

The Gippsland Natural Resources Report Card 2011

Rain! And plenty of it. That is what we've seen in the two years since the last Report Card published in 2009. Since 2003 we have observed the impacts of various major natural events including drought, bush fires and floods on Gippsland's natural resources. This year, it is the return of average or above average rainfall across Gippsland that dominates the commentary. Impacts have been both positive and negative, often balancing the overall environmental effect – for example, rivers have been flushed and wetlands rejuvenated, while sediment load and nutrient runoff have increased.

It's not just rivers, lakes and estuaries that have been affected. Terrestrial assets such as the Strzelecki Ranges and the Macalister Irrigation District have also been impacted by the rainfall. Water has been more widely available to meet allocated entitlements, relieving pressure of competing demands.

After a further two years of data collection and monitoring, some trends and anomalies in ratings are becoming evident. It is interesting to note that both Red Gum Plains and Corner Inlet have seen significant stewardship increases in recent years yet both their condition ratings have decreased this year. Does this show ineffective or wasteful expenditure or resource allocation? Quite the contrary!

It is because of the increased and/or improved planning, assessment, on-ground implementation, evaluation, stakeholder communication and funding that the condition of the assets is better understood and hence condition ratings have been adjusted to reflect this more accurate understanding.

There is an inevitable lag in the more predictable response to increasing stewardship – that of improving condition. An asset's environmental condition will take time to respond, for monitoring data to be collected and a reliable picture to emerge. It is anticipated that the condition ratings of both the Redgum Plains and Corner Inlet will steadily increase over the coming years, reflecting the incredible work of agencies and individuals.

In 2009 GINRF undertook a review of the Report Card which saw the introduction of two new assets and refinement of various existing assets. In preparing this year's Report Card, after a two-year break, familiar issues were raised with regard to comparison of assets, validity of subjective evaluation and target condition ratings for individual assets. The GINRF member organisations that contributed to the 2009 review confirmed the validity of the Report Card despite the inevitable subjectivity of the ratings. Although comparison between like assets is inevitable, each asset is evaluated as a separate entity and its ratings should be viewed in isolation. For example, comparing a

resource type asset such as Brown Coal Reserves and Extraction with a long standing National Park such as Croajingolong is counterproductive.

I would like to thank those individuals and agencies involved in the management of our iconic natural assets. Their efforts to preserve and enhance the natural environment of Gippsland are essential to the essence of our region. Their participation in the Report Card preparation process is also appreciated!

We look forward to their continued support during preparation of the 2013 Report Card.

For further information on the condition and stewardship rating of each asset, along with a more detailed overview of the asset's background, refer to the Report Card Companion Document, available online at www.ginrf.org.au or in hard copy by request.

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Natural Resources Report Card 2011



