

EstuaryWatch Update March - April 2009

This is a monthly email to let people know of recent achievements and upcoming events for EstuaryWatch.

If you receive this and would like to be removed from the mailing list please reply to email requesting to be removed.

Any person interested in adding something to the update, please send me an email with your written piece toward the end of the month.

News and upcoming events....

Updates to depth gauges

Thiess Services began updating the Corangamite regions depth gauges in January; monitors will be advised if any alterations occur.

Quality Assurance and Quality Control

The third round of QA/QC events will be held in late April and early May. Dates and times need to be set with your team leader prior to this. Please also remember that additional database entry training is still available upon request.

Data Confidence Plan

The Data Confidence Plan for EstuaryWatch is now complete. As previously explained this plan describes all of the measures we take to ensure that our data is of the high quality needed to be used by estuary managers.

Database and mouth condition monitoring data sheet upgrades

The remaining upgrades are currently being reviewed. If required, modifications will be made to improve the quality of these upgrades, which at this stage will be launched over the next few months. These upgrades include:

- New improvement to older graph style with a temporal x-axis (i.e. bottom scale bar now date divided not equally spaced for each monitoring event).
- Data points are no longer linked and appear as dots. This is because the monitoring events are not linked to each other.
- A critical limit placed on the DO graph to infer when oxygen has dropped below a safe limit for life.
- Totally new graph which a tricky combo of depth, salinity, open/closed, and DO all on one graph, and highlights the halocline so we can instantly see the ratio of fresh to saline water. Of course this is not always relevant or available to all sites.

The following upgrades have now been launched:

- As I explained in the previous update, the sampler ratings information (i.e. Competency, Accuracy and Knowledge) have been removed from the database.

This information has been replaced by each EstuaryWatchers “Last Assessment Date”.

- Recently one of our dedicated EstuaryWatchers recommended that I change the physical conditions sub heading from “Recent (Average of last two week)” to “Median (over the last 2 weeks)”. This fantastic idea was implemented on the 1st of April. Until all of your existing mouth condition data sheets have been used, please adjust your remaining sheets to suit (i.e. replace “Average with Median”), this will prevent any unnecessary paper wastage.

Social Event east and west

Unfortunately the Spring Creek Social Event, which was scheduled to be held on Sunday the 29th of March, had to be cancelled, as the timing was unsuitable for many of the regions EstuaryWatchers.

As you are aware, these events give the regions EstuaryWatchers the chance to gather, have fun, share some ideas about our monitoring program, and of course indulge in a good quality BBQ lunch. As previously mentioned Food and drinks will be supplied, and all EstuaryWatchers (and families/friends) are invited to attend this Sundays event at Kennett River, details are as follows;

- **Kennett River (west) Sunday 5th April 1pm, Picnic area on the western side of the Great Ocean Road Bridge.**

Numbers will need to be finalised prior to the event (i.e. Friday the 3rd of April) for catering purposes, so I would really appreciate it if you could contact myself or your team leaders to let us know if you’re coming along. For further information please contact me on: 5224 9402 or 0427097225 or email me at matthew.khoury@ccma.vic.gov.au. It would be great to see you all there.

Clean Beaches Award

In recognition of their time, effort and dedication to the program, I decided to enter our EstuaryWatchers into the 2009 Keep Australia Beautiful “Clean Beaches Awards”. Currently, our EstuaryWatchers are in the running to receive the “Community Action Award”, which recognizes outstanding achievement in community organisation and pride expressed through its development and strong relationship within the local beach community. Upon request, Roslyn and Tim Gibson from the Painkalac group proudly represented our regions EstuaryWatchers. On the day Roslyn and Tim provided the competition judge with an excellent array of information about the program, and a fantastic EstuaryWatch monitoring demonstration. Good luck EstuaryWatchers, I think you have got an excellent chance of wining this award.

Important Reminders.....

Occupational Health and Safety

EstuaryWatchers, please remain safe. There are many risks to consider at this time of year, for example; snakes, fire and to a lesser extent, heat exhaustion. Monitoring on total fire ban days is not advisable, especially in remote well vegetated locations.

