

Leaps and Bounds

CASE STUDY

LEAPS AND BOUNDS



TOP: The Scott River near Dunnet's property
(photo: Barbara Dunnet)

INSET: Angus and Murray-Grey Cattle (photo:
Barbara Dunnett)

PROJECT TITLE

Leaps and Bounds

PROJECT LEADER

Pip Marshall (SWCC)

PROJECT MANAGER

Yasaman Mohamadi (Lower
Blackwood LCDC)
John & Barbara Dunnett
(Landholders)

PROJECT DURATION

January 2013 – June 2013

PARTNERSHIPS

Lower Blackwood LCDC,
John & Barbara Dunnet (Landholder).

BENEFICIARIES

Landholder, water quality in the
Scott River and Hardy Estuary,
Biodiversity and connectivity to
Gingilup Swamps Nature Reserve



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This project is supported by the South West Catchments Council, through funding from the Australian Government's Program, Caring for Our Country and the Government of Western Australia.



John and Barbara Dunnet own and operate one of the largest beef farms along the Scott River Coastal Plain, located just east of Augusta in the South West of WA, and they have been farming in the area for over 40 years.

Like many farmers, the Dunnets have worked hard to build a profitable farming enterprise in this wild and unforgiving part of the world. As a tribute to their perseverance, they are still farming today and not only that, they are doing their best to ensure the land is cared for so that future generations can continue their farming legacy.

John Dunnet says, "*Farmers care about their land and do whatever they can within the limits of their financial situation to protect biodiversity*". However he tempers this with, "*Survival is the number one key as a farmer has to undertake activities on his land which give him an economic return*". Understandably, this is a hard balance to strike, but in their 40 years on the farm, the Dunnets have always had a sustainable vision for their land.

In 1993 they embarked upon a self-motivated waterway improvement project to construct riffles in a creek to protect the lower slopes and the adjoining Scott River from mobile sediments travelling down the waterway from upstream properties. John and neighbour Chris Avery designed a riffle structure and installation was completed within 2 years.



This effort was extended in 1995, in partnership with the Lower Blackwood LCDC, by fencing off and revegetating one of the most badly eroded sections of the creek – a minor tributary of the Scott River.

The revegetation stabilised the creekline although some of the trees did not successfully establish and infill may still be necessary in future. This is often a reality of many rehabilitation projects. Besides losing some seedlings this project was a very successful. The riffles are still in place today and the previously highly mobile sediment is now more stable resulting in protection of the creekline and the nearby natural pool at Avery's property.

Other than the revegetation carried out in 1995, the creekline has been absent of vegetation due to historical clearing and as a result, erosion and nutrient loading is still an issue.

This is not only an issue for this property, but for the Scott River catchment and South West

waterways in general.

Farmers like the Dunnets have long been aware of the need to put back vegetation, but it is always a question of time and resources.

The opportunity to progress the next stage of their on-farm conservation plan came in 2013, nearly 18 years later, when they were approached by Yasaman Mohammadi from the Lower Blackwood LCDC.

Yasaman suggested to the Dunnets that they apply for funding from the South West Catchments Council's Community Groundworks grants program to continue revegetation of the creekline.

The original plan for the site was conservative in scale, but in a giant leap of faith and determination, the Dunnets decided to fence and revegetate the entire creek, creating a significant wildlife linkage to nearby remnant vegetation.



ABOVE: John Dunnet at work on the farm (photo: Barbara Dunnet)

RIGHT: John Dunnet (photo: Barbara Dunnet)

FAR RIGHT: 2013 Revegetation of the creekline (photo: Yasaman Mohamadi)

This was an ambitious project, made possible through the boost in funding received through the South West Catchments Council, in partnership with the Lower Blackwood LCDC. The Dunnedts have worked with the Lower Blackwood LCDC on landcare projects in the past but never on something of this scale. The work they have been able to do this year has put them leaps and bounds ahead of where they would have been if they had to fund the entire project themselves.

SWCC's Community Engagement Program Manager, Nerilee Boshammer says, *"It was great to work in close partnership with Yasaman Mohammadi from the Lower Blackwood LCDC for such a great on-ground outcome. This project is a credit to her hard work at the grassroots level"*.

In total, the project has resulted in 8 ha being protected on the property and has contributed to the protection and enhancement of a far greater area adjacent to the property, namely the Gingilup Swamps Nature Reserve to the south. The Dunnedts also revegetated 6 ha along both sides of the creek with 30,000 native seedlings, creating a 60m wide, 1.7km long protected wildlife corridor along the waterway that connects directly to the Gingilup Swamps Nature Reserve. In addition, two stock crossings were constructed by the Dunnedts to allow for stock movement across the property without impacting on the creek, now that it has been completely fenced off.

This project is significant for improving the landscape connectivity of this region by linking to the Gingilup Swamps Nature Reserve. The now connected reserve is one of the prominent nature reserves in the South West. This reserve has great biodiversity and numerous priority species including the Scott River Banksia as well as two occurrences of the Scott River Ironstone Threatened Ecological Community.

The funding from SWCC had provided the resources to complete this component of their conservation plan in just 6 months. John Dunnedt says *"Our contribution and the partnership with the Lower Blackwood LCDC to do this project along with the SWCC grant make it a 'win-win' situation for all"*

Next on the list for the Dunnedts is to develop and implement a rotational grazing program, to further increase the sustainability of their operations. Exclusion of the waterway allows greater flexibility in the grazing regime by creating smaller paddock areas for short-term intensive grazing with increased numbers of cattle. This style of grazing increases production and is easier on the land. Keeping cattle out of the creekline also prevents harmful nutrients from entering the waterways and travelling downstream into the Scott River and eventually the Hardy Estuary.



ABOVE: Governor-Broome Road near Dunnedt's property (photo: Barbara Dunnedt)

The Dunnedts long term goal is *"to have a fertiliser regime which has minimal run off and improved microbiology of the soils"* which will further decrease the environmental impacts of their farming enterprise.

Community Engagement Facilitator Pip Marshall says, *"It's really rewarding to work in the NRM industry and help farmers like the Dunnedts achieve their sustainable land-use goals much sooner than they ever thought possible"*.

This project will leave a positive long-term legacy, with multiple community, environmental and production benefits, something that many landholders strive for.



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