



## **PAINKALAC REPORT**

### **Background**

In September 2004, the Surf Coast Shire received funding from the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and Natural Heritage Trust to implement a two-year Healthy Waterways/Healthy Estuaries Community Project.

Interested members of the Aireys Inlet local community along with the relevant agencies (Surf Coast Shire, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority - CCMA, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Western Coastal Board, Parks Victoria, Barwon Water, and Great Ocean Road Coast Committee - GORCC) met and subsequently developed a management plan for the Painkalac Estuary. Key concerns at the time were;

- co-ordination of decision making between agencies
- lack of knowledge of the “health” or “condition” of the estuary and floodplain
- river mouth openings and associated flooding
- water quality and quantity (flows) and
- managing cultural, social and recreational values

These concerns have been expressed as objectives and actions in the Estuary Management Plan (EMP)

At the community’s request, the Surf Coast Shire then established the Painkalac Estuary Management Plan Implementation Committee to oversee the implementation of the plan. Five years on, much has been achieved towards the health and well-being of the Painkalac Estuary.

### **Achievements**

The Painkalac Estuary Management Plan Implementation Committee has gained many achievements and includes:

- The type and conservation significance of vegetation in the Painkalac Nature Reserve and Mellors Swamp has been mapped (Ecological Vegetation Class – EVC) by ecologists from the Arthur Rylah Institute.
- The area behind the Bottom Shops was resurveyed to define the boundaries and the practice of dumping of materials in the Painkalac Creek Reserve was discontinued.
- With assistance from a Greencorps crew and additional funding from the CCMA, the eastern side of the creek was fenced to restrict the access of stock to the creek. The fence has recently been repaired.
- A landscape plan was developed for the east bank between the Great Ocean Road and Bambra Road and placed on public exhibition. Following consultation with the wider community, on-ground works have commenced and include;
  - ❖ Construction of a walking/bicycle track
  - ❖ Removal of environmental weed species including Pampas Grass, Mirror Bush, Sweet Pittosporum, Coast Wattle Hybrid, Coast Teatree and Boneseed. Mature pine trees that were considered unsafe were either removed or pruned
  - ❖ Construction and planting of swale drains and installation of boardwalk over the drains
  - ❖ Removal and replacement (where appropriate) of dilapidated jetties

- ❖ Provision of purpose-built canoe-launching facilities. A canoe-launching platform/jetty was designed in consultation with the local commercial canoe operator and installed near the corner of Coastal Court and River Rd
  - ❖ Revegetation of the areas that had been weeded and mulched and also of parts of the degraded banks. Additional rock placement will be undertaken as necessary to protect the revegetated and are adjacent to the canoe-launching platform.
  - ❖ Installation of bollards to limit the access of vehicles and prevent further degradation of the creek banks and their fragile riparian vegetation.
- A contractor will remove large woody weeds in the Painkalac Nature Reserve, to complement the ongoing weed removal activities by Anglesea and Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Native Flora and Fauna (ANGAIR) and the Friends of the Aireys Inlet Wetlands and the Shire.
  - The Committee considered that a high priority should be given to protection of the midden site on the inland side of the barrier dune adjacent to Mellors Swamp, and GORCC has subsequently fenced the area.
  - In conjunction with GORCC a signage audit was completed to rationalise the signage and to remove redundant signs. A Painkalac Nature Reserve sign will be installed near the bridge on the west side of the valley in the rustic style of the Nature Reserve signs throughout the Surf Coast Shire.
  - The car park adjacent to the bridge has been cleared of large environmental weeds. There will be some landscaping including revegetation and bollard installation in lieu of the weeds that had previously provided a barrier between the car park and the creek bank.
  - The existing line of bollards along the creek near the Great Ocean Road will be extended to prevent the parking of vehicles immediately adjacent to the bank, which is currently leading to destruction of the bank vegetation.
  - Following urging by the committee, and community concerns about the long dry periods and lack of freshwater inflow to the creek, funding was obtained by the CCMA and an Environmental Flow Study was commissioned. Unfortunately the study was focussed on one freshwater reach of the creek and not on the estuarine stretch (below Old Coach Rd), because the tools for the study of flows in estuaries had not been refined. The final report recommended increased flows under certain conditions. Barwon Water subsequently presented computer-modelling data for the predicted run-off from the catchment into the Painkalac Reservoir to support their decision not to release water purely for environmental purposes.
  - The CCMA installed an erosion control structure on the creek at Old Coach Road. For detailed information see the link below.

#### **Where to from here**

The Painkalac EMP has now been fully implemented. The Committee will complete a final report on the Plan in early 2010. The community can continue to be engaged in the management of the estuary through the CCMA Estuary Watch Program. Barwon Water has a Community Advisory Board that responds to community issues in relation to Barwon Water assets and water management. On-ground works within the Painkalac Reserve will continue to be undertaken as part of Council's ongoing reserve maintenance program.

#### **Technical Notes (Links)**

Painkalac Environmental Flows Study (including Water Supply Modelling: Barwon Water)  
 Old Coach Road erosion control structure  
 Planned river mouth openings