

Gippsland natural connection

Newsletter 3/03

July 2003



Dates Dates Dates

- 12th August 2003 Next GINRF Executive meeting
- 14th August 2003 Release of GINRF Web site
- August 2003 East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy Feedback
- Aug/Sept 2003 Marine National Park Management Plan development
- 31 Oct 2003 Gippsland Regional Information System Workshop (GIS and Spatial Modelling – Guest speaker, Professor Michael Batty)
- November 2003 Gippsland Greenhouse Issues Workshop

From the Hart.... (Prof. Barry Hart, Chair of GINRF)

Congratulations are extended to Professor Barry Hart for the award of a Centenary Medal. The citation: "For service to the conservation of rivers and to water quality, in particular the Gippsland Lakes"

From the executive.....

- MERG - A small, region-wide group will be formed to steer Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting for the Gippsland region. Part of the role of this group is to further develop the GINRF Report Card. This group will also support the Gippsland Lakes Taskforce in achieving its monitoring, evaluation and reporting aims, and the Catchment Management Authorities in meeting their legislative monitoring and evaluation obligations.
- The GINRF executive is submitting a preliminary paper to the Victorian Government as it prepares a Green Paper on the Victorian Water Industry. The Reference Group will have an opportunity to comment on the Green Paper when it is released some time later this year.
- The merge between Gippsland Research Coordination Group and GINRF is under way, with the details of the process still to be worked through.



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Regional Catchment Strategy News

West Gippsland

The new Board of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority commenced their 3 year term on 1 July. At their Induction Day on 16 July, they were provided with a briefing on the RCS, the process to date, and the projected timeframe for completion. They will be considering this at their first Board meeting later in July.

West Gippsland CMA Board members:

- Ms Elizabeth Clay (Chair)
- Ms Rasa Bennett
- Ms Sylvia Davey
- Ms Mary (Jane) Gurling
- Mr William Harrington
- Mr Kenleigh Lamb
- Ms Joan Liley
- Mr Noel Maud
- Mr Michael Sinnot
- Ms Hannelore Wardell
- Mr Kevin Young
- Mr Anthony Edgar (Department of Sustainability and Environment representative)
- Mr Neville Penrose (Department of Primary Industries representative)

We are currently dealing with the feedback from the Exposure Draft RCS and hope to have the Public Exhibition Draft RCS approved for release at the August Board meeting. Copies will be sent to key stakeholders and a 6 week public exhibition period will be held through late September and October. We will publicise the availability of the Public Exhibition Draft RCS for comment in early September and run a series of Information Sessions early in the public exhibition period to help people understand the RCS and it's renewal process. It is anticipated that comments will close in the first week in November to enable us to produce a final draft RCS by Christmas. This final draft RCS will be submitted to the State/Federal Accreditation Coordinating Group for final accreditation, and then to the Independent Advisory Panel who advise the government on the appropriateness of the stakeholder engagement process. The final step in the accreditation process is sign off by the 2 Federal ministers and the 2 State ministers responsible for environment and primary industries. All going well, we will officially launch the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy in May.

Contact: Jo Caminiti Ph: 51757800



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Regional Catchment Strategy News

East Gippsland

The new Board of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority commenced their 3 year term on 1 July.

East Gippsland CMA Board Members:

- Mr Ken Norris (Chair)
- Mr William Bolitho
- Mr Alan Brown
- Ms Andrea Brumley
- Dr Rodger Grayson
- Mr Leo Hamilton
- Mr Duncan Johnston
- Mr Astley Morris
- Ms Emma Sellers
- Ms Alison Tanner
- Ms Gayle Timms
- Mr Tom Speedie (Department of Sustainability and Environment representative)
- Mr Neville Penrose (Department of Primary Industries representative)

The East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy is progressing well. The GINRF Reference Group will have an opportunity to provide stakeholder feedback during August.

Contact: Andrea Lindsay Ph: 51 530462

EAST GIPPSLAND
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY



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Gippsland Lakes from Jemmy's Point

Gippsland Coastal Board Releases Information Notes

The Gippsland Coastal Board has released two series of Information Notes titled "Learn about the Coast" and "Learn about the Lakes."

The Information Notes are a wonderful source of information on coastal and Gippsland Lakes issues for land managers, community groups and the general public.

Seventeen titles are included in the Learn about the Coast series, including Greenhouse Effect, Climate Change and Sea Level Rise, Ramsar Wetlands in Gippsland and Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils.

Nine titles are included in the Learn about the Lakes series, including Environmental Flows and the Gippsland Lakes, Native Fish Stocks and Algal Blooms in the Gippsland Lakes.

The Gippsland Coastal Board appreciates the assistance of the wide range of experts who prepared the Information Notes and thanks ESSO and BHP Billiton, who supported the project with a community grant.

The new Information Notes will be widely distributed in Gippsland to coastal interest groups, secondary schools and to land and water managers.

The new Information Notes and the ten Fact Sheets from the 2001 CSIRO Gippsland Lakes Environmental Study are available to download from the Board's web site at www.gcb.vic.gov.au



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Gippsland Lakes

The Gippsland Lakes Future Directions and Action Plan has now moved into its second year of implementation.

