



Department of
Agriculture and Food



SOUTHCOAST
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT INC.

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Worth their weight in Narrogin

Digging and sifting the equivalent of 100 truckloads of soil to measure the carbon stored in mallee roots is not easy but South Coast NRM's Cultural Connections crew rose to the challenge in Narrogin last month.

The Albany-based Aboriginal crew of Noel Coyne, Sam Oreo, Michael Simpson and Josh Woods were contracted by the WA Department of Agriculture and Food together with Narrogin locals to assist the department's carbon sequestration research project, working across three farms to weigh a total of 150 mallee trees.

The results of this work will be crucial in identifying how much money farmers will be paid for the trees they plant, once the Australian Government's Emissions Trading Scheme and Carbon Farming Initiative come to fruition.

DAFWA research scientist Kim Brooksbank said identifying the volume of carbon stored in a tree from the ground up was fairly simple, but the difficulty was measuring the portion of the tree below ground.

"All the carbon stored in the roots will be eligible for carbon credits as well and considering this adds more than a third of the total tree carbon store, it's certainly worth investigating.

"Unfortunately the only way to calculate the volume of roots is to dig them all up and weigh them. Mallee roots can be found well out into the paddock next to the trees so this is a very big job," he said.

The contribution of South Coast NRM's Cultural Connections crew was invaluable, Mr Brooksbank said, as they sifted more than 1,000 cubic metres of soil in challenging conditions.

"It was a mammoth task and the only way to approach it was like eating an elephant- one bite at a time. They should be very proud of what they've achieved."

The carbon sequestration project is funded by DAFWA, CSIRO and the Federal Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

South Coast NRM cultural coordinator Shandell Cummings said the Cultural Connections crew had worked on many successful landcare projects over the past year for public and private sector organisations.

"The crew are highly skilled and mobile, and can provide many services including fencing, weed control, landscaping, revegetation and land rehabilitation," she said.

The Cultural Connections crew is coordinated by South Coast NRM and Skill Hire.

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