

Community Photo-Monitoring

NACC NRM Region, Western Australia.



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The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) has teamed up with a number of coastal local governments and community volunteers in the NACC NRM region, to monitor more than 90 coastal sites between Guilderton and Kalbarri, in a very innovative way.

It starts with the community

In response to community concerns about coastal erosion throughout the region, the NACC team launched the Community Photo-Monitoring Program to assist in coastal adaptation planning.

Through this fusion of technology, innovation and on-ground action, volunteers from across the coast take regular photos at their selected sites, either on their mobile phones or digital cameras, which are then uploaded to an online database.

Central to the Community Photo-monitoring Program is the smartphone app *'Photomon'*, which has been developed by NACC to reduce the administrative weight usually associated with photo-monitoring programs.

The app is designed specifically for all community members to get involved, regardless of technological ability, and includes immediate photo labelling and upload options, as well as a site-specific guide photo to ensure all photos have a consistent field of view, which allows more accurate measurement of environmental change for each location.

“To date, more than 10,000 photos have been added to the Photomon database”

NACC’s Coastal and Marine Program Coordinator Dr Mic Payne said the Photo-monitoring program was a great way for community members to contribute to citizen-science projects in the NACC NRM region.

“Photo-monitoring is an effective way to document environmental change over time, thereby providing historical information to aid decision-making by resource managers,” he said.

“This program was born out of community concerns for coastal erosion and this was seen as a method to get more of our local community members and environmental groups involved with a citizen-science monitoring program, to assist in this coastal adaptation planning.



“Erosion is a huge issue in the region; it’s an issue for all stakeholders, particularly the coastal land managers or Local Government Authorities who are charged with the

task of managing for sea level rise, coastal erosion and inundation.”

On the move for better monitoring

“Previously, the Department of Transport conducted an aerial survey of the state’s coastline once every five years, and in addition to that, a number of local shires had started their own Photo-monitoring programs,” Dr Payne said.

“As a team, we found receiving data every five years wasn’t providing us a lot of resolution toward coastal adaptation planning, as so much changes in the coastal environment in that time frame, and aerial photography relied on the vegetation which isn’t the same as the coast line, so it lacked that aspect.

“Thanks to Coastwest funding, we started the manual Photo-monitoring program, and from that, we decided to apply for a second round of Coastwest funding to develop the app, which then led us to an app developer to help in building the *Photomon* tool.”

Photomon for the future

As a result of the Photo-monitoring program, and *Photomon* app, more community members are getting more engaged in helping their local coastal environment. To date, more than 10,000 photos have been added to the database, from locations within the NACC NRM region.

“We needed the app developers to make this app as user-friendly as possible, because we wanted all members of our community to be able to access and make the most of this great digital tool, while engaging with their local coastal environment. We relied on community feedback to better the app, and optimise this user-friendliness,” Dr Payne said.

“We have had great feedback from our local community members during the testing out phase of this app.”



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