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Cape Howe Marine National Park



Management Plan July 2006

CAPE HOWE MARINE NATIONAL PARK
MANAGEMENT PLAN



July 2006

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of *Country*. In their rich culture, Indigenous Australians are intrinsically connected to the continent – including the area now known as Victoria. Parks Victoria recognises that the park is part of *Country* of the Traditional Owners.

Parks Victoria is grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have contributed to this approved Management Plan. Special thanks go to members of the East Gippsland Marine Management Plan Advisory Group: John Ariens, Jeff Cross, Barry Kenny, Jenny Mason, John Minehan, Luke Molan, Leo OpDen Brouw, Josh Puglisi and Peter Sands.

Note

Technical terms used in this plan are explained in the **Glossary** at the end of the plan.

Disclaimer

This plan is prepared without prejudice to any negotiations or litigated outcome of any native title determination applications covering land or water within the plan's area. It is acknowledged that any future outcomes of native title determination applications may necessitate amendment of this plan; and the implementation of this plan may require further notifications under the procedures in Division 3 of Part 2 of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cwlth).

The plan is also prepared without prejudice to any future negotiated outcomes between the Government/s and Victorian Indigenous communities. It is acknowledged that such negotiated outcomes may necessitate amendment of this plan.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this plan is accurate. Parks Victoria does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence, which may arise from you relying on any information in the publication.

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FOREWORD

Cape Howe Marine National Park makes an important contribution to Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, it is Victoria's most easterly and remote Marine National Park, adjoining the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.

It is here that warmer waters from the East Australian Current mix with up-wellings of cooler southern waters, creating an environment rich in nutrients and high in productivity. Many species from warmer northern waters reach their southern limit in the park. A range of habitats, including sandy beaches, subtidal reefs, intertidal reefs and open waters, provide for a diverse array of species, including fish, algae and transient whales.

The seascapes of the park and the surrounding landscape and waters are spectacular, with a backdrop of Croajingolong National Park, Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve and Nadgee Nature Reserve. The landscape and seascape values of the park are intrinsic elements of *Country* for the Traditional Owners in accordance with tradition.

Indigenous tradition indicates that the park is part of the *Country* of the Bidwell Indigenous people and that other Indigenous people, including the Yuin Nation, also have an association with the coastal region of this area.

The history of the park since European settlement is also rich in diversity, involving maritime history, commercial fishing and wartime activities. Evidence of maritime exploration is present today, with the remains of the steamship *Gilbert San* which ran aground in 1929, visible on the shore today.

Today, the Cape Howe Marine National Park provides opportunities for a range of nature-based activities in a remote setting, including diving, snorkelling, boating and hiking. Because of the remote nature of the park, visitors need to be experienced and self-reliant.

Implementation of this Management Plan will help protect and conserve the park's natural and cultural values, help make the park more widely known and appreciated, and ensure visitors both enjoy and respect its importance for current and future generations.

The care of Cape Howe Marine National Park is not a task for government alone, nor only for those who live on the coast. It is a task for the whole Victorian community. This Management Plan sets out the ways in which we can work together to learn about, protect and sustain an important part of our marine environment.

I welcome collaborative initiatives in management of the park, particularly with Indigenous communities, local community groups and individuals, and key government agencies.

I am pleased to take the opportunity to thank those many individuals and organisations who made submissions on the Draft Plan and contributed to this plan by responding to requests for information or views. In particular, I thank representatives of the East Gippsland Marine Management Plan Advisory Group for their valuable contribution to development of the plan, and I look forward to the community's ongoing support for the management of Cape Howe Marine National Park.



JOHN THWAITES MP
Minister for Environment

APPROVED MANAGEMENT PLAN

This Management Plan has been prepared under section 17D of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.) and is approved for implementation.

The plan provides the basis for the future management of Cape Howe Marine National Park. It was finalised following consideration of the 18 submissions received on the Draft Management Plan.

PROF. LYNDSEY NEILSON
Secretary to the
Department of Sustainability and Environment

MARK STONE
Chief Executive
Parks Victoria

INTRODUCTION TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Victorians are custodians of some of the most remarkable and diverse marine environments on Earth. These include deep open water, shallow embayments, rocky reefs, canyons, seagrass meadows, tidal sandflats and mudflats, and estuaries, and they support more than 12 000 known species. Around 90% of these marine species are found only in the waters of southern Australia.

Broadly speaking, Victoria has responsibility for the waters which extend offshore to three nautical miles and cover around 70 000 square kilometres. Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries make up about 5% of this area, but protect a range of significant species and important habitats as well as maritime artefacts and areas of significance to Indigenous communities.

