

Working to Revive, Renew and Protect the Ecology of Lake Macquarie NSW

Committee Channels Attention To Management Strategy

The Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee will move ahead with design works for the partial closure of Swan Bay in early 2004.

The decision was made in light of community support of the recommended strategy for the long-term management of the Channel, following public exhibition of the options in October and November 2003.

Committee Chairman, Cr Greg Piper, said the partial closure was the first stage of an adaptive approach to the management of the area in the longer term.

"There is a high level of community interest, with submissions received during the exhibition period indicating the community is well versed on the issues relating to Swansea Channel and have given their responses a great deal of thought," said Cr Piper.

"A number of the suggestions will be considered in the final design of the partial closure and I thank everyone who made comments."

"We received 52 submissions and the majority were very supportive of the recommendations of the report prepared by WBM Oceanics Australia, which outlined the preferred strategy for the long-term management of the channel."



Aerial view of channel entrance

dredging in order to source the required sand supply as part of the closure."

Cr Piper continued, saying the recommended strategy provided direction for the long-

"This is a complex issue within a dynamic environment."

"The comprehensive report considered the channel and nearby areas such as Swan Bay, as well as the findings of a detailed cost/benefit analysis carried out by Gillespie Economics and Hassall and Associates."

"The Project Management Committee will start the ball rolling with the partial closure, which will also involve further maintenance

term management of boating access through Swansea Channel.

"This is a complex issue within a dynamic environment. It is impossible to implement a solution and forget about it. Whatever we do will require ongoing management as part of an adaptive strategy," he said.

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Working Towards Sustainable Solutions



Greg Piper
Chairman,
Lake Macquarie
Project
Management
Committee

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Living Lake Macquarie newsletter.

In this issue we report on the key findings of the third Community Survey. It is pleasing to see that the community is increasingly optimistic about the Lake's long-term future. Not only that, but the results displayed a strong belief that the state of the Lake has improved over the life of the project.

While the issues of environmental management are complex, it is important that as a community we improve our understanding of the economic, lifestyle and environmental drivers in an improved Lake and balance our focus accordingly. The Project Management Committee is responsible for contributing to long-term improvements for the environmental good health of Lake Macquarie.

We have maintained a strong focus on the catchment, as this is where the source of the many problems in the Lake come from. The symptoms might show up in the waterway, but they originate from urban impacts, flawed stormwater management strategies and land clearing, to name just a few causes.

The impacts on the catchment from urbanisation should not be underestimated. While the activities of one person might not make much difference, the combined effect of 190,000 people is huge.

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Praise at Marmong Point

Foreshore stabilisation and vegetation work completed recently at Marmong Point has won praise from local residents.

Marmong Point has been home to John and Barbara Cornford for 43 years and they have seen many changes in the Lake over this time.

"The stabilization of the foreshore has been of upmost importance to most home owners at Marmong Point for a long time. I would like to congratulate everyone involved in the work that has been carried out," Mrs. Cornford said.

The work that has been completed at Marmong Point is part of the broader Cockle Bay upgrade that is addressing sediment and associated pollution problems to protect the environmental health and recreational amenity of Cockle Bay and the adjacent areas of Lake Macquarie.

Lake Macquarie & Catchment Coordinator, Jeff Jansson, said the project involved creating a natural sloping beach with some low-level rock work to protect against storm events.



Left: Eastern side of Marmong Point before stabilisation and re-vegetation. Right: Local Marmong Point resident of 43 years, Barbara Cornford.

"The area was also re-vegetated with discreet vegetation to ensure community access was not inhibited," he said. "Before the work was completed, erosion was a real worry for a lot of residents. Now the area is again a place of beauty, where



families enjoy their picnics and play in a safe environment," Mrs. Cornford said. "There is an active bird life at Marmong Point again and the wave action is much improved. It really is a job well done," she said.

Creek Becomes Classroom

Local environmental consultants Umwelt and The Office of the Lake Macquarie & Catchment Coordinator built a classroom at the creek for a unique demonstration day on the banks of Boat Alley on Saturday, 6 December.

Local residents gathered to inspect works to address erosion issues and find out what they could do to protect the banks of creeks and streams around the catchment.

The idea of a public demonstration day was developed with input from residents from along LT and Mudd Creeks, which run into Fennell Bay. It was designed to give the local community and users of Lake Macquarie an insight into environmental management.

Umwelt Senior Environmental Manager, David Blyth, said the demonstration site had been constructed during November.

"The demonstration site was developed to illustrate concepts for environmentally sound landscaping and re-vegetation with native species," he said.

