

Blue Swimmer

Newsletter of the Friends of Gulf St Vincent

Issue 2 – March 2005

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Welcome to the Blue Swimmer

The Friends of Gulf St Vincent have been particularly active over the past couple of months. A number of our members have been raising awareness on the imminent dredging of Outer Harbor and in particular the proposal to dump the dredged material in the Gulf (see article below "Dredging Outer Harbor"). This saw Friends of Gulf St Vincent's media debut with both Channel 7, ABC radio and the Portside Messenger conveying our concerns about the potential impact of the dredging on the Orontes Bank and spread of *Caulerpa racemosa*. The group has also followed up on speculation of a proposed marina in upper Gulf St Vincent and made a submission to the Mount Lofty Ranges and Greater Adelaide and Northern and Yorke regions draft Investment Strategies to ensure coast and marine issues are kept on the regional radars.

We are a self-funded organisation and ask a yearly \$5 membership from groups or individuals to help contribute towards administrative costs. If you would like to become a member please contact Nick Crouch on (08) 8372 6887, Nick.Crouch@tv.tafe.sa.edu.au

Port Vincent Forum: Get to know your Gulf

How well do you know your gulf?
On April 9th Friends of Gulf St Vincent will host a community forum to discuss progress on the Gulf St Vincent Marine Plan. This forum is being kindly sponsored by the Department for Environment and Heritage.

Expert speakers will talk about the history of the Gulf, shipwrecks, fishing, ecology, Marine Protected Areas and the Gulf St Vincent Marine Plan.

This is your opportunity to find out how the government is planning to protect Gulf St Vincent and discover a lot more about why it is such a precious resource.

Get to know your Gulf!

Saturday, April 9th, 9:00am until 4:30pm
Port Vincent Institute, Marine Parade, Port Vincent

Lunch will be provided

Please RSVP to Pat Harbison by 2/4/05 so that we can organise catering.

More information about the forum (including accommodation at Port Vincent) can be obtained by contacting Pat Harbison on 8522 4714.

Dredging Outer Harbor: Outer Site, Outer Mind

You may have heard that Flinders Ports are proposing to dredge the channel at Outer Harbor from a depth of 12.2 metres to 14.2 metres so that 'Post Panamax' vessels can come into Outer Harbor. These ships are appreciably larger than those able to travel through the Panama Canal.

Friends of Gulf St Vincent have made representations to relevant Ministers, to the Development Assessment Commission (DAC) and to the Premier on particular aspects of these works.

The Friends have seen deepening of the channel as compatible with 'wise use', as in our first objective - to foster a unified community approach to the protection and wise use of the Gulf St Vincent. Our disappointment comes from learning that Flinders Ports wants to barge their dredged material out into a deeper part of the Gulf and dump it, out of general sight.

The Friends see this as inconsistent with the spirit of what is called the '1996 Protocol' which effectively replaced what was known as the London (Dumping) Convention of 1972, the international agreement on disposing of dredged material in environmentally sound ways. While Australia is a signatory to the Protocol, the Act which would apply it in South Australian waters has not commenced. There has been a 'Sea Dumping' Act in South Australia for 20 years, but it has never passed the final administrative stages that make it law.

In the absence of a specific sea dumping Act, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) controls dredging. Its guidelines - EPA 396/02 (current version September 2003) - cover environmental effects of dredging and disposal of the dredged material. On plain reading, we believe that they encourage applicants to bring material ashore and treat it as a potential resource.

This, incidentally, is the attitude of major dredging companies and their professional associations. It has also long been the attitude for dredging from the Port River.

Within just a few years of European settlement, port operators needed to dredge the 'river' to get access to the ships of that time.

Much of the town of Port Adelaide is built on material dredged from what was originally a shallow creek, running through tidal wetlands.

The Friends have raised two issues.

The first is the known risk to the proposed 'dump' area from the estimated 3 million cubic metres of material that will be removed. More specifically the Friends are concerned about the invasive alga *Caulerpa racemosa*. This is a much more vigorous pest than the *C. taxifolia* that our

State authorities appear to have brought under control in West Lakes and parts of the Port River.

