

*Celebrating 5 years of working on ground in genuine partnerships
rehabilitating aquatic fish habitat and improving water quality for seafood.*



WHAT IS TIDE to TABLE?

Tide to Table (T2T), established by OceanWatch Australia (OWA) in 2006, is a unique and unusual partnership that bridges the gulf between the commercial seafood industry and Landcare type incentives in our coastal and marine waterways. T2T concentrates on protecting and rehabilitating habitats and breeding grounds for fish and improving water quality for shellfish such as Oysters.

The “T2T model” is a flexible instrument that is run through a local management process with an OceanWatch Australia project officer, whom is usually housed with either primary industry, the NRM group or Government fisheries Department. The officer’s job is to manage a process that collates scientific data and seeks anecdotal information from relevant industry, government, indigenous, recreational fishing and community stakeholders to devolve funds on ground for particular targets. Along with this is a strong component of behaviour change, striving to build capacity and awareness of the linkages between catchment actions and the seafood commodity.

Components can include;

- Managing a devolved grants process or targeted projects first hand
- Connectivity tours (catchment tours linking stakeholders)
- Thematic signage and community activities towards specific objectives
- Fisher and aquaculture forums
- Seafood Environmental Management Systems (EMS)
- Marine debris cleanups

WHY THE NEED?

The project started to concentrate effort in Sydney harbour- addressing poor water quality for inshore fishers. Today the concepts and strategies relevant in Sydney are common to that of which the seafood industry faces nationwide. The issues and solutions are regionally different but central to the theme is that to continue producing fresh local Aussie caught product, all sectors of the seafood industry benefit from a healthy local marine environment”. The entire community is responsible for looking after catchments however the actions of a few can really do a lot of damage. A good example is dumping in saltmarsh or obstructing fish passage. To reach these offenders is not an easy task and requires smart thinking and practical exercises.

WHY TIDE TO TABLE

OceanWatch Australia's "SeaNet" extension service is the Australian seafood industries preferred delivery agent of environmental extension. SeaNet extends information between scientists, government policy makers and industry. This means accessing local input, knowledge and skills from those who fish the waters daily. Working on marine issues is critical to industry but the chore often falls between the cracks of other jurisdictions and it isn't an easy concept to grapple with. An industry run, steering group governed group working under the supervision of OWA and direction of Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups is a viable option to undertake these works. T2T is not a separate core funded NRM group it works to complement existing NRM operations.

THE VISION

To plant a form of a "T2T model" in all relevant coastal NRM regions of Australia to assist meet Catchment Action targets related to coastal marine and seafood related community engagement.

"Tide to Table means that farmers - whether of water or land - think about and solve environmental issues around them. Through the projects they're able to help each other to help themselves,"

Rachel King, EO, Seafood CRC Oyster Consortium

WHERE HAS IT WORKED BEFORE?

The program currently operates in NSW and Queensland. We have undertaken works at over 100 project sites over 19 major contracts within the Sydney Metropolitan, Hunter Central- Rivers and Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority regions (from Sydney to Taree) and also the Burnett Mary (around Bundaberg) and Burdekin Dry Tropics (around Townsville) NRM regions of Queensland. We have spent more than \$5 M towards these on ground works gaining \$2.8m cash through grants and actively involved over 3000 people in works and activities.



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Case studies

PROJECT : Stuart Creek culvert removal

PARTNERS: Conservation Volunteers Australia, Reef guardian Schools (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority)

LOCATION: Townsville

Stuart State School along with CVA and reef guardian schools has developed an environmental education curriculum that involves the students undertaking regular activities at the Start Creek site. Some of their activities will include tree planting, watering of seedlings, water quality monitoring through CreekWatch and taking regular photos throughout the project to monitor change over time.

- Removed the concrete culvert opening up fish passage to 8 km of stream.
- Rehabilitated a 2.36ha area along Stuart Creek by removing weeds (Parramatta grass) and revegetating the riparian zone.
- Held community tree planting events with local residents, schools and businesses



PROJECT : Bilingual fish habitat educational and awareness

PARTNERS: Sydney Metropolitan Catchment management Authority, Department of Environment, Sydney Fish Market

LOCATION: Inner Sydney and along the Georges River

To some the concept of killing thousands of carp for landfill is a day's work well done, to the Asian community it sounds ludicrous and a waste of a great resource. This, bioaccumulation of heavy metals, washing cars on the grass and responsible recreational fishing are just some of the topics we discuss via an interpreter and images during workshops. A healthy catchment requires an informed community. This project strived through innovative means to reach this segment with relevant information to change practices.



PROJECT : Walkers Point Shell Midden Protection & Interpretation project

PARTNERS: Green Army, Bundaberg Regional Council, IMPACT Make Your Mark, Woodgate Progress Association, Traditional Owners and Indigenous Representatives

LOCATION: Walkers Point, Woodgate - Queensland.

The project involves community groups, Traditional Owners, and Indigenous Representatives protecting significant shell middens, European heritage and indigenous artefacts located on the banks of the Burrum River. The middens and riparian zone is being degraded from impacts of camping and unmanaged pedestrian and vehicle access, which has caused erosion, habitat loss and removal, litter and weeds.