"It gave members of the community a chance to inspect the new works at Boat Alley, discuss how well the designs meet their needs,



From left: David Blyth (Umwelt), Mr. Robert Rogers and Mrs. Avril Rogers from Fassifern at the demonstration day.

and suggest improvements," he said. "We also provided information about the design of the demonstration site, plus tips for looking after the creek."

David Blyth said that while many residents who had been living in the area a long time

wanted to see LT Creek "back the way it was", the aim was to achieve sustainable improvements to the current condition. Robert and Avril Rogers of Fassifern attended the demonstration day and said, "this is a lovely project and it is very well done." Another interested local who also attended and offered input was Mrs. Kirkness. "The demonstration day offered some great ideas for when we need to re-develop our waterfront areas," she said.

David Blyth said that there were plans to host another demonstration day in early 2004.

"Using feedback gathered from the field days, Umwelt will prepare a series of standard designs for bank protection measures along Lake Macquarie's estuarine creeks."

"The designs will have the twin objectives of meeting waterfront resident needs and restoring water quality and habitat along the creeks."

Fish Life Return Clear As Mudd

Fish are returning to a formerly degraded creek in Lake Macquarie after an absence of more than a decade, thanks to work funded by the Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee.

Mudd Creek, in Blackalls Park, had been the victim of effluent run-off from a nearby sewerage treatment plant for many years. While discharge of the effluent ceased in 1992, the treatment plant had contributed to toxic levels of nutrients in the creek and nearby residents had also complained about offensive odours caused by the state of the site.

Mudd Creek suffered two major fish kills in the early 1990's, as algal blooms resulting from the nutrient-rich environment deprived the water of oxygen. One of the fish kills reportedly resulted in 10 tonnes of dead fish being removed from the Creek.

Although the Creek was dredged to remove some of the nutrient enriched sediments, flows were still greatly restricted, particularly in the upper reaches of the Creek.

Recently though, fish were spotted in this section of Mudd Creek for the first time in over a decade, to the delight of locals.

Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee, Chairman Cr Greg Piper, said



Fish return to Mudd Creek

size of an existing culvert where Mudd Creek ran under Fennell Crescent and to add an additional culvert between Mudd and Stony Creeks.

"Mudd Creek was part of the focus in the list of water quality improvement projects for Fennell and Edmunds Bay, in a total program worth around \$1.5 million."

computer modelling and minor construction works have led to some improvement in the water quality of Mudd Creek.

"Mudd Creek was part of the focus in the list of water quality improvement projects for Fennell and Edmunds Bay, in a total program worth around \$1.5 million."

The recommended strategy was to increase the

The flow of water through Mudd Creek and Edmunds Bay will be further enhanced when dredging work commences in the near future, to improve water flows through to Fennell Bay. The broader program for the improvement of Fennell and Edmunds Bay will be completed in 2004.

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"The task of managing these critical areas will long outlive the Project Management Committee."

"We have established a path for future governments and councils to ensure a channel which is both safe for people requiring boating access to our region and actions that are environmentally responsible."

"Preparations for the design work has

already begun, with the scope of works and a detailed brief currently being developed."

"We expect to distribute the design brief for quotation in January 2004 and are hopeful an appointment could be made as early as February," Cr Piper said.

A copy of the report 'Accessing Lake Macquarie: A Strategy for Swansea Channel' is available on the project website, www.livinglakemacquarie.org

The Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee is in the middle of a very intensive period of Lake improvement works. Following is a list of some of the recent projects as well as some about to commence:

Recent Projects

- Maintenance of existing rock groynes and bank stabilisation at Pelican Foreshore will help to prevent further erosion of the beach area. Derelict retaining structures are being removed and the eroded sections of the beach will be re-established.
- The construction of a rock groyne and beach nourishment at Coon Island Western Recreation Area will protect this length of foreshore from ongoing erosion.
- The installation of three stormwater treatment devices and a vegetated swale at Letchworth Parade, Balmoral.

Upcoming Projects

- The removal of stormwater sediment deltas from drainage outlets along the public reserve at Swansea Flats will commence early in 2004. The project will also involve stabilisation using cobble beach protection and littoral revegetation.
- Maintenance dredging at selected locations within Fennell Bay, Edmunds Bay and LT Creek will commence in early 2004.
- Installation of a trash rack within an existing drainage line and adjacent to a commercial area at James Street, Toronto has begun and will be completed in early 2004.
- Installation of a stormwater treatment device and vegetated swale at Margaret Street, Fennell Bay has commenced and will be completed in early 2004.
- Installation of a stormwater sediment trap and channel improvement works along an existing drainage line at Park Avenue, Caves Beach will commence in early 2004.

