

The Gippsland Natural Resources Report Card in this, its sixth year, presents an assessment of the environmental condition and stewardship of 18 key natural assets that symbolise the region's diversity.

Since the 2007 Report Card was published, Gippsland has experienced extreme rainfall events that compounded the effects of the 2006/2007 fires and long term drought. Despite the often severe impacts of these events, Gippsland's natural assets remain our regions cornerstones and the basis of our identity. Gippsland's response to the events of the past 12 months has demonstrated the region's cohesiveness and resilience. Government, industry and community have come together to work with the prevailing conditions.

The resilience and strength of partnerships within the Gippsland region are reflected in the assets' ratings this year. Despite a succession of natural disasters and degradation of the environmental condition of some assets, a strengthening of stewardship is clearly demonstrated.

Vegetation burnt during the 2006/2007 fires had not recovered prior to the extreme rainfall events of June 2007. Hence there was significant erosion, sediment transport and siltation of waterways. The floods, which caused landscape-scale impacts to natural values, also caused immediate and localised damage to property and infrastructure, such as buildings, roads and visitor facilities. The algal bloom in the Gippsland Lakes is a poignant example of how impact across multiple catchments and individual assets culminated, causing significant impact on a downstream asset.

The lessons learnt while responding to the 2003 bush fires enabled agencies to respond quickly and appropriately to the 2006/2007 fires. We were therefore well versed in emergency response by June 2007 when the first flood event occurred.

Agencies have recognised that their varying strengths can be complemented

by others'. Partnerships have been strengthened, in some cases allowing funds from one organisation to be utilised by another's extension officers. These relationships are more than just symbiotic – both organisations and the natural assets have benefited.

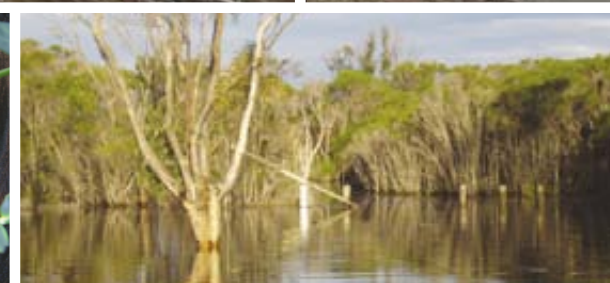
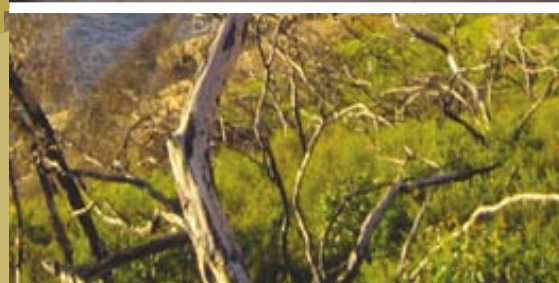
There have been a number of steering committees, management teams, task forces and expert panels operating over the year, reflecting recognition of the benefits of involving all stakeholders in planning and implementation of projects – a maturation of relationships and relationship building.

The value of the strong stewardship demonstrated in our region becomes ever greater when viewed in light of the predicted affects of climate change. An increased frequency of 'extreme' weather conditions, sea level and temperature rises and the changed pressures on natural resources will all require a coordinated responses from experienced communities. The partnerships that exist and are being developed in our region, coupled with the experience of drought, fire and flood response, give reason for our region to face the future feeling well armed.

Preparation of the Gippsland Natural Resources Report Card involves the support of many organisations and individuals – their efforts are gratefully appreciated. The coming year will see a major review of the Report Card's content, methodology and presentation. I welcome feedback on the Card's role and content as part of this review.



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Natural Resources Report Card 2008



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2008 Catchment health, Gippsland's wealth

Macalister Irrigation ↓ D ★★★★★

Floods in 2007 had an impact on infrastructure and resulted in extremely high nutrient discharge, thereby decreasing environmental condition of downstream assets. High agricultural productivity has returned following the impact of floods.

Thomson River D ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Latrobe River D ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Brown Coal Energy D ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Non-irrigated Dairy Farming C ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Strzelecki Ranges C ★★★★★ ↑

Stewardship continues to improve through strong partnerships between government, community and industry, embracing a broad range of natural resource management issues.

Coastal Living C ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Corner Inlet C ★★★★★ ↑

Establishment of the Corner Inlet Steering Committee is a significant step towards improving the stewardship of this asset.

Wilson's Promontory A ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Alpine National Park C ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

↓ D- ★★★★★ **Mitchell River**

Floods in 2007 caused catchment-wide damage and further significant decline in environmental conditions, following 2006/2007 fires.

Snowy River C ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Forests of East Gippsland B ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Bataluk Cultural Trail B ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

↓ C ★★★★★ **Gippsland Lakes**

Significant increase in nutrient input and elevated turbidity as a consequence of the 2007 floods. Subsequent algal bloom has persisted for an extended period, impacting on water quality and biodiversity values.