Our concern, very simply, is that fragments of *C. racemosa* may spread from the proposed dumpsite to the Orontes Banks. This formation adjoins the dumpsite on the western side of the Gulf. The Orontes Bank is one of the gems of Gulf St Vincent, as anyone who has taken a boat across the Banks, or, better, has dived on them, will attest. It is a major sea grass meadow, rich with dependant molluscs, crustaceans, worms and fish.

The second issue is one of attitude. The International Protocol, the EPA Guidelines and general international practice no longer promote dumping dredged material anywhere that is conveniently out of sight.

With the publicity for the Premier's 'South Australia's Strategic Plan' to foster creativity and encourage innovation, we would have hoped to see better than Third World thinking apply to this project.

We are told that better environmental treatment of the dredged material would be too expensive, with suggestion of costs of the order of \$30 per cubic metre to use the material.

Against this we note that the Coastal Protection Board advised the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee that in 1997 it dredged 600,000 cubic metres of sand and pumped it to the metropolitan beaches for just under \$5 per cubic metre.

Coastal Protection Board also says that that bank of sand has been drawn down, and it is not sure where the next supply might come from.

Three million cubic metres of material coming out of the northern end of the metropolitan beaches; 600 000 cubic metres needed to nourish those beaches. Are we missing something here?

What other things can you do with dredged material? A variation on the build-up of what is now Port Adelaide is the practice of creating islands outside other rivers when they are dredged. Brisbane has the example of Bishop Island, which was started 95 years ago, and is now absorbed into the Fisherman Islands Container Facility. Such use has the advantage of containing all the material in a small area,

where it can be treated. And that area will be much closer to the dredge site, with minimal steaming time.

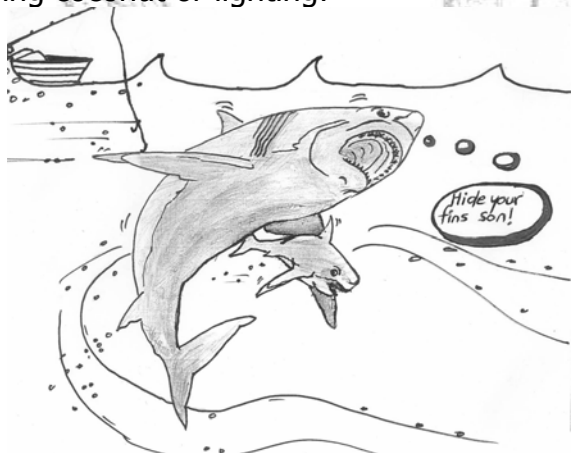
The Friends is not an engineering consultancy. But we are aware that the international operators who do works on this scale offer many more options to treat dredged material. We also are aware that there are operators based in South Australia who have developed their own, ingenious and effective ways of dredging to improve environmental outcomes for our Gulfs, which are enclosed waters, with limited exchange, and much less able to forgive mistakes with their management than open ocean waters.

Ian Kirkegaard

Shark vs predator!

Sea Week will be held this year from the 6th to the 13th of March. The theme for this year's Sea Week is "SOS Save Our Sharks".

Often when the word shark is mentioned one conjures up images of razor sharp teeth and a feeding frenzy amongst a blood stained backdrop. However the reality is that you are more likely to be killed driving to the beach, by a falling coconut or lighting!



Given the recent fatality off the Adelaide Metropolitan coast discussion on the plight of the shark may appear untimely, but Sea Week is putting out an SOS as many of our shark species are in dire peril and when you consider the statistics you have to wonder just *who is eating who?*

It may be interesting to note that for every person killed by a shark there is over 23 million kg of sharks and rays killed through both commercial and recreational fishing and shark control programs. This figure doesn't even begin to consider the decline in shark numbers that are potentially attributed to commercial bycatch and

other anthropocentric activities such as loss of nursery habitat through development, pollution and global warming.

