

NORTHERN exposure

Summer 2010



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KILLIECRANKIE BAY - Photo: Melissa Lewarn



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 evokes all sorts of images and memories but none more so than coastal walks and beach holidays. What we take for granted so often is the amazing natural coastal areas we have, still fairly intact and in some cases almost pristine. Summer for NRM North is a focus on supporting improvement of these coastal areas in conjunction with a whole range of partners. Some of the stories of how this is happening are in this newsletter.

The Caring for our Country program business plan was released early in the year. With it comes the usual array of opportunities along with challenges to fill gaps. Coastal funding remains a feature and we will be focusing more of our efforts on working with local coastal community groups. These groups do a power of work that is beyond what we or governments can fund and they also provide the backbone to allow larger projects to succeed. A number of large coastal projects are wrapping up. These include a project aimed at protecting ecosystem values in areas which have high use such as the Bay of Fires. The challenge in these areas is always to find the balance between enjoyment and protection of the very things that make it a special place.

We have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Tasmania which cements a long standing relationship. Past and current activities have been varied. Some of the more prominent of these have been in the estuarine and coastal areas, everything from investigating the impact of vehicles on the microbes in beaches through to larger monitoring projects in the estuarine and marine environment.

NRM North is also in the middle of a review of the NRM Strategy for the region. There have been a range of engagement activities from community forums in each of the sub regions through to targeted meetings, online surveys



and science reviews. Some of the highlights have been the community forums which provoked both helpful information and robust debate. It also included a number of excellent presentations from understanding the weather through to an experience with live snakes. If you have not had a chance to have your input and would like to, we would love to hear from you. You can do the online survey or contact us directly.

One of the key focuses that I spoke about at the last AGM was support for grass roots community groups that are involved in NRM activities. We have done a range of things including more community group grants, providing ongoing support for volunteer engagement and after Easter we will be running a region wide campaign to recruit volunteers for groups. Stay tuned for more information – we are hoping you and potential volunteers won't miss it.

A long awaited revamp of the NRM North website has been completed. You will find it at www.nrmnorth.org.au and it is packed with information in an easy to find format. We welcome your feedback.

I hope you find this edition of the newsletter interesting and informative. Please contact us if you wish to follow up any of the stories and until next time, I look forward to working with you to care for the natural resources of our island home.



James McKee
CEO NRM North

Petal Point & Waterhouse



Petal Point - Photo: Emma Williams

“Petal Point is treasured by traditional visitors for its simplicity and abounding natural qualities.”

Flanked by pristine beaches and wind-swept coastal heath, Petal Point camp ground’s remote beauty evokes the feel of a smuggler’s secret landing.

This site is located within the Cape Portland Conservation Area on Tasmania’s north-eastern coast and accessed by dirt road between two major private properties – Rushy Lagoon and Cape Portland.

NRM North’s Healthy Coasts and Seas Coordinator, Emma Williams, said Petal Point was a unique place.

“Petal Point is treasured by traditional visitors for its simplicity and abounding natural qualities.

“Like its larger sister reserve to the east, the Waterhouse Conservation Area, Petal Point offers ‘freedom’ camping, based on self-sufficiency and minimal impact.

“This is important because both of these camping destinations are also shared with a wealth of biodiversity icons such as Little Waterhouse Lake and the Lower Ringarooma River Floodplain adjacent to the Cape Portland Conservation Area, which are both internationally-recognised Ramsar wetlands.” Ms Williams said.

Migratory shorebirds visit the extensive sandy beaches and coastal lagoons, rare orchids flower among the diverse heathlands and the broader coastal habitat offers refuge for a number of the state’s threatened species.

For these reasons and more, NRM North has built upon its partnerships with local land managers to ensure the continuity of sustainable use within and around Petal Point and Waterhouse Conservation Area (CA).

Currently, these coastal assets are being negatively impacted upon by a range of issues like improper recreational use (litter,

fires and vegetation damage) vehicle use (erosion, vegetation and dune damage, disturbance to shorebirds), and the spread of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and weeds.

To ensure ongoing management of these issues and to incorporate the vision of traditional visitors and other local stakeholders, NRM North is collaborating with the Parks & Wildlife Service to undertake site planning for both the Petal Point and Waterhouse camping areas.

“Inspiring Place was commissioned to survey stakeholders during the summer holiday period and to develop the draft site plan.

“This plan will be released for public comment within the next few months, to be followed by appropriate on-ground improvements to rehabilitate damage to natural assets and relevant infrastructure.” Ms Williams said.

