



### In this edition

This 'Blue Swimmer' gives an account of our Forum at Semaphore on May 26, on the theme 'Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary'.

Incidentally - since that forum, the draft management plan has been released for public comment. The draft is at [http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/ads/at\\_work.html#draft\\_plan](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/ads/at_work.html#draft_plan)

Then we thought we should tell you of some of the meetings, hearings and consultations at which members represent us. These are an essential part of functioning as an environmental interest group these days.

Finally - SALA - South Australian Living Artists - was held in August. Your society was involved directly with 5 exhibitions.

So - an indication of the variety of activities your 'Friends' are involved in. We would be pleased to have your comments on any of this. We are delighted to see several members coming along to our Committee meetings and giving us extra perspective on matters before your Committee.

We think members are aware that we hold meetings only when they are necessary. If you would like to join us at any Committee meeting, or see the agenda or minutes, just e-mail the secretary at: [ianrk@iprimus.com.au](mailto:ianrk@iprimus.com.au)

### Text of letter to Ms Pat Harbison, President, Friends of Gulf St Vincent

*Thank you for your letter dated 2 May 2007 regarding the Cheltenham Park Racecourse site and water initiatives.*

*As you are aware, the South Australian Jockey Club intends to sell the Cheltenham Park Racecourse site and is currently seeking partners to develop the land.*

*Any proposal for the Cheltenham Park Racecourse site will incorporate wetlands and an aquifer storage and recovery system for stormwater recycling suitable for the local catchment. In addition, any proposed new housing development on the site will be required to meet the Government's regulations on affordable housing and other sustainability initiatives.*

*With regard to the Water Smart Australia program, the State Government is well aware of this fund and is actively seeking funding sources, through this and other programs, to implement projects under the Water Proofing Adelaide strategy.*

*Thank you for your interest in this matter.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Hon Patrick Conlon MP*

*Minister for Infrastructure*

*8 July 2007*





## Forum at Semaphore

We opened to an audience of about 35. Numbers went above 40, with exchange of people, through the day. We also had 12 apologies (which we did not get a chance to read out, but thank those members for their courtesy in letting us know, and for their good wishes)

The Masonic Hall served our needs well, for modest hire fee. It also allowed us to announce our presence by flying our large flag from the awning outside.

Local Councillor Peter Jamieson welcomed participants, acknowledged our co-sponsors - Australian Marine Sciences Association and Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary, defined our theme for the day - the Dolphin Sanctuary - and opened the forum.

First speaker was Peter Christy (EPA). Peter's talk, on water movement through Barker Inlet and the Port River, was illustrated with 'movies' derived from the water circulation model they have developed for this system. They are literally very graphic, and informed discussion on distribution of nutrients through BIPR, and to sea. The audience is now more aware of the two distinct tidal flows that are separated by the 'partings' through Swan Alley and Eastern Passage. The audience could also follow the distribution of nutrients from the major source - Penrice - out to sea and towards the metro coast.

Questions from Peter's presentation focussed on the prospects to reduce nutrient loads to a level at which they should no longer trigger excess growth of algae such as sea lettuce *Ulva*, or the almost constant 'red tides' of the river.

David Close spoke on the birds of the 'Section Bank', which is largely an artificial habitat cre-

ated by accumulation of drift sand against spoil from early dredging to reshape outer harbour. David has the knack of adding fascinating snippets to the facts of logging in different species of birds, such as speculation about the source of carp bones around Pelican nests on the bank. We also learned that this may be the only place in the world where we might see 5 different species of cormorant living together. David claims 38 species confirmed as living on the section bank, with at least 11 breeding there. All of that had come about because of benign neglect of the area, but it was now an important habitat in its own right, and David suggested it might be renamed to reflect this.

Vic Nevarauskas (PIRSA) spoke on likely growth of invasive *Caulerpa*. Partly from his observations of introduced *Caulerpa* in the Mediterranean, he suggested growth around Adelaide might be much more profuse in the high nutrient river environment, compared with the lower nutrient Gulf. If this hypothesis holds, we may not have as much cause for fear of invasive *Caulerpa* reaching valued sea-grass areas in the Gulf proper, such as Orontes Bank.

Robyn Ashworth started her talk - which she called 'gossip' - on ships of the area with a special acknowledgement of the late Terry Arnot. Terry had had a great reception when he spoke at our first forum at Port Vincent on his work cataloguing wrecks in Gulf St Vincent.