The vast three-dimensional marine environment has characteristics that are very different from those of the land and atmosphere. The fundamental physical properties — pressure, temperature, salinity, density and availability of nutrients and gases — are all very different. There are also great differences in the types of substrates, and the physical and biological processes that occur, such as tides, currents, light penetration, erosion, sedimentation, oxygen uptake, life cycles and even the food chains.

The organisms that occupy the marine environment are different as well. On land vascular plants dominate, but in marine habitats they are very rare, occurring only in very shallow water on sheltered coastlines. In most marine environments their ecological roles in photosynthesis and oxygen production are undertaken by algae, which range in size from giant kelps to minute single-celled species. Other single-celled organisms such as diatoms, cyanobacteria, dinoflagellates and forams, together with invertebrate larvae and marine fungi, make up most of the abundant marine plankton that is the basis of all marine food chains.

As on land, invertebrates, including molluscs (e.g. octopuses, abalones, and snails), crustaceans (e.g. crabs, lobsters, tiny amphipods) and echinoderms (e.g. sea cucumbers, sea stars and sea urchins) dominate

the marine fauna, but insects — the most abundant invertebrates on land — are almost absent. The dominant vertebrates are fish, although mammals and reptiles also inhabit the marine environment and many birds inhabit both realms.

Although they are very different physically and biologically, the land, atmosphere and marine environments are interconnected. Water and gases are transferred between oceans and the atmosphere. There are animals with both marine and freshwater life stages and some species breed in estuaries where fresh water from the land mixes with oceanic salt water. Fresh water and sediments from catchments far inland are dispersed into coastal waters, bringing with them nutrients needed to maintain inshore marine ecosystems but also pollution from human activities.

The sea interconnects marine habitats over great distances. Tides and currents move sediments, plankton and organic matter into and through habitats, along with flotsam, jetsam, ballast water and oils from catchments or inshore waters, released from ships on the open seas, or washed from the shores of other countries. Many marine animals migrate long distances, passing freely into and out of Victorian waters and spending much of their lives in the open ocean.

A vision for Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries

‘A world-class system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries that conserves the diversity of Victoria's marine environments, protected and enjoyed by Victorians and visitors, forever.’

This vision for Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries is detailed in the *Marine National Park and Marine Sanctuaries Management Strategy 2003-2010* (Parks Victoria 2003a) and summarised in the following extract:

‘The vision for Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries is to maintain marine ecosystems in their natural state, enjoyed by visitors and protected from the effects of inappropriate activities. The system will safeguard representative examples

of undisturbed natural marine habitats, respect cultural heritage values, and be a place of inspiration, enjoyment and renewal for all people. The system will complement our world-class national parks system on land.

This vision aims to preserve the diversity of our marine environment, its flora and fauna, its natural beauty, and the diversity of activities that may be enjoyed there. It is a vision that invites all Victorians to become involved, to take pride in our Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, and to share in their stewardship' (Parks Victoria 2003a).

Contribution of Cape Howe Marine National Park to the statewide system

At the far eastern extent of Victoria, Cape Howe Marine National Park (4050 ha) is Victoria's most remote Marine National Park, a wilderness that few people have seen. Adjacent to the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park, it is where Victoria touches the Pacific, with a diversity of cool and warm water species.

Implications for management

The differences and connections in the marine environment mean that Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries must be managed somewhat differently from land environments. Natural, recreational and cultural values may be affected by the use of both land and marine areas some distance away, over which Cape Howe Marine National Park managers have no direct control. Impacts

on one marine habitat can quickly affect another and human activities and natural events on land and in the atmosphere can have widespread consequences for the marine environment. Boundaries in the ocean can be difficult to define, and the effects of human activities can be hidden from view.

Like the atmosphere but in contrast to land, the marine environment is a common resource which is rarely in private ownership, and there are few natural or artificial barriers to movement. Many of the strategies used to concentrate the impacts of recreational activities in terrestrial parks (e.g. the creation of walking tracks and picnic areas) are not feasible in the marine context.

Conserving historic and cultural places is also a challenge because it is difficult to identify an underwater place or monitor activities that take place on the open sea or under water. Sea *Country* and cultural association with, or past use of, underwater sites which were exposed before the sea level rose, must also be considered.

The long-term protection of the Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries relies on the support and goodwill of the community, together with the help of coastal managers and government agencies. The plan seeks to foster a strong sense of custodianship of the Cape Howe Marine National Park and to strengthen its protection while respecting cultural and community associations with the area.

