

NORTHERN exposure

Summer 2012 - 13



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CHAIN OF LAGOONS - Photo: Emma Willfams

From the CEO

Welcome to this Summer edition of Northern Exposure. The coastal theme showcases just some of the activities NRM North is undertaking under the Healthy Coasts and Seas program as well as a snapshot of a few other activities happening around the region.

Summer is always a fantastic time to be enjoying all that our region has to offer. With abundant natural resources and so close at hand, we are truly spoilt.

Our coastline in particular is something we often take for granted. While we are all out enjoying our beaches and rugged coastlines, there are many pressures and issues which threaten to minimise our ability to enjoy these areas.

The three main coasts care projects which NRM North has delivered in partnership with the Parks & Wildlife Service and a myriad of other partners, were designed to take a practical but holistic approach to some of these issues.

Access is important but so too is ensuring that access doesn't ruin the very things we enjoy. Development is important, but so too is maintaining the reason those developments are special and unique. Local aspirations are vital, but so too are the values of those who visit and bring much needed economic support.

These projects set out to try and find the balance in these often tricky areas. We hope the results will be a legacy for those communities well into future decades.

We have so much to celebrate about our coasts and the work that so many communities and individuals do to look after them. The Bay of Fires Celebration is a great example of just this.

Back in the Tamar estuary we continue to work to both inform you of what is happening "beneath the waves" and working to ensure practical actions to improve the health of the estuary is at least not declining and hopefully over time improving.

The most recent report card was launched late last year along with a virtual reality app to help you explore and understand the amazing underwater world of the Tamar.



We do live with many legacy issues and one of those is heavy metals, some of which occur naturally and simply build up in the silt deposits (and would previously been deposited on the floodplain of Invermay) and some are legacies of past industrial activity.

One symptom of this is the impact on shellfish in the Tamar. The study we undertook with the Department of Health and Human Services emphasises the need to discourage people from taking and eating shellfish.

2013 is an important year for NRM North. It is our 10th anniversary as an organisation. Stay tuned for some events where you can help us celebrate. It is also the end of Caring for Our Country Mk1.

We are looking forward to the new program which we hope will give us some further flexibility to address more local needs. We are working with the Tasmanian Government to understand how we can best deliver our responsibilities under the NRM Act 2009.

It is an exciting time but most of all we will keep our focus on working with you to look after the natural resources of our island home.



James McKee
CEO NRM NORTH



“..users can explore the Tamar estuary in 3D using augmented and virtual reality.”

Northern Tasmanians will be able to better understand the Tamar River estuary thanks to a new iPhone app developed by NRM North’s Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program and the University of Tasmania’s HITLab.

The 3D app follows the release of the TEER Program’s third report card into the health of the Tamar estuary.

The report showed an improvement in the health of the upper Tamar estuary compared to last year due to higher rainfall.

The higher rainfall also resulted in the slight decline in health of the lower estuary as pollutants are flushed into the Tamar estuary mouth.

NRM North Chief Executive Officer, James McKee, said the new app should help the general public better understand its complexities.

“The app uses information and data from around 115 reports on the estuary through 3D models,” Mr McKee said.

“It’s a representation so it’s not a literal interpretation but accurate in terms of content.

“It has taken information and findings from the myriad of reports that have been done on the estuary over the years and presents them in a way that is meaningful to people. It brings something to them that words on a page just can’t do.”

TEER Program Manager, Amanda Locatelli, said users would see the 2012 report card grades from A to F for the five zones along the 70-kilometre estuary.

“For the first time users can explore the Tamar estuary in 3D using augmented and virtual reality to explore the habitats, flora and fauna, and issues affecting the health of the estuary,” Ms Locatelli said.

“You will find swimming seals, flying eagles, big-bellied seahorses, and fish hiding in the kelp forests and sponge gardens.”

The tracking map for the iPhone app can be downloaded from TEER website: www.nrmnorth.org.au/teer

To use the app, move the iPhone camera over the printed tracking map until the report card appears.

The Tamar app is available through the Apple app store. An android version will be available in March 2013.

