



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

This week the Victorian Government launched a new Victorian Coastal strategy (VCS). The VCS provides a policy framework and sets priorities for action by coastal managers, users of the coast and government recognising its natural values and the many and varied activities the coastal environment supports.

The VCS also responds to key issues facing our coast: climate change, rapid population growth in coastal areas and the health of our marine environment.

The VCS has a strong land use planning focus and provides guidance to State and local government who prepare local policies and planning schemes along the coast. The VCS is also incorporated into state-wide planning provisions.

The VCS builds on previous strategies and reports such as the Coastal Spaces Report (2006) - guiding settlement growth while protecting non-urban landscapes between settlements; the Coastal Siting and Design Guidelines - which inform the siting, scale and design of development along the coast.

Notably the VCS responds to the real threat of climate change and associated sea level rise identifying a projected 0.8 metres rise by 2100. This, combined with more frequent and extreme weather events will lead to increased flooding, erosion and other impacts on the coast and presents a key challenge.

The VCS has been significantly improved in its policy response and guidance for the protection and management of the marine environment. The hierarchy of principles to guide sustainable use of the coast remains.

I recommend the strategy to you. It is available on the Victorian Coastal Council website at www.vcc.vic.gov.au.

It has been a busy lead up to Christmas this year, and I wish you a happy and safe festive season and hope you are enjoying some time on the coast.

Liz Johnstone
Chair

CURRENT PROJECTS

Community Coastcare Projects

The Australian Government announced successful projects that will be funded under the Caring for our Country Community Coastcare Grants on 3 December. In Victoria 60 projects will receive small grants. They will share in 1.6 million dollars of funding to help protect and restore coastal environments. A full list of successful projects is available on the Caring for our Country website (www.nrm.gov.au). Congratulations to all recipients.

CURRENT PROJECTS (CONT'D....)

In Victoria, 9 projects were successful for larger grants and together will receive more than \$1.7 million in funding. This includes the CCB sponsored project entitled, 'Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds'.

Western Port is recognised as a wetland of international significance for migratory shorebirds and surveys suggest long-term declines in the abundance of some species. This project will establish the importance of high tide roosts and feeding areas, produce clear and accurate maps of the key habitat areas, conduct a program of carefully-targeted social research, develop collaborative management programs for selected species and threat management at key sites.

Coastal Community Capacity Building

The Community Capacity Building project has been extended until 30 June 2009 to focus on Caring for Our Country objectives.

Extending the project will allow more work in the Western Port Ramsar site which the Federal Government has identified as a 'hotspot' although there were few applications for community grants covering Western Port in 2008.

The project has identified that:

- the number of community groups in Western Port is low in comparison to Port Phillip
- the lower population density and dispersed settlements, together with less information and awareness of biodiversity values makes it difficult to establish new community groups
- the distribution of assets in Western Port does not always coincide with active community groups.

The project will bring together information on existing studies and activities being undertaken, establish a forum to share this information and develop partnerships to address priority targets relevant to Western Port. Gaps in current biodiversity information will also be addressed.

CCB visits Western Port

The CCB went on a two-day field trip to Western Port in October 2008. Board members heard presentations from the Port of Hastings, Department of Primary Industries, EPA, Melbourne Water, Western Port Greenhouse Alliance, committees of management, local government and the Phillip Island Nature Park. There is a lot happening in Western Port and the challenge for the Board is to keep abreast of information and minimise any duplication of effort.

CURRENT PROJECTS (CONT'D . . .)

The Board considers a major scientific study would enable the benchmarking of the current condition of Western Port and a framework to assess major future impacts. Two options are being considered by the CCB for a proposed coastal action plan (CAP):

1. A two-stage CAP with the first stage focusing on a major study of Western Port and stimulating awareness of the issues (particularly climate change) associated with coastal settlements, coastal Crown land and marine ecosystems. The second stage would follow the Western Port study.
2. Because a broadly based study of Western Port would take a number of years to complete a second option is to commence a CAP now that is focused on current issues including the integrated management of coastal reserves and settlement planning.

