



About the Bays

The Newsletter of the Central Coastal Board

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Coastal Issues in Port Phillip and Western Port

FROM THE CHAIR

Having recently finalised the Central Coastal Board's Annual Report for 2007/08 I've had the opportunity to reflect on our achievements for the year and focus on what lies ahead.

Particular highlights over the past year have been:

- Running eighteen consultation sessions in six coastal locations to coordinate feedback on the draft *Victorian Coastal Strategy*.
- Completing the *Engaging Coastal Communities* project, an important partnership with the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA.
- Launching the Boating CAP in July 2007 and promoting implementation of the plan through the Boating CAP Implementation Committee.
- Working closely with coastal communities to inform them about the new Australian Government's *Caring for our Country Community Coastcare* grant program and helping them apply for funds.
- Making submissions to the *National Inquiry into Climate Change* and the Victorian Government's *Land and Biodiversity at a Time of Climate Change Green Paper*.
- Contributing to the Technical Working Group for the Environmental Effects Statement for the proposed desalination plant at Wonthaggi.

In the year ahead, the CCB will have a major focus on supporting implementation of the *Victorian Coastal Strategy* (VCS). This will present plenty of challenges given the region's high levels of use and activity and our role as a facilitator rather than a 'doer' in terms of many of the priorities and actions of the VCS, particularly with regard to climate change.

The CCB is exploring the need for a Coastal Action Plan (CAP) for Western Port, as the key statutory mechanism available to the Board for implementing the VCS in the area. We will seek support from local government and community networks to ensure strong local involvement and ownership of any CAP. The 2007 Inception Report will be updated to include emerging issues such as climate change implications for the region among our key priorities.

Finally, I'd like to provide feedback on the excellent Coast to Coast 2008 Conference held in Darwin in August. It attracted around 400 delegates from all over Australia to hear speakers present the latest thinking, insights and approaches to some of our most pressing coastal issues.

Again, the climate change message came through loud and clear. Scientists believe that the extent of the change is being underestimated. It is something we can't ignore and organisations, such as the CCB, involved in strategic planning for the coast have to keep up to date with research and scientific analysis in order to guide decision making to enable decisions today to lay the framework for an equitable and sustainable adaptive response.

Liz Johnstone
Chair

CURRENT PROJECTS

Coastal Community Capacity Building

The Australian Government's new small grant scheme *Caring for our Country - Community Coastcare* which opened on 19 May closed on 25 July 2008. The CCB hosted six information sessions in conjunction with Coast Action/Coastcare attended by over 60 people.

The sessions provided information on the Government's requirements, opportunities to network and talk to other groups with more experience and, in some cases, helped to reduce the time needed to write applications.

Thanks to Port Phillip Region Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitators, Denis Cox and Phillip Wierzbowski for their valuable contribution. We hope to continue this partnership in the future.

The CCB understands that at least 25 project applications were submitted from the Port Phillip and Western Port region.

Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds

Western Port has long been recognised as a wetland of international significance and is listed under the Ramsar Convention and part of the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network.

Volunteers have been monitoring shorebirds and other waterbirds for 35 years. Counts suggest long-term declines in the abundance of some species but more sophisticated statistical analyses are needed to understand population trends and help focus management attention on the several possible reasons for declines.

The CCB submitted a project entitled 'Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds' to the Australian Government's *Caring for our Country - Community Coastcare 2008*. If successful, the project will deliver an effective, well-targeted management program that identifies key habitat areas and works with land managers and local communities to ameliorate the threats to migratory shorebirds and other waterbirds in Western Port.

The project aims to encourage efficient and effective collaboration between key stakeholders including government and community conservation groups.

The CCB would like to thank the many agencies and organisations that provided support for this grant application, especially given the tight timelines.

CURRENT PROJECTS (CONT'D . . .)

Boating CAP

The Boating Coastal Action Plan (CAP) Implementation Committee met in early September 2008. Even though resources have been limited for boating infrastructure for many years, considerable progress has been achieved to-date such as:

- Master planning for a number of key sites - such as St Kilda, Portarlington and Frankston, and more recently to commence in Mornington.
- Progress at Queenscliff and the private developments at Martha Cove and Wyndham Cove.
- The Parks Victoria Bays and Maritime Initiative which is seeking funding to further invest in boating infrastructure and services at a number of distinctive boating precincts consistent with the CAP.
- Marine Safety Victoria is using the CAP in its assessment of grant applications for improvements to boating facilities and community harbours.
- The CAP which identifies strategic directions and objectives for boating activities in the central region is also used at a day to day level by coastal managers assessing use and development proposals.

The Committee will undertake a regular high level audit of progress in implementing the Boating CAP, identify priority actions for the next two years and assess the resources needed to achieve these actions.

Review of the Port Phillip Bay EMP

The 2002 Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan (EMP) outlines objectives, tasks and performance reporting to mitigate critical risks to the Bay's environment - identified at the time as excessive nutrients and marine pests.