In addition to this input, NRM North is also in the early stages of providing Property Management Planning to landholders within the Waterhouse catchment, with property visits and reports about to occur.

The outcomes of this process will allow for improved land management within the coastal catchment, thereby increasing protection of the Ramsar sites and their valuable coastal environment.

This work continues NRM North’s involvement with properties such as Rushy Lagoon and Cape Portland, expanding active NRM across a significant proportion of this striking and asset-rich part of Tasmania’s northern region.

For more information contact:

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p: 03 6333 7779

Coastal Wetlands and Lagoons



A new report has found coastal lagoons and wetlands sites in Tasmania's Break O'Day region are generally in good health.

NRM North, in conjunction with the Break O'Day Council, released the results of a scientific health assessment of east coast lagoons and wetlands to coincide with World Wetlands Day in January.

The project assessed 22 lagoons and wetlands between Grants Lagoon at Binalong Bay to the Douglas River north of Bicheno.

NRM North's Healthy Coasts and Seas Coordinator, Emma Williams, said the purpose of the assessment was to carry out a health check on each wetland and identify necessary 'first aid' works and prioritise these tasks.

"Many of the wetlands are on private land and no one has previously checked their aquatic and riparian habitats to see how valuable and healthy they are." Ms Williams said.

"Generally, the wetlands have reasonable water quality and vegetation buffers and they provide an array of habitats with high conservation values, including newly identified sites of threatened species.

"However, the report also shows the environmental and social values of Break O'Day's coastal wetlands are threatened by weeds, altered drainage and poor vegetation cover."

The NRM Break O'Day Facilitator, Polly Buchhorn, said the next stage of the project would be to undertake 'first aid' work on the high priority wetlands in conjunction with landholders.

"This is being undertaken with funding from the Australian Government.

"Coastal lagoons and wetlands are a feature of the Break O'Day landscape and lifestyles and are important ecologically, lying between the land and the sea.

"During the health assessment stage we made a point of talking with landholders as they have the most knowledge and influence.

"We want to focus the funding for the first aid works where there is both ecological value and a will to care for these gems in the Break O'Day municipality." Mr Buchhorn said.

Landholders interested in helping care for lagoons and wetlands are encouraged to read about the sites near them in the health assessment report.

Landholders interested in undertaking large high priority works may be able to access funding assistance through the project and should contact NRM North or the Break O'Day Council for more details.

The report is available from NRM North.

For more information contact:
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Community Grants

NRM North and the Tasmanian Landcare Association are running separate community grants programs.

NRM North's small grants program is targeting coastal community groups.

Grants from between one hundred dollars to a maximum of five thousand dollars are on offer to assist volunteer groups undertaking on-ground works within coastal or estuarine areas.

\$45,000 is available in total and has been made possible through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program.

NRM North's Community Engagement & Communications Manager, Melissa Lewarn, said community care groups played a crucial role in managing our natural resources.

"Northern Tasmania is lucky to have a large number of dedicated volunteers and it is important we support them any way we can.

"This latest round of community grants specifically targets activities to protect and rehabilitate our coastal assets and we expect to receive some strong applications from the community." Mrs Lewarn said.

NRM North Chief Executive Officer, James McKee, said this was the third round of community grants to be offered by the organisation since April last year.

"Our feedback from the community shows that these grants play an important role in helping local care groups achieve their goals.

"NRM North remains committed to assisting grass roots efforts to manage our natural resources and we hope to be able to offer another round of small grants in the near future."

Community groups, schools, youth organisations and other volunteer associations are encouraged to apply for the grants.

Applicants must be incorporated, not-for-profit organisations or volunteer care groups (encompassing landcare, bushcare, rivercare, coastcare and 'friends of' groups) or be supported by an organisation that is incorporated. Individuals are not eligible.

Submissions closed 12th March, and guidelines and application forms are available from the NRM North website www.nrmnorth.org.au or by contacting the NRM North office on 6333 7777.

Groups needing assistance with the application process should also call NRM North administration.

The Tasmanian Landcare Association's 'From the Bush to the Beach' grants program is being rolled out over the next two years.

Grants up to \$20,000 will be available for care groups and individual landcarers.

The first round will open on March 27 and will close on May 11.

TLCA is aiming to provide a supportive application process, with two dedicated TLCA project staff to assist applicants.

Projects will need to target the following Caring for our Country priorities:

(i) Participation in natural resource management – we will support groups to build capacity and increase the number of volunteers involved in natural resource management and expand the network of groups.