SUMMARY

As Victoria's most easterly Marine National Park, Cape Howe Marine National Park (4050 ha) makes an important contribution to Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. The park abuts the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone (one of only three Wilderness Zones on the Victorian coast) of Croajingolong National Park, which then adjoins the New South Wales Nadgee Nature Reserve, forming one of the largest coastal conservation areas on the south-eastern Australian mainland.

The marine flora and fauna of Cape Howe Marine National Park is largely unexplored. There are a variety of marine ecological communities, including sandy beaches, intertidal and subtidal rocky reefs, subtidal soft sediments and pelagic communities, providing habitat for a range of species. The warmer eastern waters mix with cooler southern waters, creating an environment rich in nutrients and high in diversity. Many species in these waters reach their southern limits in Far East Gippsland. A diverse array of sponges, hydroids, ascidians and gorgonians can be found among the sandstone reefs of the park.

The park has outstanding landscape and seascape values, with pristine waters and a coastline undisturbed by human influences. The area protects a variety of coastal landforms and examples of active coastal processes at work. The rocky habitats of the park have complex forms and structures, including low-profile reefs eroded into pits and gutters, and heavy boulder reefs with gutters and ridges up to three metres high.

Indigenous tradition indicates that Cape Howe Marine National Park is part of the *Country* of the Bidwell¹ people. Indigenous tradition also indicates that other Indigenous people, including the Yuin Nation, may also have an association with the area now park. At the time of publication, there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas within the park.

One shipwreck listed on the Victorian Heritage Register — the steamship *Gilbert San* (1929) — is within the park. The remains of the *Gilbert San* are still visible from shore today.

There are opportunities for visitors to undertake extremely remote and self-reliant nature-based activities in the park, although the park is difficult to access. Hiking and boat-based recreation opportunities consistent with protecting the wilderness values of the area are available, although visitors need to be self-reliant and well prepared.

Cape Howe Marine National Park will be managed as a world-class marine protected area for conservation and appropriate recreation, in accordance with its status. It will contribute to the overall maintenance of marine biodiversity in the Twofold Shelf marine bioregion, protecting a range of marine ecological communities, threatened marine mammals and shorebirds.

Protecting natural processes within the park will be an important management goal, as will improving partnerships with local communities, community groups, relevant Indigenous communities and other government agencies.

Significant management directions for the park are summarised as follows.

- Natural processes, including competition, predation, recruitment and disturbance, will be protected to ensure an overall benefit to the biodiversity and variety of marine ecological communities in Cape Howe Marine National Park.
- Identified threats to the park will be minimised through addressing the outcomes of ongoing monitoring, risk assessment and, where feasible, complementary adjacent, coastal and catchment management.
- Research and monitoring to improve the scientific basis for management, including baseline data collection, marine habitat mapping and threat assessment, will be undertaken as outlined in the Statewide Management Strategy (Parks Victoria 2003a) and through collaborative research links.
- The Traditional Owners' cultural lore, interests and rights in the park and aspirations relating to *Country*, will be

reflected in the park's planning and management, in accordance with legislation and policies, and through strong cooperative working relationships with the relevant Indigenous communities.

- Historic relics and places including shipwrecks will be conserved by protecting them from damaging activities.
- Maritime and other cultural heritage will be interpreted off-site, with priority given to the historic theme 'Shipping Along the Coast'.
- Visitors' safety and their understanding and appreciation of the park's natural and cultural values will be enhanced by information, interpretation and education programs, which will be integrated with management of the adjoining Croajingolong National Park (Cape Howe Wilderness Zone) and nearby Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve.
- Visitors will be encouraged to adopt minimal-impact techniques and to adhere to industry-developed standards appropriate to their activity.
- Opportunities for the community and other stakeholders to work together and with Parks Victoria to achieve common goals for the park will be promoted.
- Impacts of illegal harvesting will be minimised through information, education, interpretation and improved surveillance and enforcement.

¹ This management plan adopts the spellings used by the Native Title Unit, Department of Justice. There are a number of alternative spellings and pronunciations. For the Bidwell these include: 'Bidawal', 'Biduelli', 'Bid doo wal', 'Bidwal', 'Biduell-mittang', 'Bidwilli', 'Bidwelli', 'Birtowell', 'Biddiwell', 'Birtowall' and 'Birdhawal'.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and planning area

Cape Howe Marine National Park is approximately 550 km east of Melbourne and 15 km east of Mallacoota (figure 1). The park adjoins the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.

The park (figure 1) covers a total of 4050 hectares of land and waters reserved under Schedule 7 of the National Parks Act.

The eastern boundary of the park is aligned with the Victoria – New South Wales (NSW) border. The Iron Prince Reef is excluded from the park (figure 2). The western boundary is located east of Telegraph Point and Gabo Island. The park extends to the high water mark and seawards for approximately three nautical miles. The vertical boundary of the park extends to 200 m below the seabed.

