

# Regional Recharge Farm

Groundwater resources in the Limestone Coast are critical and underpin the region's environmental, social, cultural and economic values.

The unconfined aquifer is a renewable resource that is predominantly recharged from rainfall. To manage these water resources, extraction of water and recharge must be balanced. Water is extracted from the unconfined aquifer through irrigation and directly by vegetation. Recharge has been reduced over time through the efficient removal of water from the landscape by artificial drainage networks. Under changing climate conditions the Limestone Coast is predicted to be hotter and drier, further reducing recharge of the aquifer. Exploring new ways to achieve localised recharge of the unconfined aquifer is critical to achieving water security and sustainability in the Limestone Coast region. A new concept being trialled to increase aquifer recharge is a **Regional Recharge Farm**.

## What is a **Regional Recharge Farm**?

- A regional recharge farm is a location in the landscape where water is actively held in natural wetland features for the purposes of passively increasing recharge to, or reducing the depletion of, the shallow unconfined aquifer.
- Water may be held in the landscape through on ground works to modify or reverse artificial drainage impacts.
- Holding of water in the landscape may be permanent or seasonal and where appropriate, the location may have alternate functions when not flooded for recharge (e.g. grazing).
- Holding water in the landscape may achieve other benefits such as enhancing or restoring groundwater dependent ecosystems or increasing soil moisture for productivity.

While current policy settings facilitate recharge farms on land managed primarily for ecological values, this concept could evolve in the future to develop mechanisms to support a wider application of this idea, and deliver similar outcomes across the broader commercial/agricultural landscape.

## Where can a **Regional Recharge Farm** be located?

- Suitable locations for regional recharge farms will depend on the soil and substrate type, groundwater hydrology, topography and infrastructure needs of the location.
- A regional recharge farm could occur on private or public land and the concept is intended to be inclusive of all land managers.