We are seeking more information and exploring further the need for a significant study.

Boating CAP

The CCB is undertaking a limited audit of actions in the CAP to determine progress to date, develop priority actions over the next two years and identify the resources needed. This information will be used as the basis for the Boating CAP Implementation Committee's annual report to the CCB and will be available early in 2009.

CCB submission on the Desalination Project EES

The CCB made a submission to the Victorian Government in relation to the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) for the proposed desalination plant at Wonthaggi which lies in the Central Region. We highlighted four issues regarding environmental matters associated with the desalination plant:

1. Maintaining coastal environmental integrity
2. Climate Change
3. Maintaining coastal character
4. Marine environment - discharge.

The EES Report and EPA Works Approval Application were on public exhibition from 20 August to 30 September 2008.

AROUND THE COAST

The 2009 coastal awards

The closing date to nominate your coastal project or outstanding local volunteer for the 2009 Victorian Coastal Awards for Excellence is 12th December.

Please encourage nominations by telling all your coastal and marine networks and friends.

There are 10 categories that aim to capture the breadth of coastal and marine related initiatives occurring on the coast and within coastal catchments:

- Outstanding Individual Achievement
- Community Action
- Coastal Management
- Education
- Innovation
- Coastal Planning

AROUND THE COAST (CONT'D . . .)

- Coastal Culture
- Biodiversity Conservation
- Integrated Coastal and Catchment Management
- Coastal Building and Design.

If you have any enquiries, contact Lyndel McLennan, on phone (03) 9637 9776 or email lyndel.mclennan@dse.vic.gov.au. For more information visit www.vcc.vic.gov.au/coastalawards.

Boating on the Bays

In October, the Minister for Roads and Ports, Tim Pallas, announced the successful recipients for grants under the 2008-09 Boating Safety and Facilities Program.

More than \$3.6 million will go to 91 projects for upgrading boating facilities, education and training, search and rescue vessels and equipment, navigation aids and signage, and the installation of marine communications.

Successful major projects include:

- widen the boat ramp and install a floating pontoon at Blind Bight, Western Port
- improve the floating pontoon and undertake a feasibility study into an upgrade of launching facilities at Warneet boat ramp, Western Port
- replace pontoons and undertake minor dredging at Queenscliff boat ramp, Bellarine Peninsula
- upgrade the gravel ramp to a formal concrete ramp at Swan Bay, Queenscliff
- replace ageing wooden jetty with a new floating jetty adjacent to boat ramp at Patterson River
- upgrade floating pontoon and boat ramp 3 at Werribee South boat ramp.

For a full list of successful projects visit Marine Safety Victoria's website www.marinesafety.vic.gov.au

Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC) Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation is underway.

VEAC is an independent statutory authority that conducts investigations and provides advice to the Victorian Government on the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of Crown land and public authority land.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change recently requested VEAC to undertake an investigation of Crown land and public authority land in 29 municipalities in metropolitan Melbourne. Notice of this investigation, including a request for submissions from interested individuals and organisations, was published in the Herald Sun, The Age and on VEAC's website on 3 December and in suburban newspapers the following week. The submission period will close on 16 February, 2009.

The Minister's request and the full terms of reference, a map of the investigation area and advice on making submissions are available from www.veac.vic.gov.au.

The Council will prepare a discussion paper during 2009 and a final report by May 2010. The release of the discussion paper will be followed by a second formal submission period.

AROUND THE COAST (CONT'D . . .)**Managing Country Together**

For two days in November, members of Indigenous communities and coastal managers gathered at Point Nepean Quarantine Station to discuss various issues of mutual interest in caring for the coast.