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Coastcare Projects

After several years of planning, consultation and on-ground delivery, NRM North has concluded its three major community coastcare projects, funded through the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program.

On-going site management is being handed over to project partners, the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service and community-based groups, and to private landholders with whom NRM North will continue to work.

The projects addressed visitor impacts on key coastal natural values in the Waterhouse Conservation Area, Lower Ringarooma River Ramsar site and adjoining Petal Point campground (Cape Portland Conservation Area) and the Bay of Fires and Humbug Point.

These included popular coastal camping locations, Ramsar wetlands, shorebird habitat and threatened flora populations.

Project activities included site planning for campground management infrastructure, feral cat control, extensive weed removal, interpretation sign design and production, community field days and water quality assessment for coastal Ramsar wetlands.

NRM North's Healthy Coasts and Seas Coordinator, Emma Williams, said the projects had achieved a lot for coastal habitat.

"Some of the on-ground outputs such as willow removal across the Lower Ringarooma River floodplain site and fencing in campgrounds, have had immediate and in some cases, dramatic effect.

"In some campgrounds, the vegetation damage and retreat prior to fencing could be measured in metres per season. The need for on-ground works in these places was quite urgent."

Other outcomes have been less easily measurable, but even more critical for sustainable coastal use and conservation. Partner support, particularly from within the broader community, has been critical to achieving the successes of the projects.

"There is no doubt that each of these projects would not have delivered the outcomes they have without the commitment of our partners.

"This support has occurred in all aspects of the project work, from the dedication of Parks & Wildlife Service staff members, to our community-minded sub-regional facilitators, to the great staff at Dorset Council who coordinated cat micro-chipping events, to the organisers and participants of the wonderful Bay of Fires Celebration," Ms Williams said.

"However, we have special thanks to all volunteers who gave their time and other resources to the project, whether this was hands-on planting, weeding, shorebird monitoring, school engagement or on-site consultation and sharing their insight, or whether this was providing us with local knowledge and constructive comment and input into the process, or simply allowing us access to private land.

"Folks such as the Friends of Bay of Fires are like gold when it comes to looking after our coastal values, but there is no contribution that is not valued immensely."

The Parks & Wildlife Service will continue to manage priority campground improvements, while NRM North will continue its support with follow-up weed control, community support and protection of coastal natural values.

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Seafood Safety

People are being warned against eating wild shellfish from the Tamar River estuary after a new study found the oysters contained high levels of heavy metals.

NRM North's Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program investigated metal concentrations in Pacific oysters and four species of recreationally targeted fish - cod, flathead, flounder and mullet.

Around 300 oysters were analysed for metal contaminants and concentrations of cadmium exceeded limits in the upper estuary while in the whole estuary, zinc and copper were found to be up to four times the levels set by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand.

Metal levels in the fish species tested were found to be within the guidelines and not of concern to public health.

While it is acknowledged that many people enjoy consuming wild shellfish, this can be a high risk activity. The Director of Public Health, Dr Roscoe Taylor, warned against eating wild shellfish in Tasmanian waters.

"Harvesting and eating wild shellfish is never recommended because the quality of the water and shellfish is not always routinely monitored," he said.

"The quality of the water influences the quality of the shellfish. Poor water quality may be due to many factors, such as heavy rainfall or naturally occurring algal blooms."

TEER Project Officer, Monique Thompson, said the study confirmed the long standing recommendation from the Department of Health and Human Services against eating wild shellfish from the estuary.

"Despite this advice, locals and visitors are still harvesting shellfish from the Tamar River estuary," Ms Thompson said.

"We are now embarking on a public awareness campaign which includes erecting signage at boat ramps and other public areas to warn about the dangers of consuming wild oysters."

A brochure has also been produced and will be available at tourist information centres, local councils and most fishing outlets and a full technical report can be viewed on the TEER website <http://nrmnorth.org.au/teer>.

As part of the study, Pacific oysters were collected from eleven sites which were chosen according to public access areas and industrial bays.

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

"Metal levels in the fish species tested were found to be within the guidelines but it is recommended that people limit the consumption to two to three serves per week."

