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## Going green by turning blue

Plains Producer, Balaklava

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## JARRAD DELANEY

SOUTH Australia's marine vegetation will play a part in the state's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint with the first blue carbon project launched near Webb Beach on Friday.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water Susan Close was on hand for the official launch of the state's first blue carbon project, located on a site adjoining the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary National Park - Winaityinaityi Pangkara.

The project will see 250 hectares of coastal wetlands restored, which is expected to see 20,000 tonnes of carbon emissions removed from the atmosphere by 2100.

Blue carbon refers to carbon that has been incorporated into coastal ecosystems, mostly in plants and sediments of saltmarshes, mangroves and seagrasses.

Ms Close said this was another step forward in South Australia becoming a leader in reducing the impact on the environment.

"South Australia is well placed to capture the immense opportunities blue carbon presents our coastal and marine environment and this first site is an important step in growing the sector," she said.

"It's not only about carbon emissions, what it's also about is partnering with environmental groups and Aboriginal traditional owners to create a combined effect to heal our planet."

The Nature Conservancy Australia, the Department for Environment and Water and Smartgroup have worked together to identify an ideal site for wetlands restoration to capture blue carbon.

Smartgroup chief operating officer Sarah Haas said it was really exciting to see the project launched after partnering with The Nature

Conservancy in 2020.

"This day has been a long time coming and we're excited it's finally here," she said.

Smartgroup chief sustainability officer Sophie McIntosh said blue carbon ecosystems were shown to be highly effective at sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, which would have long term environmental benefits.

"The beauty of blue carbon is it's 50 to 70 times more effective than a tree at sequestering carbon," she said.

On top of removing carbon emissions from the atmosphere, the new site will also expand the habitat for Australian and migratory birds, including 15,000 shorebirds that are in the area for up to six months of the year.

Representatives of the Kurna community were on hand for the project launch with a traditional smoking ceremony also conducted.

Elder Jeffrey Newchurch said it was exciting

to see this project happen and for the Kurna people to be involved with it.

"It's exciting because it's building opportunities, allowing the Kurna and Aboriginal communities to come back onto country and be engaged with the community," he said.

"We have that ability to shape it together."

The Nature Conservancy Australia managing director Alison Rowe said the day was a major milestone with the seeds planted for further ecological progress.

"Over the next years, the team will restore natural tidal flow to the wetlands, which will expand the area where saltmarsh and mangroves can grow," she said.

"The project will result in other environmental benefits such as the protection of threatened species, tidal retreat, the creation of fish habitat and roosting and feeding habitat for important migratory and resident shorebirds."



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Kurna men Yuandamarra Kelly and Travis Hogan conduct the smoking ceremony near Webb Beach with people filing past to cleanse in the smoke. INSET: Deputy Premier Susan Close meets with representatives from the Kurna community, Travis Hogan, Yuandamarra Kelly and Jeffrey Newchurch. PHOTO: JARRAD DELANEY