

# NORTHERN exposure

*Winter 2011*



## *inside:*

From the CEO 2

Seafood Safety 3

Community  
Recognition 4

Diving for Debris 5

News in Brief 6

Out & About 7

About Us  
and Contacts 8

p: 03 6333 7777  
f: 03 6334 2822

Level 2, McKenzie Building  
63-65 Cameron Street  
Launceston TAS 7250

PO Box 1224  
Launceston TAS 7250

[admin@nrmnorth.org.au](mailto:admin@nrmnorth.org.au)  
[www.nrmnorth.org.au](http://www.nrmnorth.org.au)

LAUNCESTON SEAPORT – Photo: Matthew Butt

# From the CEO

Ever wrinkled your nose at the sight of rubbish along the side of the road? Ever thought about the amount of litter beneath the waves of the Tamar estuary? A group of Australian Maritime College students has been doing the equivalent of a roadside litter survey, just underwater. You can read the story in this edition of Northern Exposure and you might just be surprised at how much and what they found.



Natural resource management continues to be vital to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the region. Our natural resources form the basis for many of the things we value and NRM North continues to work hard, in partnership with many of you, to ensure that we are managing these natural resources in a balanced and progressive way.

Nowhere is this demonstrated better than around issues relating to water. We use it for work, play and it is fundamental to all our ecosystems. Whether it is swimming or drinking, producing timber or plastic and maintaining healthy river systems, we all need and want clean healthy water and waterways.

One project which has received a bit of attention recently has been the Tamar Estuary and Esk River (TEER) Program's Seafood Safety project. A lot of water quality issues we have to address in our generation are the result of past practices, some of which at the time were considered best practice!

While the Tamar estuary is fundamentally healthy, it is by no means pristine and we are trying to answer a question that has been around for a long time now - what is safe and not safe to eat from the estuary. Not only will this provide some public health advice to recreational fishers, it will help us better understand the state of the Tamar.

One of the programs NRM North and many of you have long supported has been community water monitoring. Unfortunately this took a severe "trim" a few years back when funding guidelines changed but we have managed to keep the basics running.

We recently gained a grant to put all our past results into a database to be used by the Bureau of Meteorology. It is wonderful to see all the hard work of the team and the many volunteers over several years now being used in so many different ways. Many small contributions all add up to significant things.

On a different front, water on our coastlines and in our oceans remains critical and we are pleased to be able to provide a range of coastal community grants to those who do so much to look after our magnificent coasts.

Add to that a whole range of groups we are able to support, in conjunction with our sub-regions, to do everything from weed removal to tree planting and monitoring.

It paints a picture of a vibrant volunteer community in the region which is working hard to look after the natural resources of our Island home. We are proud to be able to support them.



**James McKee**  
**CEO NRM NORTH**



## Seafood Safety

*“It is important to have recent science supporting any health recommendations associated with Tamar seafood consumption...”*

**NRM North, through the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program, has embarked on a new seafood safety study for the Tamar estuary.**

The study looks specifically at the consumption of intertidal wild oysters and recreationally targeted finfish in the estuary.

It will quantify the levels of metal contaminants accumulated in the oysters and finfish and compare these with the Food Standards Australia New Zealand guidelines.

TEER Project Officer, Monique Thompson, said the collection of oysters and finfish would run in collaboration with the University of Tasmania.

“The target shellfish species is the pacific oyster which is abundant along the intertidal zone of the Tamar estuary and is recreationally harvested.” Ms Thompson said.

“The target fish species are flathead, flounder, cod and bream which are recreationally targeted and possess behaviour qualities that increase the susceptibility to metal accumulation.”

Rio Tinto and Van Diemen Aquaculture will assist with oyster collection.

Five of each fish species will be collected from three zones in the Tamar estuary, which equates to a minimum of 60 fish of legal size.

Pacific oysters will be collected from eleven sites which have been chosen according to public access areas and industrial bays.

“Finfish length, weight and age data will be collected, along with a 20g flesh sample. Oysters will be shucked, weighed and frozen in the Australian Maritime College laboratory

before being sent to Analytical Services Tasmania for analysis.” Ms Thompson said.

NRM North’s Chief Executive Officer, James McKee, said it had been several years since a similar study was carried out in the Tamar estuary.

“The last study of this kind was conducted in 2002 on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services.

“It is important to have recent science supporting any health recommendations associated with Tamar seafood consumption.

“This study will also assist in collecting data for the investigation into the black spot phenomenon affecting flathead which is of interest to the commercial and recreational fishing sector.” Mr McKee said.

Sampling will run from July until September and the data will then be analysed.

