



COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA – 2 FEBRUARY 2022

WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

TO BE HELD: Wednesday 2 February 2022

LOCATION: Microsoft Teams

COMMENCEMENT: 2.00pm

PUBLIC ACCESS: Live Streaming from Council's website
www.westwimmera.vic.gov.au

REQUIRED TO ATTEND:

Councillors	Executive Leadership Group
Bruce Meyer OAM, Mayor Jodie Pretlove, Deputy Mayor Trevor Domaschenz Tom Houlihan Tim Meyer	David Bezuidenhout Chief Executive Officer (CEO) James Bentley Director, Corporate & Community Services (DCCS) Ram Upadhyaya Director, Infrastructure Development & Works (DIDW)

*The West Wimmera Shire Council Governance Rules
set out the meeting procedure rules for this Council Meeting.*

*Members of the public are reminded that they are required to
remain silent during this meeting.*

Vision Statement:

*Our Wimmera Shire communities are healthy, thriving, diverse, harmonious,
prosperous and self-sustaining, with regional and global connectivity*



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OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

That in view of the current COVID-19 Pandemic and the social distancing restrictions put in place by the Australian and Victorian Governments, public access to this meeting will be limited to live streaming from Council's website www.westwimmera.vic.gov.au and a recording is to be made available post meeting via Council's website.

1.0 WELCOME

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The West Wimmera Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays respect to their elders, past, present and emerging.

2.0 OPENING PRAYER – CEO

Almighty God, we humbly ask your blessing upon this Council. Guide and prosper our decisions to the advancement of Your Glory and the true welfare of the people of West Wimmera Shire. Amen.

3.0 APOLOGIES, LEAVE OF ABSENCE, DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

3.1 APOLOGIES

3.2 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

3.3 DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All Councillors have a personal responsibility to ensure they are aware of the provisions mandated in the Local Government Act 2020 with regard to Conflict of Interest disclosures.



4.0 INFRASTRUCTURE, DEVELOPMENT AND WORKS

4.1 LAKE WALLACE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

FILE NUMBER:

**REPORT AUTHOR: RAM UPADHYAYA, DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE
DEVELOPMENT AND WORKS**

FOR DECISION

Introduction

Following an ongoing discussion about the management of vegetation in Lake Wallace, officers engaged a consultant to develop a comprehensive report detailing various options in relation to the management of the lake. The intention of this report is to get direction from the Council on options for ongoing management of the lake.

Declaration of Interests

No officer declared an interest under the *Local Government Act 2020* in the preparation of this report.

Background

Lake Wallace is a 1.83 km² freshwater lake located in Edenhope. The water level in the lake fluctuates and at times has been completely dry. The Lake's pier and jetty provide access to activities such as fishing, swimming, and sailing.

Lake Wallace is also considered to be the key environmental and tourism feature of Edenhope. It attracts visitors to the town and provides a stunning backdrop to Edenhope township. The lake is considered by many to contribute significantly to the social wellbeing and economic viability of the district.

Observations and recommendations provided in this report are based on the report prepared by Aquatic Technologies of Carrum Downs. (See Attachment 1: Lake Management Observations)

The aerial image taken on 30 November 2021 suggested that about 90% of the lakebed is covered with aquatic vegetation and approximately 85 – 90% of the vegetation coverage was made by Ribbonweed. The Ribbonweed can grow up to the height of four meters in an ideal situation however typically the length is less than three meters.



This plant is known to have a higher capacity to absorb nutrients and is considered high on the desirable scale than most other vegetation that can proliferate the lake system even though it obstructs recreational use. This plant grows vigorously in summer and can survive in the water with salinity up to 1500 ppm.

The water quality test undertaken in November 2021 suggested that the water has a higher-than-average level of nutrients and pH. This further suggests that the cut vegetation is likely to grow at a faster rate even after removal. The report also suggests that without this volume and spread of Ribbonweed, there would be a more likely chance of Blue-Green Algae bloom. The water quality test result and relevant comments are summarised in Appendix B of the attached “Lake Management Observations” report.

Removing an excessive amount of aquatic vegetation is likely to result in an increased chance of algal growth. Hence, it is recommended that aquatic harvesting be limited to 10% in Summer and 20% in Winter.

Treatment Options:

- **Aquatic Herbicide Treatment:**
The treatment cost is likely to be around \$90K plus the cost of application. This is likely to induce algal growth due to the deposition of nutrients from dead plants and deoxygenation which will eventually lead to fish kills.
- **Aquatic Harvesting:**
The aquatic harvester can be used at full capacity when water is at least 600mm deep at 6 meters from the boat ramp. At 460mm depth (observed during November 2021) at 6 meters from the ramp, the aquatic harvester can be utilised at 60%. The recent measurement indicates that the water level is currently about 3.5 meters away from the end of the ramp and is less than 460mm deep at 6 meters, hence this option cannot be utilised.

The cost to harvest 20% of the area while the machine is operating at 65% capacity is approximately \$85K plus the cost of removal and disposal of vegetation to an appropriate location.
- **Amphibious Harvesting:**
This machine can be utilised for harvesting at all depths more than 0.3 meters of water in the lake. The cost to harvest 20% of the aquatic vegetation with this machine would be approximately \$75K plus the cost of removal and disposal of vegetation to an appropriate location. The removal of 10% of vegetation with this method is likely to cost around \$40K for the machine and labor-hire, and another \$15K removal and disposal of weeds and any other contingencies.

The detailed finding of this report was presented at a Councillor discussion session by the consultant on 20 January 2022.



Water Testing

The report strongly recommends having a regular water testing regime to understand the residual nutrient level and dissolved oxygen level. This will enable officers to make decisions on the level of vegetation trimming in the future. To have a 6 monthly testing regime in place Council will have to incur the initial set up cost of \$900 plus approximately \$1400 for water testing and shipping of water samples to Melbourne.