The *Managing Country Together* forum brought together for the first time government agencies, other coastal land managers and Traditional Owners. It provided the opportunity for frank discussion and hopefully has led to a better understanding of Indigenous concerns in Caring for Country.

The objectives of the forum were to:

- provide an opportunity for Indigenous people to communicate their interest and aspirations for the management of coastal Country to land managers from various agencies
- identify workable outcomes for future directions
- explore and understand links between cultural heritage and natural resources
- provide an opportunity to meet and talk about Indigenous coastal management issues
- assist with indigenous participation and capacity building and
- build relationships between Indigenous people and land managers.

Conserving Victoria's saltmarshes

Professor Paul Boon from Victoria University has submitted the third progress report on the 'Conserving Victoria's Coastal Saltmarshes' project.

More work has been done on the literature review and it will be progressively updated as information comes to hand, particularly on climate change impacts. Earlier work on agency-level understanding of coastal saltmarsh and mangroves is complete.

A consultancy is being engaged to undertake the social marketing research for the communication strategy. Workshops are being held at Torquay and Hastings/Tooradin in December and the report for this component of the project will be completed by the end of January.

The Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) has completed all the aerial photographs needed for the field work to develop the inventory of saltmarshes. This field work started in October and will be completed by the end of summer.

It is envisaged that about 80 saltmarsh sites will be assessed which will be complemented by assessment of another 150 randomly chosen sites by ARI, after the routine field work has been completed.

Channel Deepening Update

The Port of Melbourne Corporation (PoMC) provided an update in October on the Channel Deepening Project by announcing that dredging works at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay have been completed. Dredging at the entrance started in early April.

AROUND THE COAST (CONT'D . . .)

Almost 10 million cubic metres have been dredged which represents approximately 44% of the total project volume. PoMC said the Project is on schedule and within budget.

Dredging is ongoing in other sections of the bay and there are other works involving navigational aids, berths and underwater services.

Ministerial Taskforce for Regional Planning

A Ministerial Taskforce for Regional Planning has been established to examine the key drivers of change and the challenges that will have significant impact on productivity, liveability and sustainability in Victoria's regions over the next decade.

The Taskforce is part of the State Government's intention to develop a new provincial statement when the existing *Moving Forward* statement concludes in 2010. The desire is to integrate planning between portfolios, sectors or levels of government in provincial Victoria.

The Taskforce is chaired by Jacinta Allan, the Minister for Regional and Rural Development.

For further information about consultation meetings in regional Victoria see www.dvc.vic.gov.au press releases.

Determining priorities for Victoria's Western Coast

The Western Coastal Board (WCB) has commissioned a project to develop a methodology for collaboratively setting priorities for the sustainable management of the western coasts of Victoria.

The WCB is working with many investors and partners to develop the Coastal Priorities project: DSE, Parks Victoria, EPA, Catchment Management Authorities, local government and water authorities.

The project represents an important and timely opportunity for improving collaboration and involves agreement on priorities across the region through improved collaboration and more efficient use of scarce resources.

Western Boating Coastal Action Plan

The Western Coastal Board has started to develop a Boating Coastal Action Plan (CAP) for Western Victoria. The CAP will put in place a strategic framework to guide the provision of improved and more sustainable boating facilities.

The Western Victoria Boating CAP will cover the area from Breamlea to the South Australian border. This area takes in six municipalities: Surf Coast Shire, Colac Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, Moyne Shire, City of Warrnambool and Glenelg Shire.

The project is broken up into key stages and includes consultation with stakeholders. The project is being guided by a small Steering Committee supported by a larger Reference Group that includes all key stakeholders.

AROUND THE COAST (CONT'D . . .)

The full copy of the Western Victoria Boating Coastal Action Plan: Existing Conditions and Issues Report can be found on the Western Coastal Board website at www.wcb.vic.gov.au. There is also a summary discussion paper for consultation available on the website.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Given the importance of climate change to the coast this is a new segment in our newsletter.