(ii) Increasing native habitat – we will be funding projects that contribute to establishing or protecting native habitat including Ramsar wetlands and supporting groups to conduct strategic control of Weeds of National Significance.

(iii) Increasing coastal community engagement – there will be support for coastal projects. For example, project works supported may include fencing, weed control, tracks and signage to protect cultural heritage and shorebird habitat.

(iv) Improving knowledge and skills of land managers – we will work with landholders to improve knowledge and skills in natural resource management.

Keep an eye on the website www.taslandcare.org.au for updates.

For more information contact the Project Manager, Alan Barton on 0428 222 816 or 6234 7117 or email projectmanager@taslandcare.org.au or Peter Stronach on 0488 404 061 or email projectofficer@taslandcare.org.au

This project is delivered by the Tasmanian Landcare Association, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative.



News in brief...

State of the Region Report

The fourth annual report by Northern Waterway Assessment has found a slight overall improvement in the health of rivers and streams in northern Tasmania for 2008, compared to 2007.

The report was launched by the Minister for the Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts, Michelle O'Byrne, in December.

Thirty seven sites retained the same ranking as the 2007 report, eleven sites

improved their rating and five sites declined.

NWA assessed 40 sites for river health across northern Tasmania in 2007, while the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment assessed 23 sites.

Of these, 31 received a rating of A (more biologically diverse than or similar to reference), 24 sites received a B rating (significantly impaired), two sites received a C rating (severely impaired) and two sites received a D rating (extremely impaired).

Some of the sites to received an A rating were the Brid River at Bridport

Road, Brumbys Creek at Saundridge Road, Lobster Rivulet at Mole Creek Road and Rocky Creek at Lilydale.

The Kings Meadows Rivulet at Punchbowl again received a D rating, along with the Rubicon River at Avenue Road.

The full report can be found on the NRM North website: www.nrmnorth.org.au

Landcare Awards

Northern Tasmania was well represented at the 2009 Tasmanian Landcare Awards held at Swansea in November.

Among those recognised for their achievements in protecting our precious natural resources were:

- Westpac Landcare Education Award – Deloraine High School
- People's Choice Award – Tamar NRM
- Landcare Australia Primary Producer Award – Brian Baxter

NRM North was also honoured to be presented with the Australian

Government Landcare NRM Region Award.

All state winners will be in the national awards in Canberra in June.

NRM North congratulates all of the participants.

The full list of winners can be found on the Tasmanian Landcare Association website:

www.taslandcare.org.au

TRCI Launch



A new river health assessment method was launched by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, in November.

The product of a one million dollar investment over three years, the Tasmanian River Condition Index is a joint initiative of Tasmania's three NRM regions.

The tool was developed by a team of experts in waterway condition assessment, in collaboration with the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment and Hydro Tasmania.

Unlike conventional river assessment methods, the new index measures river condition 'holistically' with a river considered healthy only when it has healthy flow patterns, riparian vegetation, aquatic fauna, physical form (bed and bank structure/processes) and good water quality.

Methods currently used in Tasmania and interstate concentrate on water quality, without fully assessing the underlying physical condition of the river.



Out & About



Break O'Day Sub-Region

Coastal Native Garden Workshop

The North East Understorey Network ran a coastal native garden workshop after receiving funds through NRM North's community grants program.

The workshop was run by Anna Povey from Bushways Environmental Consultants.

Discussions centered around coastal native vegetation management and propagation principles including seed collection and treatment, landscaping principles and preparing a herbarium.

The afternoon session included a field trip to Winifred Curtis Reserve and Paul Frater's native garden

for a walk and talk on all things native including plant identification and habitat information.



Bush Tucker Garden

Indigenous students from St Helens District High School have started a program to increase Aboriginal cultural awareness with support from NRM North.

The students are working with local Aboriginal Elder, Gloria Andrews, the Understorey Network and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

They have started growing plants for a bush tucker garden and are learning about the cultural importance of natural resources on the east coast.

The next phase of the project will focus on Aboriginal cultural leadership within the school.



Out & About

Furneaux Sub-Region

NRM Strategy Review

Flinders Island residents turned out in force to a workshop on the review of the regional NRM strategy.

The workshop was one of six held in the northern region throughout January and February.

The first version of the strategy was completed five years ago and the review is needed to ensure the contents reflect the community's current aspirations for the region and our understanding from science.

The review is due to be completed in June.

NRM North is expecting to have a five year report on achievements against the existing strategy in September to coincide with the release of the new strategy.

For more information contact NRM North on 6333 7777 or go to our website:

www.nrmnorth.org.au





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, 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.

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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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