The EMP identified the CCB to conduct independent progress reviews of the nutrient and pest programs in 2003 and 2006.

Reports from Melbourne Water, on monitoring nitrogen loads into Port Phillip Bay, and from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) on the marine pest program have been made available to the CCB.

Progress on Nitrogen Reduction into Port Phillip Bay

The EMP identified a 1000 tonne reduction target for Bay nitrogen loads (split between the Western Treatment Plant and catchment waterway inputs). Monitoring at the Western Treatment Plant indicates that the 500 tonne target has been met.

To-date, it hasn't been possible to determine whether the catchment 500 tonne target has been met as data is still being assessed.

Low inflows to Port Phillip Bay due to reduced rainfall may actually have reduced overall catchment loads. Ongoing development in the catchment will increase runoff and nitrogen loads and may offset reduction efforts of the climate-induced reductions.

CURRENT PROJECTS (CONT'D . . .)

Marine Pests

The EMP includes actions for managing marine pests (including ballast and hull fouling) as well as monitoring.

EPA Victoria has introduced ballast water management regulations making Victoria the only state with mandated management arrangements for ballast water consistent with international standards. Victoria has also implemented aquaculture translocation protocols.

In addition, Victoria is participating in national plans to manage marine pests and it is hoped that implementation will occur in 2009. Fortunately, there have been no known major pest incursions in recent years.

Reviewing the EMP

The purpose of review is to assess the performance of the EMP and to help inform the State Environmental Protection Policy (SEPP) review which is scheduled for 2013. Future reviews of the policy will need to consider the impacts of climate change on targets and necessary management actions.

Relevant impacts of the Channel Deepening project (turbidity and increased risk from marine pests) are being addressed in that project's Environmental Management Plan.

The final report for the Port Phillip and Westernport Regional Water Quality Improvement Plan - *Better Bays and Waterways* - is due out in early 2009 and may provide useful information for the EMP. DSE has a key role in future reporting on the EMP.

AROUND THE COAST

VCAT decision on Grip Road, Toora

In January, 2008 the Gippsland Coastal Board (GCB) successfully sought leave to review the South Gippsland Shire Council's decision to grant permits to construct a dwelling on each of six small (2-4 hectare) Crown allotments in the Grip Road area, Toora - which can be categorised as part of an 'old and inappropriate' subdivision created in the 1890s. In October 2007, the Minister for Planning wrote to the council about these permit applications saying: *"I trust that council when considering planning permit applications for dwellings in this area, recognise the already considerable strategic policy statements which discourage this type of development in the Grip Road area."*

The case is of interest for the range of policy matters considered - including: land outside of township boundaries (Coastal Spaces); Dwellings in a Farming Zone, Land Subject to Inundation Overlay; Climate Change; Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils and, notably, the reference to the 'precautionary principle'.

The Tribunal found the land unsuitable for residential development; that planning policy discouraged residential development in this area, that the dwellings were contrary to the purpose of the Farming Zone and that the cumulative impact of the development would adversely affect the ongoing use of the area for productive agriculture.

AROUND THE COAST (CONT'D . . .)

The case is of particular interest because of potential sea level rises due to the effects of climate change which the Tribunal found as relevant matters and applied the precautionary principle, finding that increases in the severity of storm events, coupled with rising sea levels, create a reasonably foreseeable risk of inundation of the subject land and the proposed dwellings, which is unacceptable. See the decision at <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/vic/VCAT/2008/1545.html>.

VCAT did acknowledge that the decision adversely affected the plans of individual owners and their economic stake in the land.

Much of the argument presented by the GCB centred on the climate change studies undertaken by CSIRO on behalf of the Board. The findings of these studies are outlined in the Board's recent report - details in the article below.

Gippsland Coastal Board Report: "Threats from Climate Change and Coastal Subsidence"

The Gippsland Coastal Board ("GCB") has released a report that details significant threats from climate change and coastal subsidence for the Gippsland coastline.

"The best scientific predictions are indicating that within 50 years, parts of the Gippsland coast will be inundated to an extent requiring protection or relocation of assets, including dwellings and commercial buildings," said Duncan Malcolm, Chair of the GCB.

"Decisions need to be made now about how to deal with this situation. Controls are needed on new developments in areas likely to be affected, and plans need to be made for dealing with the threats, especially vulnerable existing towns and infrastructure."

"Regional collaboration will be a key driver for change in Gippsland. The Gippsland Coastal Board considers councils and community organisations to be central to this collaborative effort in the future."

The report is available on the GCB's website at www.gcb.vic.gov.au and was discussed at a climate change forum on 12 September at Lakes Entrance - details below.

Forum on Adapting to Climate Change on the Gippsland Coast

The forum was attended by over 80 people from local and state government involved in planning and managing the coast.