Future Coasts Update

The Future Coasts program is helping the Victorian Government understand the risks climate change may present to the State's coastline. The program is assessing the physical vulnerability of the coast to climate change and identifying approaches to help communities and industry respond and adapt.

The program involves three projects. The Science and Modelling project involves collecting the quantitative information required to assess coastal risks from climate change. Specifically, this involves the capture of high resolution digital elevation modelling (DEM) of the topography and bathymetry (sea depth) of the Victorian coastline using an airborne laser system (LiDAR).

The topographic mapping and capture of the land based data has been captured and processing of the data will be completed in early 2009. This data is to a scale and level of detail never previously achieved for the Victorian coastline. The bathymetry data collection commenced at the end of November, and will continue over summer. Extensive data processing requirements mean that this data will not be available until late 2009.

The Future Coasts program also includes a policy and planning project, which will work with coastal stakeholders to develop guidance on the interpretation and application of information produced in the Science and Modelling project. The third element is the development of a coastal asset database to identify key coastal assets within the Victorian coastal zone.

The Federal Government's Department of Climate Change is preparing a national strategic assessment of the vulnerability of Australia's coast to climate change. It will include assessing marine, coastal and estuarine habitats at risk. Findings from this assessment will help to inform the Future Coasts program.

If you would like more information on the Future Coasts Program, visit the website at: www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/futurecoasts.

Research on the effects of climate change

In October, the Federal Government announced \$10 million worth of funding over four years to establish research networks to investigate the effects of climate change on areas such as water resources, human health, emergency services, infrastructure and biodiversity.

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, said the seven new 'adaptation research networks' will foster critical research into the effects of climate change and what action is needed to reduce the risks.

CLIMATE CHANGE (CONT'D ...)

The networks will be part of the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, hosted by Griffith University, which is leading Australia's climate change adaptation research effort.

CSIRO report on wave climate

A new CSIRO report provides important information for coastal zone managers to help them plan for the potential impacts of climate change.

The *Variability and Trends in the Australian Wave Climate and Consequent Coastal Vulnerability* report details research that investigated climatic conditions which could lead to changes in waves on Australia's coast, including extreme waves of around three metres or more. The research will improve understanding of how climate change might affect off-shore waves and the potential impact on our coastal zones.

The available modelled data suggests that over the past 45 years there has been an increase in the frequency of weather events which led to large waves being generated off Australia's southern coast.

The report also outlined, for the first time, a method for identifying which parts of our coast are likely to be more susceptible to the impacts of large and powerful waves.

The \$800,000 research project was jointly funded by the Department of Climate Change and CSIRO.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAV Forum

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) is holding a forum in response to councils' concerns and need for information regarding their decision making in the context of climate change, particularly for land use and development decisions.

The forum will enable officers and Councillors to hear current information so that they can begin to scope the priority tasks required over the next few years to address knowledge and policy gaps.

The forum will be held on 12th December at the Melbourne Town Hall, from 10.30am-3.30pm.

Visit the MAV website for a registration form www.mav.asn.au

Summer by the Sea

It's back! Coast Action/Coastcare's annual coastal activity program, *Summer by the Sea*, is coming to a coastal town near you over January. This year's theme is 'Life on the Edge'. Our coastal plants and animals are amazing survivors - life on the edge can be difficult for our precious biodiversity. *Summer by the Sea* is the opportunity to learn more about our coast, and the challenges we all face in keeping it beautiful. *Summer by the Sea* appeals to all ages. Activities are at locations from Nelson in the west right around to Malacoota in the east, including lots of activities in the metropolitan area.

UPCOMING EVENTS (CONT'D...)

Visit www.dse.vic.gov.au/coasts for a list of activities and locations or call the *Summer by The Sea Hotline* on 136 186 during office hours. This is also the central phone number for activities that require bookings.

About the Bays is published on a bi-monthly basis. To receive a copy of the newsletter contact:

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