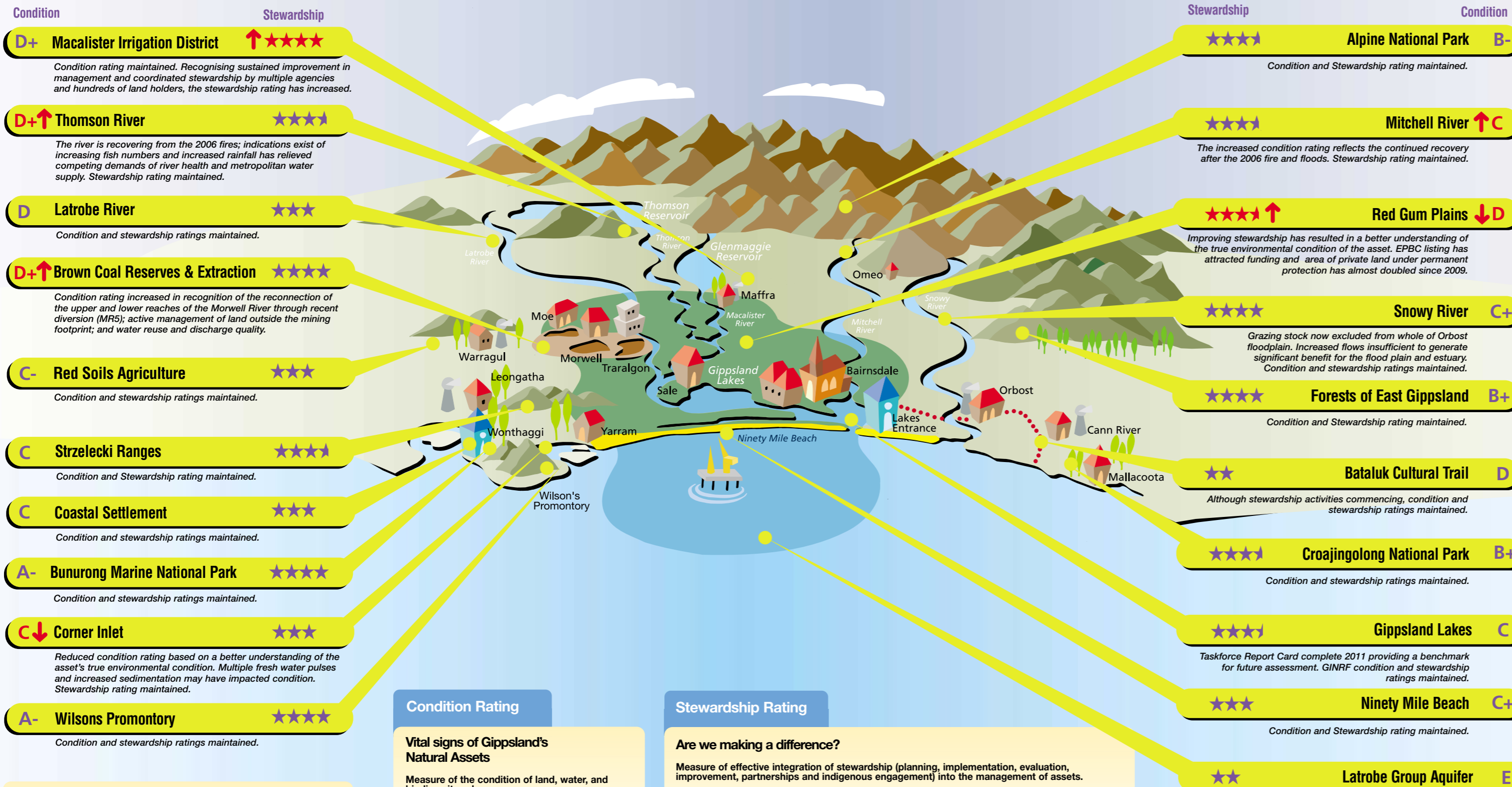
The Gippsland Region



Trends of asset condition and stewardship 2003 - 2011



2011 Catchment health, Gippsland's wealth



- Condition** **Stewardship**
- D+** **Macalister Irrigation District** ↑★★★★
Condition rating maintained. Recognising sustained improvement in management and coordinated stewardship by multiple agencies and hundreds of land holders, the stewardship rating has increased.
- D+** **Thomson River** ★★★★★
The river is recovering from the 2006 fires; indications exist of increasing fish numbers and increased rainfall has relieved competing demands of river health and metropolitan water supply. Stewardship rating maintained.
- D** **Latrobe River** ★★★
Condition and stewardship ratings maintained.
- D+** **Brown Coal Reserves & Extraction** ★★★★★
Condition rating increased in recognition of the reconnection of the upper and lower reaches of the Morwell River through recent diversion (MRS); active management of land outside the mining footprint; and water reuse and discharge quality.
- C-** **Red Soils Agriculture** ★★★
Condition and stewardship ratings maintained.
- C** **Strzelecki Ranges** ★★★★★
Condition and Stewardship rating maintained.
- C** **Coastal Settlement** ★★★
Condition and stewardship ratings maintained.
- A-** **Bunurong Marine National Park** ★★★★★
Condition and stewardship ratings maintained.
- C↓** **Corner Inlet** ★★★
Reduced condition rating based on a better understanding of the asset's true environmental condition. Multiple fresh water pulses and increased sedimentation may have impacted condition. Stewardship rating maintained.
- A-** **Wilson's Promontory** ★★★★★
Condition and stewardship ratings maintained.

- Stewardship** **Condition**
- ★★★★ **Alpine National Park** **B-**
Condition and Stewardship rating maintained.
- ★★★★ **Mitchell River** ↑**C**
The increased condition rating reflects the continued recovery after the 2006 fire and floods. Stewardship rating maintained.
- ★★★★↑ **Red Gum Plains** ↓**D**
Improving stewardship has resulted in a better understanding of the true environmental condition of the asset. EPBC listing has attracted funding and area of private land under permanent protection has almost doubled since 2009.
- ★★★★ **Snowy River** **C+**
Grazing stock now excluded from whole of Orbost floodplain. Increased flows insufficient to generate significant benefit for the flood plain and estuary. Condition and stewardship ratings maintained.
- ★★★★ **Forests of East Gippsland** **B+**
Condition and Stewardship rating maintained.
- ★★ **Bataluk Cultural Trail** **D**
Although stewardship activities commencing, condition and stewardship ratings maintained.
- ★★★★ **Croajingolong National Park** **B+**
Condition and stewardship ratings maintained.
- ★★★★ **Gippsland Lakes** **C**
Taskforce Report Card complete 2011 providing a benchmark for future assessment. GINRF condition and stewardship ratings maintained.
- ★★★ **Ninety Mile Beach** **C+**
Condition and Stewardship rating maintained.
- ★★ **Latrobe Group Aquifer** **E**
High quality groundwater, however, continued decrease in water table and no aquifer-wide management. Condition and stewardship ratings maintained.

