

“Tide to Table”

Restoring fish habitat in Sydney

OceanWatch Australia has commenced a program called Tide to Table that focuses on restoring fish habitat across the Sydney Metropolitan Region.

Funded under the Australian Government National Landcare Program, this Tide to Table program focuses on working with community groups such as Bushcare to undertake on-ground works to improve fish habitat and water quality, that in turn support and build sustainable seafood resources and marine life within the Sydney region. The project is a partnership between the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority, NSW Department of Primary Industries and OceanWatch Australia.

Program for 2005- 06

There are 15 on-ground work projects, operating across 20 sites around Sydney, underway to repair and restore critical fish habitat and address poor water quality impacting on seafood resources. These on-ground projects are partnerships between local councils or state government agencies and community Bushcare groups and are designed to allow Bushcare volunteers to tackle issues concerning water quality, riparian vegetation and wetlands management.

Some examples of the types of outcomes expected from these projects include:

- areas of valuable wetland will be fenced off from 4WD damage;
- existing saltmarsh flora and fauna restored and weeds removed;
- barriers to fish passage removed;
- stormwater outputs directed through gross pollutant traps and other mechanism designed to reduce sediment, debris, and nutrient loading; and
- river banks prone to erosion stabilised and endemic natives replanted.

Education and action

There is a need for the community to be more informed of the role wetland ecosystems (including saltmarsh, mangroves and seagrasses) play in maintaining sustainable fish habitat. Much of Sydney’s wetland habitat has been lost or degraded due to development and urbanisation and now only small scattered pockets remain. These sites, such as the World Heritage Listed Towra Point Wetlands in Botany Bay and the saltmarsh remnants along the Parramatta River remain highly valuable and critically important assets that require management and focus.



Salt Marsh and Mangrove lining the Parramatta River are crucial in providing food and shelter for fish



HEALTHY CATCHMENTS
HEALTHY OCEANS



Small actions initiated at sites such as those being worked on by Bushcare and local government under the Tide to Table program can add to a supportive network that encourages fish breeding and provides shelter and food for aquatic life. By encouraging people to think before disposing of rubbish, washing cars on grassed areas, running anchors through seagrasses and participating in Bushcare Projects, together we can turn the tide on fish habitat loss.

A number of community field trips and picnic days are being organised around Sydney in the coming months. This includes: tours to provide the opportunity for Bushcare Volunteers gain insight into the seafood industry and commercial fishers to see what Bushcare Volunteers do; a fish habitat awareness family picnic day; and picnic tube stock planting mornings at sites across Sydney. Everyone is encouraged to participate. Details of location and address are on the website.

Who benefits?

By repairing and restoring critical fish habitat and water quality, Tide to Table will benefit:

- aquatic life, fish, birds and other estuarine/river animals;
- seafood lovers;
- commercial fishers and oyster producers;
- recreational fishers; and
- the general public and visitors to Sydney who enjoy our waterways.



Dumped vehicles, 4WDs and trail bikes have caused enormous damage to sensitive wetland areas such as saltmarsh.



Healthy populations of fish for seafood consumption rely on healthy habitat.

How can I get involved?

OceanWatch Australia has its head office at Sydney Fish Market, Pyrmont. You can call in or contact the Program Manager to find out about getting involved in a project and dates for community activities or check out our website at www.oceanwatch.org.au

The Tide to Table program is also underway within other regions across NSW.

For more information:

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