1.2 Creation of the park

Cape Howe Marine National Park forms part of the system of 13 Marine National Parks and 11 Marine Sanctuaries in Victorian waters. The selection of these areas was based on more than 10 years of research, investigation and community consultation by the former Land Conservation Council (LCC) and Environment Conservation Council (ECC), summarised in the *Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation Final Report* (ECC 2000). The recommendations of the ECC accepted by government (Government of Victoria 2002) included reservation of new parks and sanctuaries under the National Parks Act. Cape Howe Marine National Park was included on Schedule 7 of the National Parks Act on 16 November 2002 (appendix 1).

When created, much stronger penalties were applied for all forms of fishing, including shellfish collection, in Marine National Parks or Marine Sanctuaries than apply for taking or damaging fauna, plants or objects from these areas.

Cape Howe Marine National Park includes areas between the high and low water mark that were formerly part of Croajingolong National Park (Cape Howe Wilderness Zone).

1.3 Plan development

This final management plan for Cape Howe Marine National Park was prepared by Parks Victoria, with significant input from the East Gippsland Marine Management Plan Advisory Group and other stakeholders, taking into account existing information, reports and research findings that relate to the park and is informed and supported by a range of best practice management systems.

The strategies outlined in this plan have been guided by the statewide *Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries Management Strategy 2003 – 2010* (Parks Victoria 2003a).

The plan is a strategic guide for future management of the Cape Howe Marine National Park. As a public document, the plan establishes how Parks Victoria will protect the natural and cultural values of the park, and describes the services and facilities that will be provided to help visitors enjoy, appreciate and understand the park in ways that are consistent with this. The plan also serves to inform and encourage cooperative land management and participation in community-based programs between Parks Victoria and managers of areas adjacent to the park.

As a working document for the park, the plan informs Parks Victoria's development of corporate plans, serves as a framework for subsequent detailed planning and governs management activities.

The Draft Management Plan was published for public comment in 2005 and 18 submissions were received (appendix 2).

Where necessary, further consultation with the community and stakeholders was undertaken.

Key changes made to the draft plan in preparing this final management plan included:

- greater emphasis on the protection and management of natural values of the park
- refined and more detailed background text to assist in understanding of management strategies
- greater clarification of the role of Parks Victoria and other government agencies

- refined background text on past uses of the area
- strategies to increase community and visitor involvement in reporting incidents and illegal activities
- an increased emphasis on the no-fishing provisions of the park
- enhanced background text and strategies to encourage visitor safety
- provision to exclude motorised vessels from landing and subsequently launching within the park.

This plan will direct future management of Cape Howe Marine National Park until reviewed.

2.1 Regional context

Cape Howe Marine National Park forms part of a representative system of 12 other Marine National Parks and 11 Marine Sanctuaries in Victoria, established within the broader context of a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA) (Parks Victoria 2003a). The NRSMPA contributes to the establishment of a global representative system of marine protected areas (ANZECC TFMPA 1999).

Cape Howe Marine National Park is within the Twofold Shelf marine bioregion, as identified by the Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia (IMCRA). This regionalisation identified 60 marine bioregions, five of which apply to Victorian waters (ANZECC TFMPA 1999).

The Twofold Shelf marine bioregion encompasses the marine environment extending from the east of Wilsons Promontory to Tathra in southern New South Wales, including the Kent Group of islands in Tasmania (IMCRA Technical Group 1998). Three Victorian Marine National Parks and one Marine Sanctuary (Cape Howe Marine National Park, Point Hicks Marine National Park, Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park and Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary) are in the Twofold Shelf marine bioregion along with the Kent Group Marine Reserve in Tasmania. The Twofold Shelf marine bioregion is characterised in the far eastern area by a coastline punctuated by rocky headlands and localised outcrops of granite and metamorphic rocks such as Point Hicks, Gabo Island and the Iron Prince Reef. Water temperatures are generally warmer than those elsewhere in Victoria because of the influence of the East Australian Current. The continental shelf is close to the shore and brings up-wellings of cold water into the bioregion. The marine flora and fauna of the region has components of eastern temperate, southern temperate and cosmopolitan species (Parks Victoria 2003a).

Indigenous tradition indicates that the park is part of the *Country* for the Bidjil Indigenous people (section 5.1). Indigenous tradition also indicates that other Indigenous people, including the Yuin Nation, may also have an

association with the area now park. At the time of publication, there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of the park.

As the park adjoins the Far East Gippsland Basin, it is influenced by activities in the catchment, within the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) region (section 4.2).