A final report is expected by March next year and a public awareness campaign, including signage, brochures and other communication initiatives, will run in April/May.

The TEER Program is a partnership between NRM North, the Tasmanian Government, Launceston City Council, Meander Valley Council, Northern Midlands Council, West Tamar Council, George Town Council, Ben Lomond Water and Hydro Tasmania.

For more information contact:

**Monique Thompson**  
**NRM North**

p: 03 6333 7777

# Community Recognition



There's a lot happening in our backyard!

**Tasmania's three natural resource management organisations took the opportunity of World Environment Day on June 5th, to recognise the community's efforts in caring for our valuable natural resources.**

NRM North, Cradle Coast NRM and NRM South thanked all of the volunteers, community and school groups, local industries and government bodies who work with us to protect and rehabilitate our special places.

NRM North's Community Engagement & Communications Manager, Melissa Lewarn, said Tasmania's NRM organisations remained committed to supporting these groups.

"The community plays a crucial role in managing our natural resources and we can assist them, whether that is through grants, technical advice, free training, information services and connecting them with partners."

The organisations also assist with sustainable land management, tree plantings, weed control works, coastal conservation and threatened plant and animal monitoring throughout the state.

*"Over the past year, the three regions have supported more than 2,700 volunteers, worked with 110 Landcare and Coastcare groups and other community groups, and assisted 775 landholders."*

"We have also awarded more than \$1.2 million in community and landholder grants."

NRM North, Cradle Coast NRM and NRM South are part of a network of 56 regional bodies across Australia that care for our environment.

"There's a lot happening in our backyard and we encourage anyone who is interested in getting involved in natural resource management to contact their nearest NRM organisation." Mrs Lewarn said.

"Natural resource management is everybody's business and we are fortunate to have a rich and diverse environment and an active and enthusiastic community working to protect it."

World Environment Day celebrations also included a special treat for the winners of the NRM North and Tasmania Zoo Devil Naming Competition.

Students from grade 5/6 Sweetman, Bridport Primary School, were judged the winners with a beautiful hand-drawn poster of the two NRM North sponsored devils.

The students named the female devil 'Euca' and the male 'Wattle'.

The class, and the runners up from Norwood Primary, were rewarded with a free visit to Tasmania Zoo to meet the two devils and take part in tree planting activities to mark World Environment Day.

NRM North's Education Officer, Michael Black, said the competition was a huge success with around 150 entries received.

"We had 15 classes at eight primary schools submit posters and short stories and it was quite hard to decide on a winner as all of the entries were of high standard.

"This competition was important because not only did students get to be creative in their submissions, they also learnt a lot about Tasmanian devils and the challenges they face with the Devil Facial Tumour Disease."

The two newly-named devils are living in a purpose-built breeding enclosure which was funded by NRM North.

For more information contact:

**Melissa Lewarn**

**NRM North**

p: 03 6333 7777

# Diving for Debris

The sight of litter may wrinkle the nose when seen scattered about the streets, tangled in fences and gardens or spotted sailing from a motorist's window. At least it should.

The impacts of litter may simply be a nuisance for residents and businesses or become more troublesome, affecting local wildlife and human health.



However, once our rubbish slips beneath the water, disappearing from view by sinking or floating elsewhere down-stream, its presence and effects may quickly be forgotten.

This issue has been one that has caught the interest of several students studying Marine Conservation at the Australian Maritime College.

Currently, a Debris Dive Project is being developed to employ SCUBA-assisted survey and collection of debris at a number of locations in the upper Tamar estuary.

The dives aim not only to remove rubbish from the sites but also to record and analyse the data to look for patterns that might reveal dominant debris types at particular locations and how this may change over time.

A preliminary survey and collection was conducted in May in the waters surrounding Kelso Jetty on the west bank of the upper Tamar, a site popular for recreational fishing and diving.

*The dive resulted in the collection of 60 items weighing in at 7.7 kilograms, featuring all six target rubbish types including plastic, rubber, metal, glass, paper and cloth/fabric.*

The dominant rubbish types were glass bottles and fishing gear, however, the most novel find was a toilet seat; all were judged to be within throwing distance from the jetty itself.

The scope for the project on a larger scale, surveying a number of sites on the upper Tamar conducted over the next 12 to 18 months, has the potential to provide useful information for local resident groups and other bodies concerned with improving the amenity of the Tamar estuary.

A primary goal of the Debris Dive Project is the development of a simplified program that qualified recreational divers can follow to participate and contribute valuable information to guide management.

Potential outputs might include the introduction of temporary signage at the point-of-use at targeted locations to raise awareness and remind the careless of the impact of their actions.

