



Media Release

Thursday, 18 December, 2008

SLIGHT DECLINE IN QUALITY OF NORTHERN STREAMS AND RIVERS

The third annual report by Northern Waterway Assessment (NWA) has found a slight overall decline in the health of rivers and streams in northern Tasmania for 2007, compared to 2006.

Thirty nine sites retained the same ranking as the 2006 report, five sites improved their rating and seven declined.

NWA assessed 43 sites for river health across northern Tasmania in 2007, while the Department of Primary Industries and Water assessed 23 sites.

Of these, 35 received an A rating (more biologically diverse than or similar to reference), 22 sites received a B rating (significantly impaired), eight sites received a C rating (severely impaired) and one site received a D rating (extremely impaired).

The Northern Waterways Program Manager, Debbie Searle, said the Pipers River at Underwood is a good example of a waterway in good health.

"This site has good, mainly native riparian vegetation with no stock access and a stream bed made up of cobble sized rocks."

It received an A rating.

The Kings Meadows Rivulet at Punchbowl Reserve again received a D rating, which is extremely impaired.

"Water quality results show the urbanised rivulet had very high electrical conductivity levels, possibly due to naturally saline ground water." Ms Searle said.

Another waterway in average to poor health is the Lobster Rivulet at Mole Creek Road which has an overall health rating of B, which is significantly impaired.

"The site has very little streamside vegetation and the banks show clear signs of erosion. The rocky substrate is often coated with a layer of silt, which reduces the available habitat for native species." Ms Searle said.

The Chief Executive Officer of NRM North, James McKee, said the results of this report provide a guide to areas in good condition which need to be preserved and maintained as well as areas which could be improved by on-ground works and changes to management practices.

"These include the fencing of riparian zones, the provision of off-stream watering for stock, soil conservation measures and improved storm water and waste water management." Mr McKee said.

"The information collected by NWA provides a core component of the monitoring and evaluation framework for the region and contributes towards an understanding of the condition of the region's water resources.

"It also helps determine and measure success towards natural resource management targets." Mr McKee said.

NWA also supports community participation in the monitoring and management of their waterways, specifically through its support of Northern Waterwatch Volunteers.

NWA is a joint project between NRM North and the Launceston Environment Centre, funded by the Australian Government.

Ends

For more information contact:

Debbie Searle, The Northern Waterways Program Manager, 0429 318 554

James McKee, NRM North Chief Executive Officer, 6333 7777 or 0412 704 229

Melissa Lewarn, Manager – Community Engagement, NRM North, 6333 7776 or 0427 354 058