Robyn showed us where the 'ships graveyards' were in the Port area, and where we could find information on each hulk or set of remains. These include highly significant vessels such as the 'San Diego' - an iron hulled sailing ship, the 'Dorothy H Stirling', built as a 6 masted schooner, and various floating docks, dredges and ferries.

Verity Sanders (Port Enfield Council) spoke briefly on Mangrove Cove, which was to be our 'field trip' later in the day. Our field trip would not uncover the intricacies of negotiating this kind of conservation site with developers who were providing for c. 4000 new residents at 'NewPort'. Verity shared some of those intricacies with us.

Nardi Cribb gave us 'scholarly' information on dolphin populations, to keep the day on theme. More on her presentation follows.



Perhaps the keynote talk of the day was by Nardi Cribb, on her Honours research project investigating the “density estimates and habitat characterizations of bottlenose dolphins in the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary”.

Nardi told us that dolphins may prefer particular habitats for various reasons. They might show preference for environmental and physical features such as water temperature and depth or for other factors such as the distribution of prey, avoidance of predators and social behaviours.

Relationships between dolphins and their environment are usually quite complex and, because they are highly mobile animals, it is not always easy to identify and examine those relationships.

It is critical to identify their particular habitats or areas of high use in order to implement protection plans efficiently. This is especially important for those animals that live in close proximity to people, and the bottlenose dolphins in the Port River area are a good example of this.

The study was conducted in the area known as the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary which is situated on the north eastern side of Gulf St. Vincent. The sanctuary covers 118km<sup>2</sup>. It ranges from the upper reaches of the Port River and North Haven, down to North Arm and the Barker Inlet where it then finally extends out into GSV and north towards Port Gawler.

The aim of the study was to establish preliminary density estimates for the northern and southern areas of the sanctuary and to identify the habitat type and the environmental water conditions that influence bottlenose dolphins using this area.

The sanctuary was divided into northern and southern portions, according to the presence of seagrass. The northern area opens out into the gulf and from approximately Port Adelaide northwards seagrass occurs along most of the coastline.

There is a convenient map of the sanctuary at [http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/pdfs/adelaide\\_dolphin\\_sanctuary\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/pdfs/adelaide_dolphin_sanctuary_brochure.pdf) .and the home page is at [http://](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/ads/)

[www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/ads/](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/ads/)

The southern area, which includes the Port River - Barker Inlet estuary, is a small inlet into Gulf St Vincent. The water here is quite sheltered. The benthic environment in this area lacks vegetation such as seagrass and attached algae and consists predominantly of a bare sandy bottom.

Boat surveys were conducted between May and August. The boat followed a predetermined route covering the whole area of the sanctuary. During these surveys we recorded the number of dolphins present at any location, their age and behaviour such as socialising, feeding or travelling; and the type of habitat i.e. bare sand or seagrass.

We measured 6 environmental water proper-



ties - water temperature, depth, dissolved O<sub>2</sub>; total dissolved solids, turbidity and pH.

The individual dolphins encountered were also photographed to see if any particular animals were using one area more than the other. The information gathered was then used to compare the density of dolphins between the 2 sanctuary areas, to see which habitat type they were using most, and to find out if any particular environmental water properties were influencing where they were found.

Results showed that dolphins used both sanctuary areas; however density was significantly higher in the southern area over the bare sand habitat. Only one individual was sighted in both areas. However this does not mean that they don't use both or move between the two areas.

All behaviours were observed in both habitats except socialising, which was sighted only over bare sand in the southern area, which suggests that this area is important for this behaviour. The majority of juveniles were also observed over the bare sand habitat so it could be that the sheltered environment of the

southern area provides a suitable calving area.

Water temperature and depth were seen to be the most important environmental water properties that define dolphin habitat in this area. Water depths of 5-6m and temperatures between 18 and 20 degrees were favoured. These results suggest that dolphins within the sanctuary prefer warm, sheltered, shallow depths, which from my field observations reflects the southern area of the sanctuary.

Habitat information is really important when implementing management plans. Even though this study was primarily conducted over the winter months it has provided some baseline information. Observation over all months is needed to make more definitive conclusions. Information of this nature also highlights the importance for us to protect critical habitat such as areas relied upon for feeding, or mating and calving.



