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WaterSmart Dams case studies showcase solutions to improve water investment decisions

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The Grower Group Alliance (GGA) has released a new WaterSmart Dams - Making Dams Work Again Case Study Booklet shining a spotlight on innovative farmer-led trials that are helping shape the future of on-farm water security in Western Australia.

The nine case studies highlight the core demonstration trial sites on farms from across the South-West, Great Southern, and Wheatbelt region that investigated the effectiveness of innovative solutions to improve water security, including renovating existing dams, building new dams, and implementing evaporation suppression and run-off technologies.

GGA Head of Projects Dr Daniel Kidd said the WaterSmart Dams project aimed to develop knowledge and water planning tools, so growers can confidently make decisions on how best to invest in their water infrastructure.

“The case study booklet provides an honest account of each farmer’s trial experience, describing the process and giving tangible results,” Dr Kidd said.

“It explores not only what worked, but also the challenges and lessons learned along the way.

“Their participation in the project and knowledge gained now provides other farmers with realistic, practical insights to inform their own water planning decisions.”

WaterSmart Dams is a collaboration with grower groups within the GGA Network, including Compass Agricultural Alliance, Southern Dirt, Merredin and Districts Farm Improvement Group, Fitzgerald Biosphere Group and researchers from The University of Western Australia (UWA) and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).






In the case study booklet, site host Wayde Robertson from Scotts Brook said he was happy with his Daisy Dam cover, which was part of the Southern Dirt ‘Daisy Dam Cover Trial: Enhancing Farm Resilience’.

“There have been no ongoing costs or maintenance needed, and the sheep have taken to drinking from the dam well,” he said.

“The installation was straightforward, and the cost is proportional to dam size, making it a cost-effective solution.

“I’m planning to install more covers on my property.”

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GGA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Rikki Foss said the project highlighted the power of collaboration between grower groups, farmers, researchers and government to drive innovation at a local level.

“GGA has led this project, valued at over \$7.7m (cash and in-kind) to address Western Australian farmers’ critical need for water reliability,” Ms Foss said.

“Through these demonstration sites, project partners were able to evaluate the effectiveness of water capture approaches, such as lined catchments, evaporation reduction using dam covers and vegetated banks, and investigate how subsurface drainage can contribute to dam water supply in wet years.

“Thanks to the on-ground work and support of UWA’s Centre for Water and Spatial Science research team, the local sites have generated valuable data to develop a new fit-for-purpose digital platform, the Water Evaluation Platform (WEP). It enables users to choose the most effective dam infrastructure strategy, based on their local climate, budget, and water needs.

“These case studies demonstrate that with the right support, farmers are willing to trial new solutions and share their experiences for the benefit of the whole industry.”

The WaterSmart Dams project forms part of the broader state water security initiatives such as WaterSmart Farms – a collaborative Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) led program researching sustainable groundwater supply options using on-farm desalination technology.

GGA looks forward to continuing to develop and share water planning tools and resources to help farmers adapt to a more variable climate and continue to work with grower groups to deliver vital extension and adoption throughout the regions.

This project is jointly funded through the Australian Government’s Future Drought Fund (FDF) and the Western Australian state government’s Agriculture Climate Resilience Fund (ACRF), supported by DPIRD.

The full WaterSmart Dams Case Study Booklet is now available online. See the GGA project webpage for more: <https://www.gga.org.au/activity/watersmart-dams/>

ENDS

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About Grower Group Alliance (GGA):

The Grower Group Alliance (GGA) was established in 2002 to develop the capacity of groups and stronger connections between Western Australian grower groups, researchers, funding bodies and industry.

Today the GGA is a thriving state-wide network of over 90 member groups from across Western Australia, with a collective membership exceeding 4,000 farm enterprises.

www.gga.org.au/gga-news/media-releases/

Caption: WaterSmart Dams site hosts Wayde and Emma Robertson, Scotts Brook, Western Australia, who were part of the Southern Dirt 'Daisy Dam Cover Trial: Enhancing Farm Resilience'.