Lake management and maintenance responsibility:

Council sought some advice from Maddocks Lawyers on whether Council or another government body or agency is responsible for the management of Lake Wallace. The advice was that the Council is identified as the Committee of Management for Lake Wallace and hence is responsible for managing, improving, maintaining, and controlling Lake Wallace. The detailed advice is provided in attachment 2: “Lake Wallace Letter of Advise on Management Responsibility”.

Extension of Boat Ramp:

Council officers investigated the option of extending the boat ramp. The extension of the boat ramp by about 20 metres horizontally at 1.5% grade will take the boat ramp to 300mm below the end of the current boat ramp. The estimated cost of this extension would be approximately \$20K. Attachment 3 “Lake Wallace – Boat Ramp Extension” details the proposed design. Any further extension to this lake will incur additional costs. A consideration of the usability of the lake and the boat ramp must be given before deciding to extend the ramp beyond 20 meters.

Works on the Waterways permit:

The works on the Waterways permit has been lodged and obtained from Wimmera Catchment Management Authority. The permit is valid for 12 months. The obtained permit is provided in attachment 4: “Works on Waterways Permit”.

GWM Water consent for vegetation removal

GWM Water as a water manager has the overall responsibility to manage the Blue-Green Algae in the region. The removal of aquatic vegetation has some potential of inducing the Blue-Green Algae bloom. Hence consent from GWM Water was sought for the potential removal of vegetation. GWM Water is yet to respond.

Contractor Availability:

The initial discussion with a Melbourne-based contractor has suggested that the earliest possible date for commencement of this work will be the end of February with 3 to 4 weeks to complete the job.



Consultation with user groups:

Following the request from the Councillors, key user groups were consulted on 28 January 2022 to identify the best location for vegetation removal. The group consisted of key representatives from Angling Club, Edenhope Tourism, Boat Owners, and petitioners, accompanied by Councillors and Council Officers. There was clear support from the group on the removal of 5% vegetation to develop an understanding of future maintenance options as well as the operation of the amphibious machine. The group also suggested that there are limited benefits of extending the current boat ramp and hence the extension was not recommended. Furthermore, there was a suggestion about creating a temporary boat ramp and a channel for launching a boat. The permit requirement is likely to induce a huge administrative burden for disturbance of lake bed to create the channel.

Risk Management Implications

There are a number of risks associated with this project. These include:

- Financial risk – Project is not financed within Council's 2021-2022 adopted budget.
- Environmental risk – potential environmental risk to Lake Wallace should water plant cutting occur in relation to water quality, fish habitats, etc.
- Unknown outcome of works – potentially encouraging vegetation to grow faster and denser. Will ongoing maintenance work be required?
- Reputational Risk

Legislative Implications

- Planning and Environment Act (1987)
- Catchment and Land Protection Act (1994)
- Environmental Protection Act (2017)
- Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (1988)
- Safety on Public Land Act (2004)
- Water Act (1989)
- Local Government Act (2020)
- Gender Equality Act (2020)

Environmental Implications

Ensuring that the environmental health of Lake Wallace is maintained and enhanced is a priority area of these initial investigations.

Financial and Budgetary Implications

The scope of this project was not funded within the 2021 – 2022 Council budget. Any proposed works will require a budget variation and be funded through the current operational budget.



Policy Implications

This report is supported by the following West Wimmera Shire Council Policy:

- Communications Policy
- Community Engagement Policy
- Customer Service Policy
- Environmental Policy
- Investment Policy
- Tourism Policy

Council Plan Implications

This report supports the following section/s of the West Wimmera Shire Council Plan 2021-2025:

- Goal 1 – Liveable & Healthy Community
- Goal 2 – Diverse and Prosperous Economy
- Goal 3 – Sustainable Environment
- Goal 4 – Good Governance
- Goal 5 – Our Commitment

Communication Implications

Once the Council resolution is received on the removal of vegetation, the project manager will consult with community groups to identify the best location for the vegetation removal. A regular update on the project will be fed to the community via Council's Facebook channel.

Gender Equality

Not commented on

Conclusion

The management of vegetation in Lake Wallace is likely to provide some recreational benefits to the local community as well as tourists. The following options need to be considered:

Option 1: That the Council adopts the officer recommendation

Option 2: Remove 10% weed removal in late winter at a cost of approximately \$55K (\$35K for machine and \$20K for disposal and contingencies) and establish a biannual testing regime as per the cost detailed in the report. Investigate options for boat ramp access.



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Option 3: Program for 20% weed removal in late winter at a cost of approximately \$95K (\$75K for machine and \$20K for disposal and contingencies) and establish a biannual testing regime as per the cost detailed in the report. Investigate options for boat ramp access.

Option 4: Budget for option 2 in the 2022/23 financial year and plan for works.

Option 5: Budget for option 3 in the 2022/23 financial year and plan for works.

Option 6: Do nothing

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. Remove 5% of vegetation as a trial to allow officers to establish a most efficient maintenance program for ongoing management of the lake. Approximately 8.25 Ha of vegetation to be removed at a cost of \$35K**
- 2. Establish a biannual testing regime at an annual cost of \$2,800 and a once-off cost of \$900.**
- 3. All additional costs to be funded as a variation to the 2021/22 operational budget.**

Attachments:

No.	Name	RecFind Ref
4.1.1	Lake Management Observations, Aquatic Technologies	
4.1.2	Lake Wallace Letter of Advice – Management Responsibility	
4.1.3	Lake Wallace Boat Ramp Extension	
4.1.4	Wimmera CMA - Works on Waterways Application	

MEETING CONCLUDED:

NEXT MEETING:

**WEDNESDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2022
TEAMS MEETING**