

Restoring fish habitat in coastal Australia

OceanWatch Australia manages a program called Tide to Table that focuses on repairing the environment that fish rely upon for food, shelter, breeding and good health.

The program works to combine the needs of the seafood industry and fishers with management actions occurring on land. As such, farmers, local and state government staff, recreational and professional fishers work together to support projects that involve Landcare based on-ground works. This work improves fish habitat and water quality that in turn supports and builds sustainable seafood resources for the future.



HEALTHY CATCHMENTS
HEALTHY OCEANS



“Times have to change – the seafood industry and fishers are now taking a larger interest in Landcare activities and the actions land owners and government take within their boundaries, so fishers and aquaculture can continue to provide into the future” Geoff Blackburn, Chairman NSW Fishermen’s Co operative.

Program for 2007

There are currently 4 Tide to Table programs operating in NSW and Queensland. In its first year the Program operated across 30 sites in the Sydney region, repairing and restoring critical fish habitat and addressing poor water quality. These projects were designed so community Bushcare/Landcare groups could tackle larger issues concerning water quality, riparian vegetation and wetland management, which are slightly different in focus from conventional bushcare work and could benefit from contractor assistance.

The types of projects included;

- fencing off valuable wetlands from 4WD damage;
- restoring existing saltmarsh plants and animals and removing weeds;
- removing barriers to fish passage;
- directed stormwater outputs through gross pollutant traps and other mechanism designed to reduce sediment, debris, and nutrient loading; and
- stabilising river banks prone to erosion and replanting endemic natives.

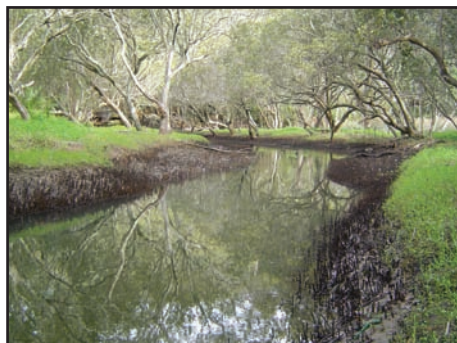


Education and action

“What’s the connection between my fish, seagrass and mangroves?”

Knowledge amongst the community of what healthy fish require is very important as humans are the underlying cause of the decline in fish numbers. Overfishing in the past and urban development/pollution are largely to blame for reduced numbers of fish. Tide to Table seeks to inform those of us that use our waterways for work and the managers of private land about the role estuarine wetland ecosystems (including saltmarsh, mangroves and seagrasses) play in maintaining sustainable fish habitat on our coast. Tide to table shows how small actions can increase the health and extent of a healthy fish environment.

To extend this knowledge to the community, Tide to Table holds a number of events and fun activities such as carp fishing, community planting days, workshops, field trips by boat to visit local aquaculture and seafood operators, excursions to wetlands and bushcare restoration sites. You may also see us at a stand at your local community or seafood festival.



Who benefits

- Fish, birds and other estuarine/river animals;
- lovers of seafood;
- commercial fishers and oyster producers;
- recreational fishers;
- people who enjoy our waterways;
- Swimmers, jet skiers, boaters, kayakers, visitors

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