Posters may incorporate on-site photos of debris collected at the site and details on the most common debris types for the location.

While the incidence of our discarded refuse may be intermittently apparent along the high-tide mark of the Tamar estuary, it should be remembered that this is only that which floats; what does not continues to accumulate beneath the surface.

It is this message that the Debris Dive Project in the Tamar aims to bring forward to those who either directly or indirectly use these local waterways for their recreation and enjoyment.

Further, it is hoped that such work can help to remind the community of the connection they share with the living environment within which they grow.

It is planned that the project be up and running in time for Spring. Details about the project and how those interested might be able to be involved will be released in the coming months.

## **Acknowledgements:**

*The Debris Dive Project is being developed by Ian Jermyn, Masayuki Tatsumi and Ryan Weeks; undergraduate students studying Applied Science (Marine Environment) at the National Centre for Marine Conservation and Sustainability, Australian Maritime College.*

*The project is supported with funding and equipment from GoDive Launceston and NRM North.*

For more information contact:

**Ian Jermyn**  
**Australian Maritime College**

p: 03 6324 3893

# News in brief...

## Water Quality Data

**The Bureau of Meteorology has become the custodian of all water quality data in Australia.**

NRM North has received a grant to retrieve historical water quality data, some of it dating back to 1995.

Currently this information is stored in a mixture of databases and Excel files and is not always easily accessible.

The data is being loaded into a database which the bureau can access directly.

The data has been collected over the years by Waterwatch volunteers and project officers.

This information will be available for benchmarking the state of rivers, for studying trends in waterway health and for natural resource management and planning.



## Community Grants

**NRM North is targeting schools in its latest round of small grants.**

The School Environmental Grants Program offers funding from between one hundred dollars and five thousand dollars to primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities in the NRM North region.

NRM North is investing 30 thousand dollars in total through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program.

This is the second round of small grants to be offered to schools in the NRM North region.

These grants aim to teach younger Tasmanians the importance of managing our natural resources in a sustainable way.

An information kit is available on the NRM North website.

Applications close August 15th.

NRM North also ran a Coastal Community Grants Program in May this year.

The successful applicants were:

- Bridport Walking Track: Revegetation and Planting Project
- Dorset NRM Community Revegetation Project
- St Helens Primary School Bush Tucker Garden
- Wildlife monitoring project Bridport
- South Sister field trip
- Foreshore weed management Four Mile Creek
- Boxthorn Control Roydon Island
- Break O'Day Coastal Educational Interpretation Signage
- Removal of African Boxthorn - Tasmanian Conservation Trust
- Gambusia trapping program
- Revision of boxthorn control strategy - Furneaux Islands 2005

## Sustainability Fellowships

**NRM North and UTAS Sustainability have announced the successful applicants for the 2011 Fellowships focusing on eco-efficiency.**

The competitive Fellowships have been funded by NRM North with direct support and project management provided by the UTAS Sustainability team.

The successful applicants are Kim Beasy, an Honours Student from the School of Geography and Environmental Studies, and Kim Anderson, a 3rd year

Bachelor of Applied Science student at the Australian Maritime College.

The UTAS Environmental Management Plan (see [www.env.utas.edu.au](http://www.env.utas.edu.au)) seeks to include the whole UTAS community in efforts to improve our environmental sustainability performance.

These 'learning by doing' Fellowships are one example and will focus on the AMC Swanson Building to explore how to increase the eco-efficiency of our built environment and our interactions with it.



Kim Anderson and Kim Beasy (centre) with Corey Peterson, UTAS, and James McKee

## Out & About

### Tamar Sub-Region



## Exeter Planting Day

Students, teachers and parents have planted around 150 grasses, shrubs and trees to rehabilitate a boggy patch of land at the Exeter Primary School.

The school was successful in applying for funding through NRM North's School Environmental Grants

Program for a project to provide a combination of sensory, educational and environmental learning opportunities.

The planting day was a great success with a number of people volunteering their time.

## Legana Landcare

A group of Legana residents attended a working bee in May to remove weeds from a popular public place in Jetty Road.

NRM North's Weeds Coordinator, Greg Stewart, held a 'walk

and talk' detailing the flora and fauna found at the site.

The event was part of an effort to revive the Legana Landcare Group.

Anyone interested in caring for the environment in the Legana area should contact NRM North.



## Out & About

### Furneaux Sub-Region



## Boxthorn Removal

The NRM Facilitators from the northern sub-regions braved inclement weather on Roydon Island off the Flinders Island coast in May to help volunteers remove African Boxthorn weeds.