Coastal Parks of Far East Gippsland A ★★★★★

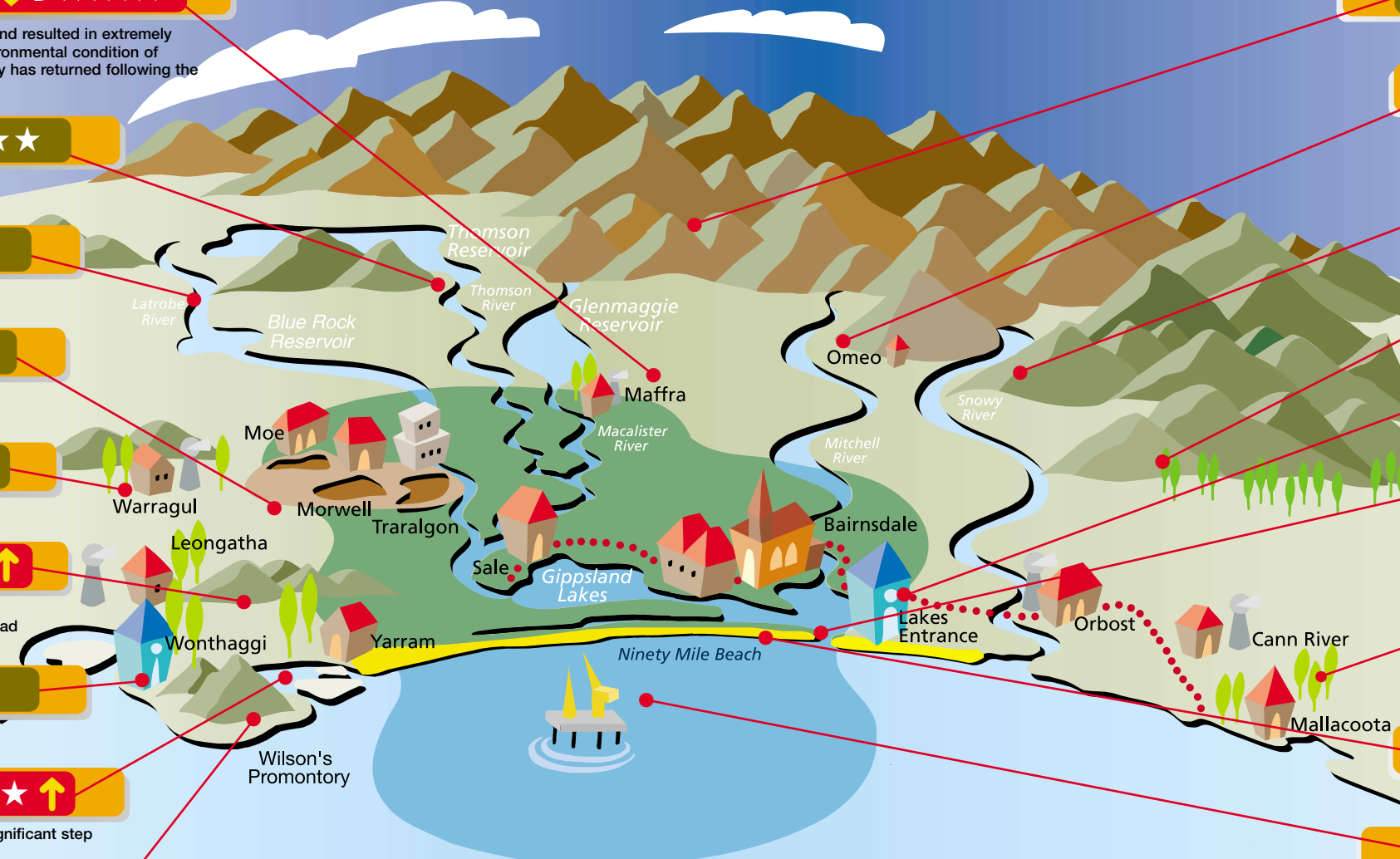
Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

Ninety Mile Beach B ★★★★★

Condition and Stewardship ratings maintained.

F ★★★★★ ↑ Latrobe Group Aquifer

Amount and extent of potential coastal subsidence (caused by extraction of fluids from aquifer) has for the first time been accurately assessed. Potential coastal inundation maps (incorporating projected sea level rise) have been prepared.



Legend

RED ★★★★★ Altered rating of assets

★★★★★ ↑ Direction of altered rating

Gippsland Lakes catchment

Corner Inlet catchment

Condition Rating

Vital signs of Gippsland's Catchment Health
Measure of land, water, biodiversity and air values of the natural asset and offsite impacts.

A Excellent	No adverse offsite impacts.
B Good	Minimal offsite impacts.
C Reasonable	Some offsite impacts.
D Poor	Several adverse offsite impacts.
F Degraded	Extensive adverse offsite impacts.

Please refer to www.ginrf.org.au for comprehensive details.

Stewardship Rating

Are we making a difference?
Measure of care and management of the natural asset by the entrusted government bodies, industry and the community.

***** Fully integrated	Improves/protects asset condition.
**** Mostly integrated	Potential to improve/protect asset condition.
*** Some integration	Impact on asset condition unclear.
** Little integration	Danger of contributing to asset condition decline.
* No integration	Contributing to decline in asset condition.

Please refer to www.ginrf.org.au for comprehensive details.