### **Port Forum - Excursion to Mangrove Cove**

With the assistance of Lee Grigg, of Portside Christian School, and several bright students, most of our audience at the Forum were given a guided tour of, and further commentary on, Mangrove Cove.

For those who missed this - anytime you are driving along Causeway Road, looking at all the new shiny housing on the other side of the railway, take the turn into Rennie Road and find your way to Mangrove Cove. You can't get lost, and we think you will be agreeably surprised to see this little sample of the original area preserved; nay, thriving.



### **Onkaparinga Council consultation on lower Onkaparinga River.**

This was first in a series of theme forums hosted by Mayor Rosenberg of City of Onkaparinga. (The Mayor, and several Onkaparinga Councillors, are members of FoGStV)

Speakers were Steven Gatti, formerly of the Onkaparinga CWMB, now with the AMLRNRMB; Karen Rouse, SA Water, on environmental performance of the Christies WWTP; Paul Manning, consultant on reverting the sludge ponds to wetlands; and Sean Connell from Adelaide U.

Steven described the condition of the entire river in terms of median flows during the last couple of years. The river is under stress, but, on this index, still in basically good condition.

Karen Rouse spoke of Christies plant and associated sludge lagoons reaching environmental compliance in the period 2009 - 2011. Note, if 2011, that will be 10 years later than they were supposed to have reached compliance under the Marine Environment Protection Act, but we suppose that is progress.

Paul Manning spoke of mildly reshaping the sludge lagoons, and directing stormwater from the existing stormwater lagoons through the sludge lagoons, and possibly through the former 'aquaculture' site, but back to the river.

Sean Connell enlarged on his hypothesis that there has been significant change to the algal communities off that coast. It appeared to have accelerated since 1997, which may implicate the sand dredging from O'Sullivan Beach. The change was from canopy brown species - 'kelps' - of about 1 metre high, to low turf of green algae, which, he claimed, now had an advantage because of the steady supply of higher levels of nutrient, particularly nitrogen, from land runoff and the STW.

There were over 50 people present for most of the afternoon. That group was well-informed. Most comments seemed to be about amenity of the river from Clarendon Weir down. An interesting suggestion

(among many) from the floor was to try to re-establish the earlier names for particular sections of the river. Thus, what has become known as 'the sludge ponds area' could revert to being 'Moreton's Flats'.

One observation, disturbing to those who have been trying to improve the Onkaparinga, is that many homes in Old Noarlunga have not connected to the sewer which was put in about 5 years ago. Those homes still have septic tanks, which means continuing seepage and overflow to the river carrying high nutrient loads.

There was a pleasing concern for use of rainwater from the lagoons for local irrigation, and that any dredging be done consistent with environmental guidelines for treating spoil.

We commend Onkaparinga council for so engaging with its constituents.



### **One step forward, two steps sideways.**

Our previous forum was at Maslin Beach, and included a walk to the former quarry site, where John Houlahan summarised the sorry history of its 'rehabilitation'. There was not a great need to describe what was wrong with the quarry in its present condition - the problems are pretty much self-evident, aren't they.

'Friends' simply does not have resources to be involved in every local issue, but this one was such a bad example, and continued to deliver highly turbid stormwater to inshore waters along that coast, that we felt we had to become involved in trying to get remedial action under way.

We have had some good news on the 'Frank Hilton Reserve' - the 'landscaped' area along Gulf Parade. A pond built over the former dump site appeared to be leaching a disturbing array of toxins from the dumped material. Onkaparinga Council has capped the pond, and started work on comprehensive remedial action.

We have commended Council on acting, and, credit to the relatively new Councillors, quite quickly.

The next step should be to integrate management of stormwater for the whole Maslin Beach subcatchment, including the former Quarry site. This will require the cooperation of State and Local Governments, preferably led by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board, with community participation.

Until this is achieved the health of the beach and marine environment will continue to suffer. Short-term "fixes" have been proven inadequate, and the gravity of the issues at last acknowledged with the Landfill Closure Plan for the former dump site.

We have written several times to the Minister for the Environment, Hon Gail Gago, seeking further action, but the responses have not encouraged us to expect real initiative on this site.