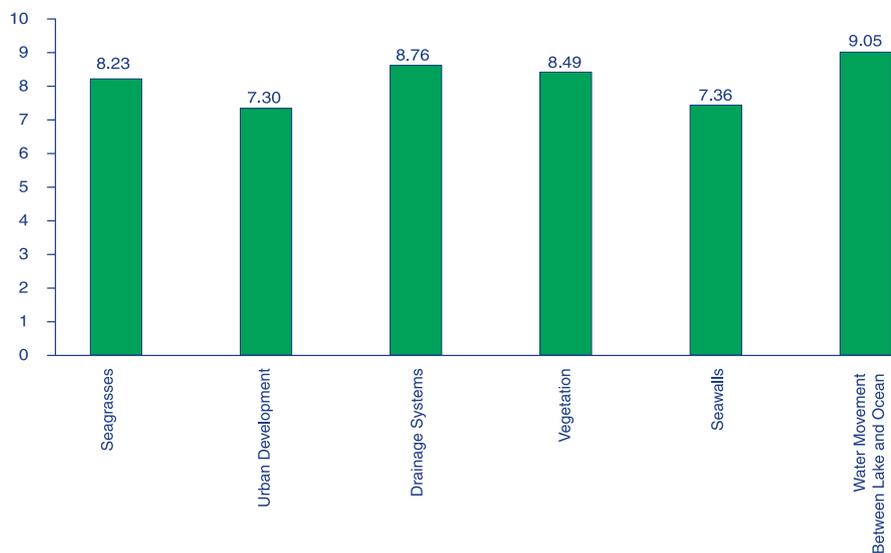
Lake Future Bright, According to Residents

Residents and users of Lake Macquarie have high hopes for its future environmental health, according to the findings of the third Living Lake Macquarie Community Survey. The survey report was released at the end of October.

Lake Macquarie & Catchment Coordinator, Jeff Jansson said the survey of 600 residents showed continued improvement in perceptions and awareness within the community on the Lake's environmental issues.

"There has been a significant increase of around 10% over the past three years in the

"The survey asked people to rank on a scale of one to ten, how important certain environmental issues are to the health of the Lake. Unfortunately, there was an increase in the importance placed on water movement between the Lake and ocean through Swansea Channel, yet an understanding of the impact of urban development remained low.



Comparison between level of importance placed on Lake issues by the community.

amount of people who believe the health of the Lake is improving," he said.

But Jeff Jansson warned against complacency.

"The Lake is still very stressed, even though we have made great headway in terms of

"The truth is that while tidal exchange in Swansea Channel has very little effect on water quality in the Lake, the level of urban development is a major contributor to nutrient and sedimentation loads, particularly in the northern reaches of Lake Macquarie."

"There has been a significant increase of around 10% over the past three years in the amount of people who believe the health of the Lake is improving."

erosion, where we have completed works to over 12km of foreshore stabilisation and vegetation, as well as improving water quality with 19 constructed wetlands and stormwater improvement devices.

"The job is not done. We have a work program in place which will take us to June 2005 and there is still plenty to do," he said.

Jeff Jansson pointed to statistics on specific environmental issues as proof that there was room for improvement.

Another statistic to cause concern was that 35% of respondents who failed to acknowledge that domestic activities have an impact on the Lake Macquarie environment. Jeff Jansson said the results of the survey would be used as a reference to assist in the future planning of community education and reporting programs. Comparisons with the previous survey results also provided a way of measuring shifts in perceptions and awareness within the local community.

Working Towards Sustainable Solutions:

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When you add together all the sediments and nutrients which feed into the Lake through storm water, there is enormous stress placed on the environment.

While the Government sector has provided a good framework for us to move forward in improving Lake Macquarie, much of the work and spending would be meaningless without the volunteers within our community.

The passion and commitment shown by many of our volunteer groups, such as Landcare, has contributed a huge amount to the great strides we have made.

Having taken part in the 2003 NSW Coastal Conference, held recently in Port Macquarie, I am also very excited that Lake Macquarie will host the event in 2004.

The Lake Macquarie project will be a major focus of the conference program and I believe the Lake will be held up as a model for environmental management involving the government, corporate and community sectors at all levels.

I hope you enjoy the latest news on the Lake Macquarie project.

Committee Chairman Appointed

Cr Greg Piper has been formally appointed as the Chairman of the Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee, after performing the role in an acting capacity since February 2002.

Cr Piper took on the role following the resignation of the former Chairman, Mr Peter Nelson, due to work commitments. The Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, Minister for Natural Resources, the Hon. Craig Knowles MP, confirmed the appointment in October.

Cr Piper said he was privileged to accept the role and was confident the Committee would continue to deliver on its objectives to improve the Lake environment.

"The next 12 months in particular will be very intense and will see us deliver more than \$6 million of improvements in Lake Macquarie."

The term of the Committee is to 2005.