Day 1 presented background information on the GCB climate change research report and the planning and legal issues facing coastal managers and planners. Speakers included Dr Kathy McInnes (CSIRO), Eric Sjerp (Ethos NRM), Peter Wheeler (Monash), Daniel Plieter (Westernport Greenhouse Alliance), Helen Martin (GCB), Mark Beaufoy (DLA Phillips Fox) and Barbara Norman (RMIT).

Weatherman Rob Gell, set the scene for day 2 "back casting" from 2032 and forecasting out to 2056. This, using Lakes Entrance as an example, set the scene for various climate change and sea level rise scenarios.

AROUND THE COAST (CONT'D . . .)

Options for defence, retreat and adaptation were considered affecting the many values of the Lakes Entrance community.

A feature of the forum was the introduction of the new 3D model of Loch Sport to enable the visualisation of various inundation projections. This model follows that developed for Lakes Entrance by Peter Wheeler and his colleagues. A third model, funded by the CCB and West Gippsland CMA is currently being developed for Anderson Inlet and will include the settlements of Inverloch and Venus Bay.

The GCB hopes that the forum will be a catalyst for further detailed discussion on climate change planning and adaptation along the Victorian coast, bays and inlets. More information is available on the GCB's website at www.gcb.vic.gov.au.

Wonthaggi Desalination EES

The Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the Desalination plant near Wonthaggi was released on 20 August and is on exhibition until 30 September.

The EES assesses the social, economic and environmental impacts of the desalination project. More than 80 specialist studies form the basis of the EES. A summary report of the EES is also available.

The desalination plant will be capable of providing around a third of Melbourne's annual water supply from a source that is independent of rainfall.

In providing comments on the EES, the CCB will advocate for best practice procedures, appropriate monitoring, mitigation and reporting measures, minimising the impact of infrastructure development on the coast and ensuring adequate climate change adaptations.

Victorians have until 30 September to comment on the EES and the EPA Works Approval Application (WAA).

Documents for both the EES and WAA can be downloaded from www.ourwater.vic.gov.au.

For further details on the EES and submission process visit www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning.

Saltmarsh Update

The first progress report on the 'Conserving Victoria's Coastal Saltmarshes' project has been submitted by Professor Paul Boon from Victoria University.

A preliminary literature review of coastal saltmarshes, their ecology and management has been done and more research is underway on legislative frameworks under which coastal saltmarshes are currently managed and the likely impacts of climate change.

Targeted social-marketing research will be conducted in order to determine the attitude of the general public to coastal saltmarshes.

Saltmarsh scientific experts are being consulted and other states have been contacted regarding lessons learnt about saltmarsh mapping.

AROUND THE COAST (CONT'D . . .)

By re-analysing all available vegetation data in various DSE databases, the researchers have produced a saltmarsh typology for use in field work that will be used to ground-truth the interpretation of available large-scale aerial photographs. The typology has been tested in a range of saltmarshes in Western Port and the Bellarine Peninsula.

The final report should be completed around May 2009.

St Kilda Harbour Redevelopment

The St Kilda Harbour has been a popular Melbourne recreational and tourist destination for decades and its pier is one of city's icons. However, the harbour is in poor condition and the pier dilapidated.

Parks Victoria (the Committee of Management for the harbour area), in conjunction with DSE and the City of Port Phillip, has developed a concept plan for the redevelopment of the harbour precinct.

The St Kilda Harbour Concept Plan outlines how infrastructure will be rebuilt and enhanced, retaining and improving its many benefits and visitor experiences.

The four major elements proposed are:

- St Kilda Pier and Sea Pool
- Marina
- Inner Harbour Precinct
- Boat Yard

The St Kilda Harbour Concept Plan has been developed to protect marine environmental values associated with the harbour, and introduces exciting elements to the precinct including a sea pool integrated into the new pier, a penguin viewing boardwalk and improved access along the foreshore. The plan creates an environmentally sustainable safe harbour for recreational boating and enhances non-boating related use of the harbour, including access to the water for people with limited mobility.

Comments on the Concept Plan are welcome until 26 September 2008.

See: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/3stkilda.cfm
Email comments to stkildaharbour@parks.vic.gov.au

Parks Victoria and St Kilda Football Club Partnership

The St Kilda Football Club has thrown its support behind promoting Port Phillip as a great asset for all Victorians.

In August, Environment and Climate Change Minister Gavin Jennings joined St Kilda players to announce the partnership between the AFL club and the State Government, through Parks Victoria.

"The focus of the partnership will be to encourage the community to protect the Bay as well as take part in environmental projects such as tree planting and clean up events," said Minister Jennings.

"I'd like to congratulate the St Kilda Football Club for their interest in the environment and community engagement and for joining with Parks Victoria to help encourage people to care for the bay."

AROUND THE COAST (CONT'D . . .)

This partnership is an important step towards involving the wider community to help value and use our bays and look after this important marine environment.

The first activity of the partnership was a 'Keep the Bay Clean' initiative on 19 August. More than 500 local school children, with the support of Saint's players, worked to clean up four beach sites between St Kilda and Frankston and helped to spread the environmental message.



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