On the morning of April 23, several residents of the western coastal suburbs observed 6-7 large vessels apparently trawling about 1-2 km off Henley Beach. Naturally they were concerned about this, and sought explanations. A couple of people sought advice through our fraternal organisation - WACRA.

Claire van der Geest, of the South Australian Fishing Industry Council, who has contributed to several of our functions and forums, checked up on the reports for us. Claire confirmed that -

SA trawlers can only operate in more than 10 meters of water, so sometimes they can be relatively close to the coast.

However, in this particular reported incident, the trawlers were seen during the "morning". Trawlers only operate during the night time, because this is when the prawns are active and feeding. The fact that there were also 5-6 trawlers is very likely to indicate that they were steaming home, following a nights fishing. They steam home with their booms and stabilisers out and the nets in the water - it is not until the vessels are inside the leads that the booms and stabilisers are brought into the vessel.

So your western suburb folk have probably

witnessed the return of the fleet from a night's fishing - much like cars returning from the city to the western 'burbs' following a day in the office.



## **Environment Resources and Development Committee of the SA Parliament Inquiry into Coastal Development**

In October last year we lodged a submission with this inquiry. The major elements of our submission were that - overall we did not see a case for major new legislation, but sought better compliance with existing legislation. The exception with legislation was that establishment of land-based Natural Resource Management Boards had actually dissected the major gulfs, and there was a case to establish the equivalent of NRM Boards for these gulfs, to integrate management.

On June 6 of this year, President Pat Harbison, Secretary Ian Kirkegaard and Committee Member Dr John Cugley appeared before the Committee. Interestingly, the only questions on the suggested 'Gulf NRMD' were to do with funding such a body. Most of the discussion involved management of freshwaters across the Adelaide plains. We got in a 'plug' (no pun intended - and a pretty poor one if it was) for our suggestions to harvest rainwater on the Cheltenham Racecourse site, but the discussion was wide-ranging, and we interpret it as favourable to real action to manage and harvest these waters.

We will be interested to see if any of this is taken up by the Government.



## **Planning development of Northern Le-Fevre Peninsula ('Techport')**

Pat Harbison and Ian Kirkegaard had direct briefing from personnel of Port Adelaide Maritime Corporation (PAMC) with Natalie Fuller, on May 31. Then on June 13 we attended the public consultation for local resident groups.

Andrew Winkler also attended.

The project is outlined at - <http://www.pamc.biz/tech/home.jsp>

Pat had set out the major requests of FoGStV as - maintain public access around the coast; water not to runoff the entire site until it met water quality criteria; freshwaters otherwise to be retained for use; dredging and related works to be done consistent with guidelines set down in EPA policies.

We have confirmed this in writing to the consultants. Incidentally, one consultant on managing lands not needed directly for the Air Warfare Destroyers is Geoff Fisher, who has given time freely to the campaign to properly rehabilitate the former quarry at Maslin Beach, and spoke at our Forum there.

We were pleased to see environmental management of dredging mentioned several times by other community representatives.

The major community concerns, as expressed, naturally are more about noise and air quality, and land amenity, in the area. Our assessment is that FoGStV has done about all it can do at this stage, and we could await release of the actual proposal to develop the lands vested in PAMC.



The Draft DEH Trails Strategy has recently been approved for release for public comment. The Strategy aims to provide a consistent approach to planning, building and managing trails within the DEH trail network, for all forms of activities including walking, cycling, diving, horse riding and canoeing.

You can find the strategy at: <http://www.communitywebs.org/FriendsofParks/>

then click where it says 'Public consultation invited', and it should deliver contact for Chris Halstead, and the document.

While such documents should not go into great detail, this one might have been improved with a few examples or case studies.

Friends of Parks office notified us that Cathy Potts had volunteered to compile a response on behalf of all interested groups of 'Friends'.

