a jetty (left) and measuring mussels (right)



Areas within the Peel-Harvey Estuary suitable for Mussel Gardening (Google Maps, 2020)

Expressions of Interest

Requirements

To be involved in the project, you will require the following.

- To live in a canal estate with water frontage (see map above) and have access to a private jetty; and
- Be willing and able to grow mussels in basket(s) beneath your jetty, and volunteer approx. 1-2 hours/month to maintain and monitor your mussel garden.

Gardening Support

Registered participants will be contacted by TNC Project Staff and will be provided with a Mussel Gardening Kit, including baskets, mussels and arrange of equipment to help you monitor and maintain your garden. You will also be provided a Mussel Gardening Manual to guide you in managing your garden.

TNC Project Staff will also be there to help you setup your mussel garden and assist you along the way.

Registration

If you meet these criteria and are interested in volunteering for the Peel-Harvey Community Mussel Gardening program, please contact your local TNC coordinator at shellfish.gardens@tnc.org to register your expression of interest. For any other queries you can call me during office hours on contact details below.

Cheers

TNC Mussel team

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