Rubbish in our Estuaries

As I previously mentioned, over the summer period a number of EstuaryWatchers noticed a significant increase in the amount of rubbish present within our regions estuaries, particularly in popular tourist areas such as Torquay. This is a major problem that needs to be addressed. The presence of Rubbish in an estuarine environment can have a detrimental effect on the fish and birds that live, feed, breed or pass through the estuary, by causing death, injury and upsetting breeding cycles. The presence of rubbish also decreases the aesthetic value of the estuary and its surrounding environment, which in turn lowers the areas tourism appeal. Please keep an eye out for offenders (particularly of the Easter break), and if possible gather as much information as you can (i.e. car registration, type of litter dropped, a photo of the offender etc) prior to reporting them to your local council or the EPA.

Wrapping up from the last month.....

The Third Unmasked Night Seminar

The EstuaryWatch “Estuaries Unmasked” night seminar was held on Thursday the 26th of March at the Ocean Grove Surf Lifesaving Club. Over 35 people, including a mix of industry professionals, EstuaryWatchers and members of the local community, came to enjoy the fantastic guest speakers. On the night our first guest speaker, Dr Jeremy Hindell, from the Arthur Rylah Institute, presented on Black Bream movements in the Gippsland Lakes. Our second speaker, Ash Herrod, from Birds Australia, presented on the resident and migratory shorebird species found within our local area. Both speakers did an absolutely tremendous job of providing our EstuaryWatchers and those who attended, with a deeper understanding of estuarine functions and processes. Those who were unable to attend on the night, and would like a copy of the presentation, please contact me by emailing matthew.khoury@ccma.vic.gov.au.

Festival of the Sea

On Sunday the 22nd of March EstuaryWatch hosted a stall at the “Festival of the Sea” in Barwon Heads. Throughout the day EstuaryWatch received a substantial amount of interest from members of the local and wider community. In relation to the programs vision, which is to “raise awareness and provide educational opportunities for the community in estuarine environments”, this was an extremely successful day, which I would like to thank the festival committee for organising.

EstuaryWatch demonstration for the Gordon Institute of Tafe

On the 10th of March, Roslyn Gibson and I conducted an EstuaryWatch power point presentation, and onsite demonstration, for approximately 40 first and second year Diploma of Conservation and Land Management students, from Geelong’s Gordon Institute of TAFE. The power point presentation was undertaken at Anglesea’s camp Eumerella, followed by an onsite demonstration at three different monitoring sites along the Anglesea River estuary, including:

1. The estuary mouth; at this site we explained the various factors that can affect the estuary mouth state, and how and why the estuary mouth monitoring is carried out.
2. Downstream; from the estuary mouth we moved upstream to our first physical/chemical monitoring site. At this site we demonstrated both the depth profiling and top and bottom

sampling procedures, that we use to obtain our water quality information throughout the water column

3. Upstream: from our downstream site we moved further upstream to another physical/chemical monitoring site. This was done to demonstrate the change in water quality parameters that can occur as you move further upstream within an estuary.

All in all it was a great day, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I would also like to extend a thankyou to Roslyn for helping out on the day, and the staff (particularly Amanda May) and students from the Gordon Institute of Tafe for their enthusiasm and interest in the EstuaryWatch program.

Estuary Openings

In the past month the following estuaries were opened:

- Gellibrand River, Tuesday 17th March
- Aire River, Monday 23rd March
- Anglesea River, Wednesday the 25th March.

All openings were conducted under the permit conditions. There is major concern over tampering with the recent Anglesea opening. Our colleague at Surf Coast Shire has alerted us to evidence that the opening was “helped along” through a deepening of the channel. Photos of this have been recorded and the details are being investigated. If anyone has any information regarding this matter we would greatly appreciate it. Estuary openings require a works on waterways permit and those operating beyond the conditions of these permits are liable, and could face heavy fines under the Water Act.

There will be more news at the start of May.

Kind Regards,

Matt