After discussion at our June committee meeting, and with some further refinement by e-mail we made this submission -

*In representations to recent consultations on land use or management - such as consultations with NRM Boards, Planning Development of Northern LeFevre Peninsula, and ERD Committee Inquiry into Coastal Development - Friends of Gulf St Vincent have sought to maximise public access along the coast. Distinction is made because too many development proposals now appear to promise 'continuing access to **points** around the coast'. Feedback to our public forums, held around the Gulf, warns us of attempts at alienation of parts of the coast by large scale development, and loss of aesthetic values from intrusive buildings.*

*We appreciate that the document for comment is a very broad strategy, not yet engaged in detail, but we would make a case for maintaining capacity for linear access, even if an actual surveyed trail is either not yet proposed, or is several years off.*

*More specifically, we see value in bicycle trails around the Gulf coast, in settled and less settled areas. We would add a caution that the coast includes some particularly sensitive environments - including dunes (which are also becoming rare) samphires and saltmarshes. In some cases, access to or across these environments, even by boardwalk, is so intrusive that the habitat almost certainly will be damaged by that access. While boardwalks can allow regular access to many environments, their very presence can damage others. Even where boardwalks are acceptable in the longer term, great care must be applied when they are built, to minimise damage to the environment. Samphires, for example, may not be sufficiently resilient to recover just from impacts of insensitive building operations.*

*When we test these issues against the draft strategy, we believe that the strategy can be read as accounting for our concerns and wishes, but we would like to see these kinds of comments developed during consultation to sharpen the strategy.*

We also transmitted one of the signs which Tim Hoile and associates at the Marine Discovery Centre have developed for the coastal walk, as an example of how signs can educate, and generally enhance the experience of a trail

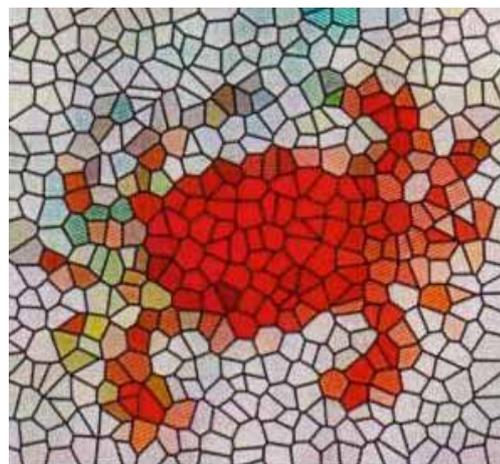
We received this response from Cathy Potts:

In our submission we have emphasised that the strategy should indicate that there are "no go " areas for trails where the environment is too sensitive (eg with the samphire communities, some wetland areas etc). We were also critical of the strategy's failure to look "at the bigger landscape picture" so that the least sensitive land/environment for trails is used (i.e. the strategy is narrowly focused on DEH land)

We have a commitment from DEH for representatives from the Friends of Parks Board and member groups to have a meeting with them to discuss our submission in August and will raise in some detail the issue of some areas being too sensitive etc.



## SALA Festival report



All five events under the banner Living Gulf were very successful.

About 40 people came to Fernando's 'Cruzin' opening and good comments came back from parents and school.

Fernando's and Vesna's 'In the Mix' at the Grange hotel had about 140 at the opening

and terrific comments made to staff during the exhibition.

Alison Harvey's 'Our Living Gulf' at the Bacchus Wine Bar attracted about 80 to the opening with much praise. Alison sold quite a lot of her exhibition and took additional orders. The owner wants us back there next year.

The community project 'Mosaic Sea Creatures' had a fantastic opening with about 150 people and lots of kids, great food and thousands walking the trail every week.

We have had lots of positive comments and requests from local residents to get involved in more community public art.

The Worm Farm project had a very emotional opening attended by 36 kids with special needs and families and friends. A great effort by Gary and Ian and the wood workers who are real gems. We have started working on the next project that will be connected to Community Gardens.

We have already sent out a few letters to organisations seeking expressions of interest to be a part of sponsoring our events next year.



So there it is. We haven't listed everything we are engaged in. A lot of time is going into two books - the 'Natural History of Gulf St Vincent' (which will be a BIG book) and the booklet on protecting the Gulf, which will be directed at schools.

Among the big issues - several members are gathering and assessing information on desalination as we prepare a position paper on desalination in Gulf St Vincent, based partly on detail that is emerging of the several proposals for Spencer Gulf.

Other members are working up position papers on climate change and its implications specifically for our Gulf. As part of that we are talking about 'greenhouse footprints' as a way of accounting for climate impacts of new developments.

We want to improve communication with our growing list of members, and have several

keen members giving us advice on the website, and other ways to use the internet.

There is a lot happening, most of it is good, and we thank you for your support.

Our next major public gathering will include our Annual General Meeting. Already we are sounding out speakers so we can make it an interesting and informative session.



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