Works to protect the middens and riparian zone being organised include;

- an archaeological survey and carbon dating of shell fragments to determine age of middens,
- erosion control and bank stabilisation using temporary drift fences,
- revegetation to accelerate establishment of vegetation cover in erosion susceptible areas,
- installation of stairways to facilitate access,
- placement of boulders to keep vehicles on formed tracks and reduce further damage to middens,
- weed control and rubbish removal.

A major component of this project is to raise community awareness of the significance of the site, and to share Indigenous stories relating to previous utilisation of the site. Interpretive signage is being developed in consultation with Traditional Owner and Indigenous Representatives, historians, and natural resource management agencies. A working group consisting of representation from all stakeholders has been formed, to oversee the implementation of this project.



“Tide to Table has opened up lines of communication between the fishing industry and members of the broader community through education and participation, leading to a better understanding of the environment in which industry and the rest of the community rely on. The concepts of sharing and protecting our resource have been well communicated by this programme and it has assisted in projecting the actual status and image of the fishing industry, something which has been sadly lacking from those agencies which collect our fees. Keep up the good work. I encourage all fishers to continue to support this project”.

Rolf Norington, Estuary Prawn Trawl Management Advisory Committee Industry Representative, and active Hawkesbury fisher.

PROJECT: Hunter River Connectivity tour

PARTNERS: Hunter- Central Rivers CMA, NSW Dept of Primary Industries, Local industry and historical society.

LOCATION: Hunter River, Newcastle NSW

Industry organized connectivity tours are a means for the wider catchment to see how their actions effect that of the seafood industry that operates within. They lead to better understanding between participants of each other roles and can often initiate actions onground for environmental improvement.

The tours aim to engage the community, community groups, farmers, aquaculture (oyster growers) and the fishing industry to improve NRM knowledge and skills and assist in the management of natural resources. This tour was customized according to individual considerations, stakeholders and potential issues/ opportunities. On the Hunter River there is a large steel and mining industry alongside fragile wetlands at Hexham Swamp and a small but successful prawning industry. Participants discussed topics on the bus and boat trip that were relevant to their day to day work or interests. In this way a lot of people whom would not necessarily speak to each other were given an opportunity to interact. The results from such interaction are that things begin to happen, projects come together and new ideas are discussed and debated with all considered. Government at all levels also find this interaction very useful for two way communication flow at a social level.



“The fisherman are really the measuring stick of how our rivers are actually going. This is a great chance to hear things from their perspective and see first hand how fish and water quality are holding up”

Phil Mercer, BBC Reporter

PROJECT : Seagrass friendly moorings

PARTNERS: OnWater Marine Services, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Hawkesbury Nepean and Hunter–Central Rivers Catchment Management Authorities, Marine Parks Authority and Pittwater Council.

LOCATION: Pittwater, Sydney and Shoal bay, Port Stephens

Dump weight and chain moorings are chains tied to a heavy bit of concrete or steel. They drag across the seabed tearing out marine vegetation including seagrass. From the air the area of damage from just a few moorings becomes obvious. A seagrass friendly mooring is screwed into place, has a spring shock absorber with rope lead to a surface buoy. In conjunction with aerial surveys of seagrass these mooring were installed at a number of locations of priority. They cost only marginally more than tradition systems.

PROJECT : Saltmarsh restoration

PARTNERS: Sydney Metro CMA, George Kendal Bushcare, Parramatta Council

LOCATION: Pemberton Street reserve, Parramatta. Sydney

This project involved rehabilitating a derelict site close to Parramatta's CBD. Originally a horse paddock in the 1940's and since left to overgrow we were able to gain funding to begin a process of stewardship for the local residents and council which involved removal of weeds and dumped soil and restoration of the ecological processes connected to the saltmarsh. Saltmarsh and mangrove being a vital habitat for nursery fish production the site is one of only a few left not built upon. Once the topsoil was removed and graded natural regeneration was quick to take hold. Being a sensitive historical and ecological site a lot of considerations were required to take on this more difficult project. Tide was an instrument to facilitate this to happen.



PROJECT : Dairy effluent and farm management for the oyster industry

PARTNERS: Local Dairy Farmers, NSW Farmers, Department of Primary Industries

LOCATION: Cessnock, Hunter

These projects involved furthering farm management systems and Dairy Self Assessment Tools to fund projects that minimised the liabilities associated with dairy farm operations such as managing the storage and build up of effluent, creek bank erosion and stock shade. These processes pose a significant risk to nearby Oyster harvest areas as the runoff contamination can close down an oyster lease with viral and faecal matter affecting oyster health and thus marketability and food safety.



The Tide to Table project provides an effective vehicle for initiating constructive dialogue between land holders and the seafood industry. The ability of Tide to Table to approach environmental issues from an industry perspective is a key factor contributing to the success of the program.
Anthony Zammit Manager, NSW Shellfish Program, NSW Food Authority