

OUR VALUABLE ESTUARIES, COAST AND MARINE ENVIRONMENTS — MAKING CONNECTIONS

overview of the project

OceanWatch Australia state that over 50 percent of aquatic habitat has been lost or severely degraded along the New South Wales coast since European settlement. This is impacting on fish numbers and is threatening the long-term viability of wild harvest fisheries. The fishing industry initiated a program with OceanWatch Australia to develop an environmental education resource for Geography teachers that tackles the issue of coastal-marine management from a whole of catchment perspective.

OceanWatch Australia produced 500 resource kits for Year 7 to 10 school students that explained the key physical and ecological processes that operate in coastal-marine environments including:

- the interaction between human activities and coastal catchments
- the importance of protecting our coastal environments for sustainable fisheries
- the threats to the sustainability of these environments
- how to respond to the threats and protect water quality and fish habitat.



Our Valuable Estuaries, Coast and Marine Environments — Making Connections poster

how the project was carried out

At the beginning of the project, a steering committee was established made up of the key partners: NSW Department of Education and Training, NSW Fishermen's Cooperative Association, the Geography Teachers Association of NSW and natural resource management representatives. The committee provided strategic direction through the development of a scoping document for the content, format and key messages.

A professional writer was then contracted to produce educational materials for the project, consistent with the NSW geography syllabus. The resources produced included:

- two case studies, with teaching support documentation
- a full colour double-sided A3 poster for each case study
- a poster titled "A Vision for Sustainable Coastal Environments"
- seven generic fact sheets for NSW and four case study specific fact sheets.

The first draft of the resources was produced by the consultant and trialled by geography teachers at professional development workshops, and also by key natural resource management stakeholders to ensure it was user friendly and accurate. The draft resources and feedback from the review were then made available to the steering committee for peer review.

The final resource kit was produced and included amendments suggested as a result of the reviews. These resources were ultimately made available on the OceanWatch Australia website, as well as in hard copy. To promote the availability of the resources a series of state wide media alerts and releases were sent out and a high profile launch was held at the Sydney Fish Market where the first complete resource kit was presented to students from Sydney Secondary College.

outcomes now and in the future

This project produced a unique stand-alone resource examining coastal management by looking at land, water and waste management. This resource offers an alternative and engaging education method to traditional learning from textbooks and note taking.

The case studies provide a local perspective of coastal processes, the interaction of humans in this environment and the cumulative impact of catchment activities. The project provides a platform from which future case studies on inland waterways can be developed. Additional case studies would make the materials applicable to a wider audience by making materials relevant to other regions.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The formation of partnerships between the bodies involved with fisheries management, fishers and the teaching fraternity has ensured the correct messages were imparted.

It proved somewhat of a challenge to find a suitably qualified writer for the materials produced, as they required skills in both curriculum writing and an understanding of natural resource management and practices.

Feedback from teachers was that the kit was well designed, appealing and engaging for students and teachers. The program tasks were well constructed, easy to understand and good for all levels of learning. Some teachers suggested the resources would need to be adapted to suit the needs and location of their school, particularly with regard to the location of field work.