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Hon Paul Caica MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation
Minister for River Murray
Minister for Water
GPO Box 1047
Adelaide 5001

Dredging guidelines review and update

Dear Minister,

The Friends of Gulf St Vincent is a voluntary organisation, with more than 90 individual and group members. Our principal objective is to foster a unified community approach to the protection and wise use of Gulf St Vincent. Enclosed with this letter is a booklet produced by the Friends that articulates our commitment to playing a positive role in championing the Gulf in the face of new and ongoing challenges.

One of our members recently alerted us to the fact that the licence for the dredging maintenance of the O'Sullivan's Beach boat launch facility is shortly to be renewed. The terms of this licence have been a cause for previous correspondence with the EPA in relation to dredge spoil being dumped on the nearby reef at O'Sullivan's Beach, resulting in significant damage to the reef flora and fauna.

We understand that the EPA is currently reviewing the dredging guidelines, and on checking the EPA website we find that this review was expected to be completed in 2011.

Since 2009 – when the Friends raised similar concerns about the inadequacy of current dredging guidelines – and now, there have been some significant developments regarding Adelaide Coastal Waters and improving their quality. The EPA, in its Adelaide Coastal Waters Quality Improvement Program (ACWQIP), clearly acknowledges the importance of 1) coastal water quality 2) its aesthetic and recreational value and 3) healthy marine habitats and their biota to the state and its residents.

Along with seagrasses, reefs are an important feature of our coastal regions and the added benefit of close-to-shore and intertidal reefs is that they provide safe opportunity for children and non-swimmers to observe and learn about marine ecosystems at close range. The reef to the north of O'Sullivan's Beach is one such resource.

A 2008 report by Angela Dutton and Kirsten Benkendorff to the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Natural Resource Management Board states "*Habitat surveys revealed that the Port Stanvac and O'Sullivan's Beach intertidal reefs are characterised by a relatively high percent cover of boulders and pebbles compared to other sites in the Adelaide Metropolitan region. Dominance of these complex microhabitats is also characteristic of other invertebrate rich hotspots found further south along the Fleurieu Peninsula (Benkendorff and Thomas, 2008) and along the urbanised NSW Coast (Benkendorff and Davis, 2002). A large number of intertidal species are restricted to the protected habitat underneath boulders and/or lay*

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their eggs on the underside of boulders (Benkendorff and Davis, 2004; Liversage, 2007; Benkendorff et al., 2008), suggesting that intertidal reefs with significant boulder fields should be prioritised for conservation.

http://www.amlnrm.sa.gov.au/Portals/2/Coast/pt_stanvac-biodiversity%20report%20Flinders%20Uni.pdf

In recent times this “invertebrate rich hotspot” been smothered by dredging spoils. While the reef slowly recovers, try to imagine what it would be if this periodic and significant setback is stopped.

We believe that environmental harm is being caused, and that there needs to be a cost benefit analysis of alternative solutions including exploring the need for fill in other nearby locations e.g. the remediation of the Pt Stanvac Refinery site.

Dredging is unfortunately necessary, however this does not excuse either the relevant authorities or the dredging contractors for adopting the easiest and cheapest solution. We challenge those responsible for the EPA dredging review to demonstrate that the ACWQIP is not just rhetoric. Help us to safeguard all reefs by prohibiting the dumping of dredge spoil onto them.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Bosley
President, Friends of Gulf St Vincent

CC: Dr Campbell Gemmill, Chief Executive, Environment Protection Authority
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