

RENEWAL OF THE PORT PHILLIP BAY (WESTERN SHORELINE) AND BELLARINE PENINSULA RAMSAR SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Corangamite CMA, in collaboration with key partners, is leading the renewal of the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site Management Plan. There will be opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders and interest groups to be involved during the renewal process, with a formal public consultation period for release of the draft management plan in late-2017.

Background

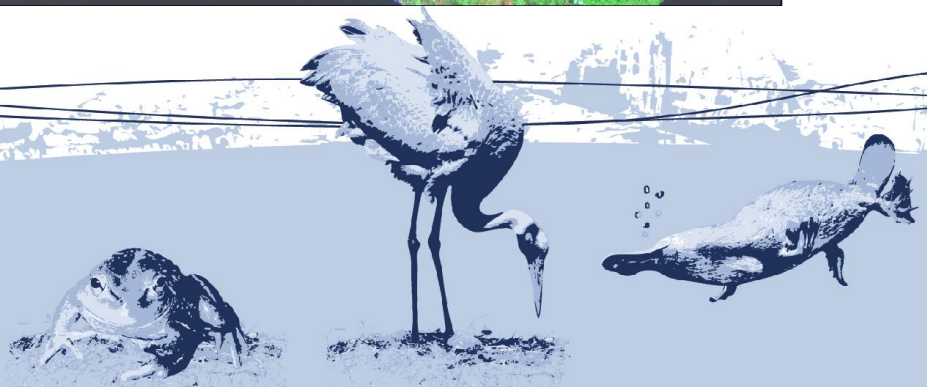
The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for international cooperation for management of Ramsar sites.

The Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site (see Figure 1) is one of Australia's 65 Ramsar sites and was listed as a wetland of international importance in 1982.

The site includes freshwater wetlands, estuaries, intertidal shorelines, sub-tidal beds, inland saline wetlands and a wastewater treatment facility.

It comprises six distinct wetland areas including:

- Limeburners Bay and Point Wilson
- Lake Connewarre Complex – including Reedy Lake, Hospital Swamp, Salt Swamp, the Barwon Estuary and part of Lake Murtnaghurt
- Swan Bay
- Mud Islands
- Point Cook/Cheetham – extending from Skeleton Creek to Point Cook and including parts of the Cheetham wetlands
- Werribee/Avalon: extending from the Werribee River to The Spit and including the Western Treatment Plant



In 2003 the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site Strategic Management Plan was developed by Parks Victoria. This plan established a framework for the maintenance of the Ramsar site's unique ecological character through conservation and wise use.

The plan is now over a decade old and there has been significant progress in our understanding of the ecological character and management of the site. This new information now needs to be updated into a renewed management plan.

The Corangamite CMA is leading a consultative and collaborative process to review and update the management plan during 2017.

What will be in the renewed Plan?

Similar to the existing plan, it will be a high-level strategic document that details management strategies required to protect and restore the ecological character of the wetlands within the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar site.

The plan must meet the requirements of the Australian Ramsar management principles as set out in Schedule 6 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000*.

The steps for renewing the Plan will include:

- Identifying and updating values and threats
- Undertaking a risk assessment targeting the site values
- Prioritising values and threats for management
- Reviewing the existing management plan and its implementation
- Setting resource condition targets
- Determining strategic actions for each location
- Identifying monitoring needs and information gaps.

What are the opportunities to get involved?

The project aims to provide opportunities for the broadest range of stakeholders to contribute to the renewal of the Plan.

Agencies with a responsibility for managing the site have formed a steering committee to oversee the development of the plan and consultation process. The steering committee includes representatives from the Commonwealth Department of Energy and the Environment, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CMA), Department of Environment Land Water and Planning, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Port Phillip and Western Port CMA and the Victorian Environment Protection Authority.

A Stakeholder Advisory Group will be established, made up of representatives from organisations and interest groups who have knowledge of and/or an interest in the management of the site. These groups will be involved to ensure local knowledge and expertise are used in identifying values and threats at the site.

Those who will be responsible for implementing actions from the management plan will then assist with developing the management strategies via a workshop.

There will be a six-week consultation period to allow members of the public to comment on the draft Plan. This is anticipated to occur in late-2017 and further details will be published on the Corangamite CMA website closer to the date.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit www.ccma.vic.gov.au to find out more about project progress and opportunities to become involved, including public consultation details once they are determined.

OR contact Corangamite CMA on (03) 5232 9100 if you have any questions, or would like further information.