The Friends of Bass Strait Islands have been travelling to Roydon Island for several years in an effort to eradicate boxthorn.

While the views may be spectacular, the work isn't easy. Volunteers must wrestle with thorns to cut the bushes back before painting the stem with weed killer.

Boxthorn was originally planted in the Furneaux Islands as a hardy windbreak but has since spread throughout the islands, largely by birds such as starlings who feed on the seeds.

The weed destroys critical habitat for burrowing seabirds through shading of the ground and the collapse of existing burrows, as well as posing a hazard to both adult and juvenile birds of being impaled on its thorns.





Natural Resource Management  
in Northern Tasmania

**NRM North** is responsible for planning, delivery and implementation of integrated natural resource management (NRM) in northern Tasmania. We take a holistic approach to managing the environment through identifying regional priorities and develop integrated NRM plans that are based on sound scientific data. NRM North was established in 2003 through a community-driven process in response to the Tasmanian Government's Natural Resource Management Framework and its enabling legislation, the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Act, 2002.

**Our role is to:**

- Develop programs that recognise the need to balance the environmental, economical and social needs of the community.
- Provide leadership to ensure that sound management of the region's natural resources continues.
- Promote partnerships with all stakeholders to determine appropriate investment and cost sharing strategies.

p: 03 6333 7777  
f: 03 6334 2822

Level 2, McKenzie Building  
63-65 Cameron Street  
Launceston TAS 7250

PO Box 1224  
Launceston TAS 7250

[admin@nrmnorth.org.au](mailto:admin@nrmnorth.org.au)  
[www.nrmnorth.org.au](http://www.nrmnorth.org.au)

Supported by the Australian and State Governments.



Australian Government



Tasmania  
Explore the possibilities

## NORTHERN REGION CONTACTS

**James McKee**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
p: 03 6333 7771

**Melissa Lewarn**

MANAGER  
– COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
& COMMUNICATIONS  
p: 03 6333 7776

**Scott Schilg**

MANAGER  
– PLANNING &  
IMPLEMENTATION  
p: 03 6333 7772

**Fiona George**

MANAGER  
– CORPORATE SERVICES  
p: 03 6333 7782

**Sarah Presnell**

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT  
p: 03 6333 7771

**Denise Colvin**

ADMINISTRATION COORDINATOR  
p: 03 6333 7777  
[admin@nrmnorth.org.au](mailto:admin@nrmnorth.org.au)

**Amanda Locatelli**

PROGRAM MANAGER  
– TAMAR ESTUARY  
& ESK RIVERS  
p: 03 6333 7783

**Emma Williams**

PROGRAM COORDINATOR  
– HEALTHY COASTS & SEAS  
p: 03 6333 7779

**Adrian James**

REGIONAL LANDCARE  
FACILITATOR  
p: 03 6333 7784

**Andrew Baldwin**

KNOWLEDGE COORDINATOR  
p: 03 6333 7781

**Jo Voller**

COORDINATOR  
– PROPERTY MANAGEMENT  
PLANNING  
p: 03 6333 7774

**Greg Stewart**

WEEDS COORDINATOR  
p: 03 6333 7778

**Michael Attard**

SCIENTIFIC &  
TECHNICAL OFFICER  
– TAMAR ESTUARY  
& ESK RIVERS  
p: 03 6333 7773

**Monique Thompson**

TEER PROJECT OFFICER  
p: 03 6333 7785

**(vacant)**

TEER STORMWATER OFFICER  
p: 03 6333 7777

**Michael Black**

EDUCATION OFFICER  
p: 03 6333 7775

**Debbie Searle  
Project Officer**

– MONITORING &  
IMPROVEMENT  
p: 03 6333 7787

**Toni Furlonge  
Project Officer**

– MONITORING &  
IMPROVEMENT  
p: 03 6333 7787

## REGIONAL CONTACTS

**Alison Hugo**

NRM FACILITATOR  
– BREAK O'DAY  
p: 03 6376 7900

**Jay Wilson**

NRM FACILITATOR  
– DORSET  
p: 03 6352 6537

**Mick Sherriff**

NRM FACILITATOR  
– FURNEAUX  
p: 03 6359 5025

**Stuart Brownlea**

NRM FACILITATOR  
– MEANDER VALLEY  
p: 03 6393 5321

**Michael Poole**

NRM FACILITATOR  
– TAMAR  
p: 03 6323 3310

**Monique Case**

NRM FACILITATOR  
– NORTHERN MIDLANDS  
p: 03 6397 7337

*Working with you to care for the natural resources of our island home.*