Year one saw 33 projects funded across the 5 major themes of the Plan with the majority of funds directed towards the Nutrient and Sediment theme. Other areas funded included improved environmental flows in the hinterland of the Lakes and further investigations into the impacts of a second entrance to reduce algae blooms. Funding was also directed towards determining the monitoring requirements for the Lakes and improving the planning and evaluation of the Plan. The Gippsland Lakes Taskforce reinforced the vital nature of this work if the results of the projects are to be measured against the target of reducing nutrients to the lakes by 40% over 20 years. Funding available for the 2003-04 year is \$3.4M and projects are currently going through the assessment process.

Following the creation of the Departments for Sustainability and Environment and Primary Industries the Gippsland Lakes Taskforce is now chaired by Prof. Lyndsay Neilson. The Taskforce met in Paynesville in May and discussed a range of matters including the Gippsland Water quality strategies and the impacts of the Gippsland Bushfires on the Gippsland Lakes. The Taskforce subsequently approved funding for several projects to quantify these impacts.

For more information, Contact:
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Marine National Park Management Plans

A system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries were declared across Victoria in November 2002. Parks Victoria is preparing management plans for these areas and a number of other marine protected areas in South Gippsland.

South Gippsland's marine and coastal environments feature some of the most spectacular rocky reefs, underwater landscapes and unique seagrass meadows along the Victorian coast. These areas provide habitat for an abundant and diverse range of marine animal life, including internationally significant migratory wader birds and hundreds of fish and invertebrates species.

Three separate management plans will be produced for the planning area:

1. Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park, Marine Park and Marine Reserve;
2. Corner Inlet Marine National Park; and,
3. Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park.

Management plans are strategic documents developed to provide a basis and direction for the future management of a park. As a public document, management plans establish how the natural and cultural values of a park will be protected. Management plans also describe the services and facilities to be provided for visitors to enjoy and assist in their appreciation and understanding of these areas.

The GINRF Reference Group will have an opportunity to provide input and feedback in the Marine Parks planning process during the remainder of this year.

For further information, please contact Ty Caling, Marine Planner at the **Parks Victoria Information Centre** on **13 1963** or visit www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.





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Feature Partnership

A healthy future for Macleod Morass (Bairnsdale) is assured with East Gippsland Water and Parks Victoria working together to deliver a fresh supply of water to sustain this important wetland into the future.

Officially opened on May 13, 2003 by Minister for Water and Deputy Premier of Victoria, The Hon. John Thwaites, three newly constructed wetland cells and control devices improve the water environment to enhance favourable habitat, and at the same time protect the Ramsar listed wetland from salinity, European Carp and other pest animals or plants.

The project stands as a fine triple bottom line example:

- Macleod Morass degradation has been halted, thus securing a win for the environment
- diverse community use is preserved as well as protection of the interests of adjoining property holders
- East Gippsland Water no longer faces expensive wastewater treatment plant relocation costs and instead provides reclaimed water as an environmental community asset.

High quality treated water can now be released into various sections of Macleod Morass rather than just entering at the northern end. It is now possible to allow the Upper Morass to mimic natural drying cycles that wetlands require as no longer does the Morass receive a continual inflow of water from Bairnsdale Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Working in conjunction with Parks Victoria's Macleod Morass management plan, East Gippsland Water's local reclaimed water management plan enhances the Morass through chemical phosphorus removal within the Wastewater Treatment Plant, polishing in the constructed wetland cells and further nutrient reduction, all providing the key to a natural solution.



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Feature Partnership – Macleod Morass, Bairnsdale

In 2001, Parks Victoria and East Gippsland Water signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The MoU provided a framework within which both organisations were able to work towards the common goal of protecting ecological values.

Begun in October 2001, the construction phase of this \$1.5 million project took less than 12 months to complete. Brief as that may seem, the co-ordinated program to improve the long-term health and ecological viability of the Morass commenced in 1994 with the formation of a wastewater management working party involving, government, statutory bodies and community representatives. Community representation on the working party included individuals from Bairnsdale Field and Game Association, Bairnsdale Landcare Trees Group, Friends of the Wetlands, Field Naturalists Club and individual property owners whose land adjoined Macleod Morass. Other working party members included representatives from East Gippsland Water, Fisher Stewart (Consulting Engineers), Parks Victoria, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (now DSE), East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Environment Protection Authority, East Gippsland Shire and Bairnsdale City Council. During more than seven years the consultation process effectively brought together groups and individuals whose vested interests came to include the aim of securing the best outcome for Macleod Morass. Although not at first the case, all stakeholders eventually expressed the view that a guaranteed fresh supply of water that East Gippsland Water could provide was a potential lifeline for Macleod Morass and the best hope to reverse what had been a relentless environmental decline.

Further information

Robin Burgess (Research Officer) Phone 5150 4146 or e-mail

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Natural Resources Report Card 2003

Thank you to those people that have provided feedback on the Report Card. Most have indicated that the concept and presentation is an excellent focus for integrated natural resource management in Gippsland, providing a great framework for future reporting. Both written and verbal feedback is still welcome as we will start planning now for the Natural Resources Report Card 2004.

Any comments can be forwarded to:

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Catchment health, Gippsland's wealth