



West Gippsland Conservation Fund (WGCF)

2022-23 Project & Funding Update

Private landholders play a critical role in protecting native habitats, plants and animals across Victoria. The West Gippsland Conservation Fund is supporting landholders to conduct conservation activities to improve outcomes for biodiversity in the region.

Trust for Nature

Established in 1972, Trust for Nature is Victoria's dedicated private land conservation agency. We work with landholders in all regions of Victoria to ensure that our precious native habitat is protected forever, using permanent on-title agreements (covenants).

In our 50th year, we celebrate our partnerships with the more than 2,000 landholders who have secured over 1,500 conservation covenants contributing to the 110,000 hectares of protected habitats under covenant or in a Trust for Nature managed reserve. These places are home to some of our most threatened species like the Helmeted Honeyeater, Growling Grass Frog or Plains-wanderer.

Trust for Nature takes an evidence-based approach to its work guided by our Statewide Conservation Plan which outlines key areas in Victoria where our most threatened habitats, plants and animals are found. This plan underpins our organisational focus areas including permanent protection and restoration in priority landscapes, landholder engagement in conservation, community engagement including deepening ties with Aboriginal Victorians and innovation in conservation finance including philanthropy.

West Gippsland Conservation Fund (WGCF)

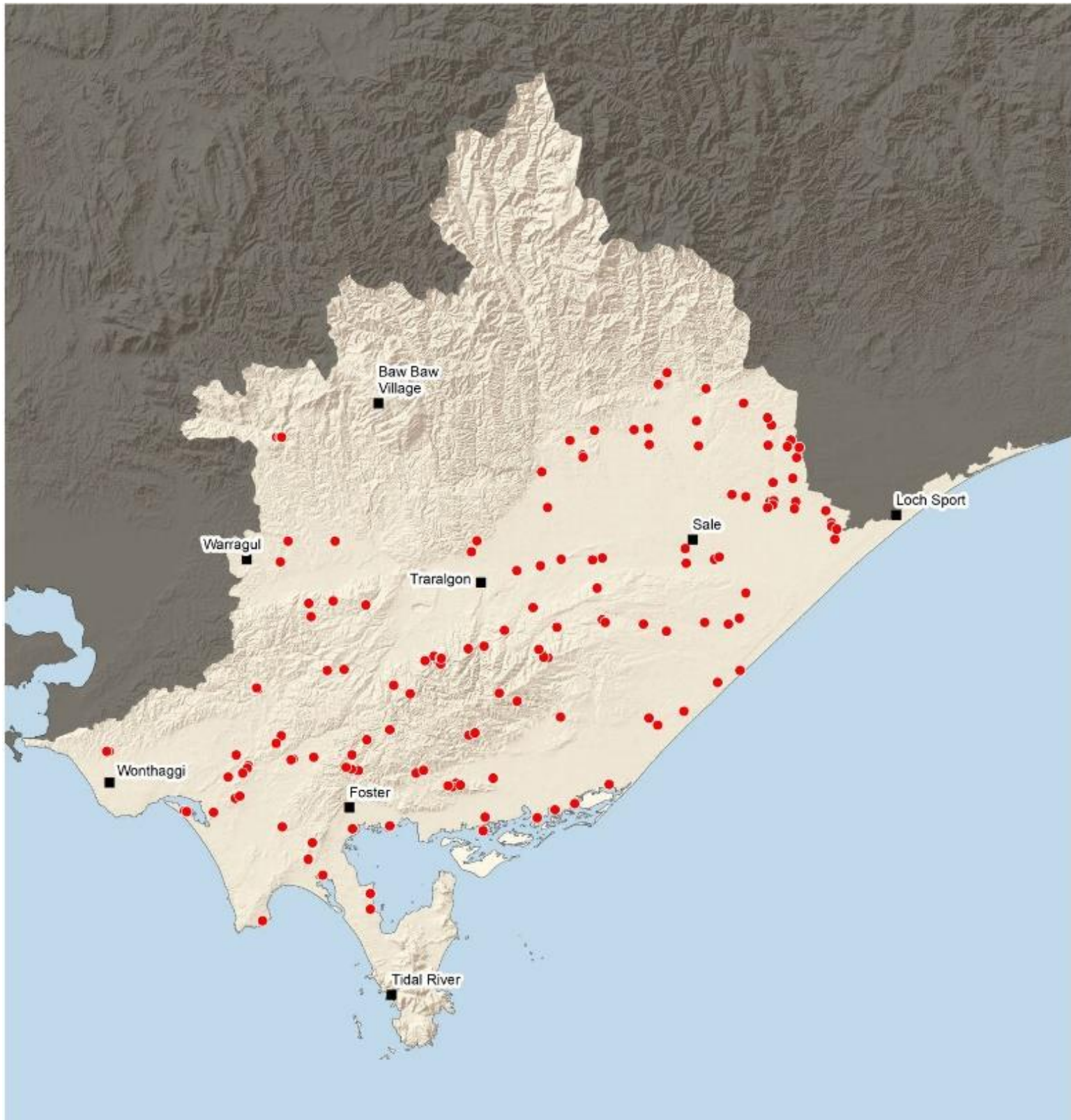
The West Gippsland Conservation Fund was established to provide secure and ongoing funding for conservation activities across a network of properties already protected with a Trust for Nature conservation covenant.