Such pressures have led to around 20 species being listed under the IUCN Red Alert List of Threatened species and many of the species which utilise Gulf St Vincent such as the Great White are on the endangered list.

Sharks play an essential role in the marine system. There are species which are planktivorous, those which are scavengers and some which are carnivores. Even carnivorous sharks have an unequivocal role in the ocean, as without the higher order predators there could be severe changes to the food web (eg many of the predatory sharks feed on species which prey upon the smaller fish we find on our dinner plates so without the higher predators there is potential that there may be more predation upon commercial species).

Being a nation of people who love the beach it is always saddening to see a fatality from a shark attack, but sharks are given undeserving bad press. The media does not create disarray and encourage retribution from fatalities arising from bee stings which cause more deaths in Australia than sharks.

Human Deaths in Australia between 1980 – 1990, inclusive.

(Stevens, JD & Paxton JR, 1992. Shark attack: but who's the victim? Australian Natural History, 24(3):46-53)

Activity	Total Deaths	Average/ year
Crocodile attacks	8	0.7
Shark attacks	11	1
Lightning strikes	19	1.7
Bee stings	20	1.8
Scuba diving accidents	88	8
Drownings/ Submersions	3367	306
Motor vehicle accidents	32772	2979

On many occasions such attacks can be avoided by not swimming at dawn or dusk, in murky water, if you have bleeding wounds, where sharks are known to be present, where burley has been dispensed, where large numbers of fish, seals and dolphins are active, avoiding activities that mimic dragging burley or excessive splashing, removing speared fish from the water and being mindful of breeding seasons when sharks may be extra territorial.

Striving to save our sharks is an emotive debate, but as a species, humans are undeniably the most fearsome predators as we are the only predator which has the power to not only cause the demise of individuals but also whole species.

The Natural History of Gulf St Vincent

Looking for a good read about the Gulf and its natural resources?

If so a sub-committee of Friends of Gulf St Vincent (including Scoresby Shepherd, Pat Harbison and Ian Kirkegaard) in conjunction with Simon Bryars of Adelaide Coastal Waters Study, have developed a proposal for a book with the above title. This book will cover the Gulf, and its entrances, Backstairs Passage and Investigator

Strait. The Royal Society of South Australia has agreed to publish it in its well known natural history series. The proposed book will have 31 chapters and 39 contributors and will cover a variety of topics including the gulf's geology, oceanography, natural ecosystems (such as mangrove systems, estuaries, reefs and pelagic systems) and the major exploited fish. The editors hope that the book will be sent to the printers early in 2006.

Scoresby Shepherd

Josephine's Journal: upcoming events around the Gulf

For more information about Friends of Gulf St Vincent please contact: Ian (ianrk@iprimus.com.au). To add your event or workday to Josephine's Journal, contribute an article or snippets of information contact Mel on (0418 802 816, rees.melanie2@saugov.sa.gov.au).

Future events:

When	What	Further Details
March		
6 – 13 th	Sea Week	http://www.mesa.edu.au/seaweek.asp
22 nd	World Water Day	http://www.worldwaterday.org/
April		
3 rd	Friends of Patawalonga Creek workday	http://users.chariot.net.au/~littoral/pat-ck/fopc/
9 th	Gulf St Vincent Marine Plan forum – Port Vincent	Contact Pat Harbison 8522 4714.
17 th	Tennyson/ Henley & Grange/ Semaphore Dunes Group workday	Contact Alicia Clutterham 8408 1208
May		
1 st	Friends of Patawalonga Creek workday	http://users.chariot.net.au/~littoral/pat-ck/fopc/
22 nd	Tennyson Dunes Group workday	Contact Alicia Clutterham 8408 1208
11 th	Henley & Grange Dune Care Group workday	Contact Alicia Clutterham 8408 1208
21 st	Semaphore Park Coastcare workday	Contact Alicia Clutterham 8408 1208
June		
5 th	World Environment Day – "Green Cities"	http://www.unep.org/wed/2005/english/About_WED_2005/
July		
31 st	National Tree Day	http://www.planetark.com

Friends
of Gulf St Vincent