Metals in the estuary come from a variety of sources including run-off from urban areas such as roads, historic mining contamination from the upper catchments and are a legacy of industrial discharges into the Tamar estuary.

Ms Thompson 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."

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

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News in brief...

Planned Burning Project

A pilot project aims to assist landholders in rural areas of Tasmania implement safe planned burning of native vegetation while addressing ecological outcomes.

This project is timely given considerable discussion around fuel management and planned burning on private land after January's tragic bushfires in Tasmania.

Case study burns and training for participating farmers will happen between

April and September this year. The project will also see the production of property-scale fire management plans, a manual for planned burning on private land, and a training package, ready for roll out to the wider community.

The project is being funded by NRM North through the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Program.

It is being delivered by Macquarie Franklin and has the involvement of key fire and land management agencies.

The first stage of the project has involved a survey of

landholder attitudes and experience with planned burning.

The results of the survey are being used to assist the project team develop practical tools to support safe and effective planned burning on private land.

Festivale Special Guest

Australian restaurateur and bestselling author Stephanie Alexander inspired many local foodies during a visit to Launceston in February.

Stephanie was involved in a number of events as part of Festivale including a lunch at Pierre's Restaurant and a morning of children's activities at the Harvest Farmers' Market.

The visit was made possible through support from NRM North, Festivale, Allan's Garden Centre and Harvest Launceston.

NRM North hosted an afternoon tea with Stephanie and teachers from the northern region

who were keen to learn more about the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation.

The foundation has engaged more than 260 schools and around 35,000 children across Australia in learning how to grow, harvest and prepare and share fresh, seasonal food.

For more information on the program visit: www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au



World Wetlands Day



World Wetlands Day was celebrated on February 2nd.

The day aims to raise awareness of the interdependence between water and wetlands and highlight ways to ensure the equitable sharing of water between different stakeholder groups.

This year the universal theme was: Wetlands and Water Management – The Big Picture.

The Tamar Island Wetlands Centre and Reserve ran a number of free activities to celebrate the day.

Mural painting, treasure hunts, live raptor and reptile displays, butterfly masks and identification of macro-invertebrate channel sweeps were popular amongst children and adults alike.

The Tamar Island Wetlands Centre also hosted local wildlife artist and naturalist Robin Wingrave as Artist in-Residence.

Out & About

Break O'Day Sub-Region



Bay of Fires Celebration

The third annual Bay of Fires Celebration was held in early January in and around Binalong Bay.

The event has grown in popularity and this year attracted a good crowd of locals, tourists and shack owners.

The inaugural Bay of Fires Fun Run kicked off the day's activities with support from Health Revival Australia and local volunteers. A group of 41 enthusiastic runners of all ages followed a scenic 4.5 km loop through the Humbug Nature Conservation Reserve and back into Binalong Bay.

The interest walks and talks were well attended and included Garry Richardson's history walk, based around his popular book, 'The Harbour'.

Paul Frater led a botanical walk around Grants Lagoon identifying many of the unique plants to the area.

The Village Green came alive with the sound of many enthusiastic children as they joined Summer Ranger Liz Znidarsic's activity learning about native and introduced animals.

Local bands entertained the crowd in the evening.



Out & About

Tamar Sub-Region



Penguin Colony Rehabilitation

In December, grade 5/6 students from Star of the Sea College in George Town went to Low Head to help NRM North's Education Officer Michael Black in a project to rehabilitate penguin habitat.

The students collected cuttings of climbing native plants which will be planted this year over the weed African Boxthorn which is a problem in the area.

They were joined by Ang Williams from the Invasive

Species Branch at DPIPWE who shared her knowledge of weeds.

The Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service is treating the Boxthorn at the site but will leave the skeletons in place as Little Penguins use it as protection for their nests.

The students gained an insight into land management issues and got practical experience propagating native plants, all while having some fun out in nature.





Natural Resource Management
in Northern Tasmania

NRM North is responsible for the 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 developing 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, economic 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.

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Supported by the Australian and State Governments.



Australian Government



Tasmania
Explore the possibilities

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

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