By working with landholders already protecting their properties, the Trust aims to mitigate threats in the region from land clearing, habitat fragmentation, pest plants and animals, and climate change by supporting the rich biodiversity in the region.

An annual distribution from the fund is administered by Trust for Nature's West Gippsland conservation team to facilitate on-ground activities at strategically selected locations to deliver the best possible conservation outcomes.

Account Balance

Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Opening balance	\$ 52,950	\$ 1,010,066	\$ 1,151,142	\$ 1,083,842
Closing balance	\$ 1,010,066	\$ 1,151,142	\$ 1,083,842	\$ 1,124,634



Map: Trust for Nature's West Gippsland region with 146 conservation covenant protecting more than 6,000 hectares.

Activities Report 2022-23

Habitat restoration works at Meenyan covenants

Trust for Nature continued engaging with landholders at the habitat restoration site in Meenyan and have entered into a Works Project Agreement covering planned project activities, including those to be funded through the WGCF.

Stockproof fencing of habitat restoration areas was completed and initial weed control was conducted by both the landholders and contractors. Trust for Nature has placed an order for locally indigenous plants to be planted in spring CY2023.

Habitat enhancement works at Jeeralang Junction covenant cluster

Lauren Halstead, Senior Conservation Officer, conducted a morning tea with covenantors at Jeeralang Junction so they could meet and discuss opportunities to gain assistance with weed control or other habitat management issues within the local cluster of covenants.

With weeds including Blackberry and the invasive native Sweet Pittosporum identified as the main threats, Lauren sought advice about local grants from Latrobe City Council and Landcare for this work. Trust for Nature has since facilitated site visits with a weed control contractor who provided quotes to the landholders.

The resulting Blackberry control on one covenant was an important first step towards further weed assessments and control being conducted across other covenants in the local cluster in the coming year.

Building the West Gippsland team's capacity

A significant outcome was achieved in the recruitments of Gabby Fitzgerald, Conservation Officer, in November 2022. Gabby has played a key role in the planning and coordination of restoration works at Meenyan and the weed control at Jeeralang Junction, and will continue to deliver priority activities that support covenantors as well as Trust for Nature's stewardship program.

Continue weed control works at Archies Creek covenants

Activities to control and monitor Sweet Pittosporum at Archies Creek covenants was planned for FY2022-23. This work was postponed until next year when the scale of the remaining work will be re-assessed and better understood.

Activities Planned for 2023-24

Habitat restoration works at Meenyan covenants

The West Gippsland team will continue to collaborate with the landholder of the Meenyan restoration site and deliver agreed habitat restoration works including weed control and revegetation in a staged manner during 2023-24. Monitoring will be undertaken to assess the success of revegetation works and changes in habitat condition over time.

Habitat enhancement works at Jeeralang Junction covenants

The West Gippsland team will continue to engage with the covenantors at Jeeralang Junction and provide assistance to the landholders to manage high-threat weeds, including to apply for Latrobe City Council's Biodiversity on Rural Land Grants.

Continue weed control works at Archies Creek covenants

The West Gippsland team will assess the scale of *Pittosporum* control required across the covenants at Archies Creek in 2023-24 and may use some of the funds released from the WGCF to conduct additional works to those being delivered through other current projects.

Building understanding of covenanted habitats

The West Gippsland team plans to deploy remote cameras more frequently at selected covenants, so that we increase our and the landholders' understanding of the wildlife the protected habitats support.



Image: Stockproof fencing at Meeniyan restoration site.

For more information on the West Gippsland Conservation Fund including how you can support Trust for Nature's work in the region, please contact:

Sam Crowther
Fundraising & Partnerships Manager
e: samc@tfn.org.au t: 0432 604 834