RED ★★★★★ **Altered asset rating**
 ↑ ↓ **Direction of altered rating**
 Explanation of ratings and methodology provided in the Report Card Companion Document available at www.ginrf.org.au

Condition Rating
Vital signs of Gippsland's Natural Assets
 Measure of the condition of land, water, and biodiversity values.

- A Excellent** Values good to excellent.
- B Good** Most values are good.
- C Reasonable** Some values are poor, but recoverable.
- D Poor** Many values poor, needs improvement.
- E Degraded** Values are in a degraded state.

Stewardship Rating
Are we making a difference?
 Measure of effective integration of stewardship (planning, implementation, evaluation, improvement, partnerships and indigenous engagement) into the management of assets.

- ★★★★ Excellent** Stewardship components fully integrated; strong, positive impact on asset condition.
- ★★★★ Good** Stewardship components occur; positive impact on asset condition.
- ★★★ Reasonable** Most stewardship components occur; some impact on asset condition.
- ★★ Poor** Some stewardship components occur; limited impact on asset condition.
- * Lacking** Stewardship components scarcely or not evident.

Gippsland's natural assets

- Alpine National Park**
The Alpine National Park asset reports on extensive areas of highly diverse, often pristine, alpine and sub alpine ecosystems in the Wonnangatta-Moroka units.
- Bataluk Cultural Trail**
The Bataluk Cultural Trail asset reports on the physical condition of this example of what cultural heritage contributes to the natural environment.
- Brown Coal Reserves and Extraction**
The Brown Coal Reserves and Extraction asset reports on the physical condition of the reserves and the impacts extraction has on the surrounding environment.
- Bunurong Marine National Park**
The Bunurong Marine National Park asset reports on the highly diverse marine life of the Bunurong Marine National Park.
- Coastal Settlements**
The Coastal Settlements asset reports on the condition of and impact on coastal ecosystems within and surrounding Bass Coast & South Gippsland.
- Corner Inlet**
The Corner Inlet asset reports on the significant marine bay and tidal mudflat system within the Corner Inlet Marine National Park, the Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park and Coastal Park and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park.
- Croajingolong National Park**
The Croajingolong National Park asset reports on the high concentration of near pristine estuarine areas and the lowland forest, heath and coastal ecosystems.
- Forests of East Gippsland**
The Forests of East Gippsland asset reports on the commercial, social and biodiversity values of the forests within the East Gippsland Forest Management Area.
- Gippsland Lakes**
The Gippsland Lakes asset reports on the water quality, estuarine and lake health with reference to maintaining recreational, commercial and tourism values and biodiversity.
- Latrobe Group Aquifer**
The Latrobe Group Aquifer asset reports on long term availability and quality of water in the aquifer and the impacts of extraction.
- Latrobe River**
The Latrobe River asset reports on river health – water quality and quantity, riparian vegetation, species composition, connectivity and habitat diversity – of the Latrobe River.
- Macalister Irrigation District**
The MID asset reports on the physical condition of the farming land irrigated by the Macalister River and the impacts irrigation has on the surrounding environment.
- Mitchell River**
The Mitchell River asset reports on river health – water quality and quantity, riparian vegetation, species composition, connectivity and habitat diversity – of the Mitchell River.
- Ninety Mile Beach**
The Ninety Mile Beach asset reports on the integrity of the coastal dune system and beach sands of Ninety Mile Beach.
- Redgum Plains**
The Redgum Plains asset reports on the recovery of the Gippsland Plains bioregion.
- Red Soil Agriculture**
The Red Soil Agriculture asset reports on the physical condition of the soil and the environmental sustainability of the industries it supports.
- Snowy River**
The Snowy River asset reports on river health – water quality and quantity, riparian vegetation, species composition, connectivity and habitat diversity – of the Snowy River.
- Strzelecki Ranges**
The Strzelecki Ranges asset reports on the commercial, social and biodiversity values of the Strzelecki Ranges.
- Thomson River**
The Thomson River asset reports on river health – water quality and quantity, riparian vegetation, species composition, connectivity and habitat diversity – of the Thomson River.
- Wilson's Promontory**
The Wilson's Promontory asset reports on the diverse, largely undisturbed ecosystems of Wilsons Promontory National Park.

Objective and Limitations

The primary function of the GINRF Natural Resources Report Card is a communication and engagement tool. The subjectivity inherent in the evaluation of the available data is considered relevant and valid in the context of its purpose. The Report Card and Companion Document do not aim to be a definitive assessment reflecting comprehensive scientific data but an independent and informed, subjective evaluation of available information.

The identifiable natural assets, the regular publication and recognisable format of the Report Card help cultivate a strong regional identity and foster strategic integration of natural resource management throughout Gippsland.

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Feedback

We value your feedback. Please contact GINRF at www.ginrf.org.au to provide comment.