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Inspiring Eugene takes top gong

South Coast NRM congratulates Eugene Eades for winning the 2011 Noongar Citizen of the Year Award announced last night at the Albany Entertainment Centre as part of NAIDOC Week celebrations.

Eugene has been involved for many years with South Coast NRM, primarily in the Ravensthorpe, Jerramungup and Boxwood Hill areas.

In 2006, Eugene helped broker a partnership between Greening Australia and South Coast NRM's Restoring Connections project, helping Aboriginal people to protect and restore cultural sites at risk of degradation. The project won a prestigious National Landcare Award in 2010.

South Coast NRM chief executive Rob Edkins said Eugene's passion for the environment, his family and culture, was evident in all that he did.

"Over the past five years, Eugene has been instrumental in the development and promotion of the meeting place at Nowanup, which is a special site of healing and learning for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike. Eugene sought funding for the project from Greening Australia, Bush Heritage Australia and South Coast NRM," he said.

A natural leader and storyteller, Mr Edkins said Eugene had helped South Coast NRM to deliver several cultural awareness workshops, school programs and cultural activities including Biodiversity Week.

He has also facilitated cross-regional cultural interaction with Aboriginal groups as well as developed and promoted economic opportunities within the Noongar community, Mr Edkins explained.

Eugene's mentoring work with Aboriginal youth at Nowanup through the Juvenile Justice program has been very successful with many young offenders going on to become positive role models for other at-risk youth.

South Coast NRM also congratulated event host, the City of Albany, and all Noongar Excellence Award winners and nominees including Vernice Gillies (Female Elder of the Year) and Jack Cox (Male Elder of the Year).

ENDS

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