The coastline adjacent to the park is part of Croajingolong National Park – Cape Howe Wilderness Zone within the Shire of East Gippsland, and managed by Parks Victoria under the provisions of the National Parks Act. To the west of the park is Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve.

A remote, wind-swept wilderness environment typifies the area surrounding the park. The vast open ocean and sandy shoreline of the park is contrasted with expansive mobile sand dunes inland, and along the western boundary by Gabo Island. The area is renowned for its remoteness and is an ideal nature-based adventure venue for hikers on the Wilderness Coast Walk.

Cape Howe Marine National Park is in Tourism Victoria's Destination Gippsland marketing and promotion region. The nearby township of Mallacoota is a significant tourist centre for nature-based and water-based activities. The *East Gippsland Planning and Development Strategy* (East Gippsland Shire Council 1997) identifies the need to enhance nature-based tourism in the area. Some 51% of visitors to Gippsland partake in nature-based activities, which is 5% above Victoria's regional average (Tourism Victoria 2004). Marine-based and water-based experiences are identified as an important strength in the region (Tourism Victoria 2004).

Cape Howe Marine National Park protects approximately 4.5 km of coastline from east of Telegraph Point to the Victoria – New South Wales border (excluding the Iron Prince Reef area), and the waters out to approximately the limit of Victorian waters. The park is complemented by the adjoining Croajingolong National Park (Cape Howe Wilderness Zone) and nearby Nadgee Nature Reserve and Gabo

Island Lighthouse Reserve and other nature-based attractions in the region (figure 1).

2.2 Park significance and values

Cape Howe Marine National Park makes a valuable contribution to Victoria's park system, which aims to protect viable representative samples of the State's natural marine and terrestrial environments. Parks also provide opportunities for all people to enjoy and appreciate natural and cultural values, and many make important contributions to tourism and social wellbeing.

The park is assigned the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Category II of the United Nation's List of National Parks and Protected Areas. Category II areas are managed primarily for ecosystem protection and recreation.

Cape Howe Marine National Park is adjacent to the Croajingolong National Park Biosphere Reserve, designated under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program. This biosphere reserve consists of Croajingolong National Park and Nadgee Nature Reserve in New South Wales. Cape Howe Marine National Park provides a complementary buffer to this designation.

The area included in the park is significant to many people in the community, especially the Traditional Owners, who are associated with the area by cultural lore, and other people with traditional attachments to the area.

Important values for the park are listed below.

Natural values

- diversity of habitats including subtidal and intertidal reefs, subtidal soft sediment and sandy beaches
- co-occurrence of eastern temperate, southern cosmopolitan and temperate species, as a result of the mixing of warm eastern and cool southern waters
- marine mammals such as whales, dolphins, Australian Fur Seals and New Zealand Fur Seals
- transient reptiles such as Green Turtles from northern waters

- threatened fauna including whales and birds
- foraging area for a significant breeding colony of Little Penguins from neighbouring Gabo Island
- outstanding active coastal landforms within and adjoining the park, such as granite and sandstone reefs
- outstanding landscapes, seascapes and spectacular underwater scenery
- Victoria's most easterly Marine National Park abutting one of only three wilderness zones on the Victorian coast
- excellent opportunities for scientific investigation and learning
- outstanding opportunities to build knowledge of marine protected areas and their management, and to further understand marine ecological function and changes over time.

Cultural values

- seascape of high cultural significance to Indigenous people
- places and objects of significance to Indigenous people
- a diverse and rich maritime and post-settlement history, including a shipwreck.

Recreational and tourism values

- opportunities for a range of nature-based recreational activities within a pristine and extremely remote wilderness environment
- spectacular views of Croajingolong National Park (Cape Howe Wilderness Zone) and Gabo Island
- opportunities for interpretation and education about the marine environment.

2.3 Evidence of past use

As recently as 10 000 years ago sea levels were some 50 metres lower and Victoria was connected to Tasmania by a 'land-bridge' (Wallis 1998). During this time, Cape Howe Marine National Park was a terrestrial habitat, and no doubt was occupied by Indigenous people.

Areas adjacent to the park contain evidence of a range of places and objects of particular significance to Indigenous people of the area. The abundance of food remains and flaked stone at nearby sites on the mainland indicate the area was important for food collection, tool-making, camping, learning and teaching.

Evidence of sealing and whaling industries can be found on neighbouring Gabo Island, suggesting that these activities took place in the waters of the park probably from the mid 19th century.

The maritime history of the park and surrounding area is rich and diverse, with many ships recorded as missing in the area. One shipwreck listed on the Victorian Heritage Register is within the park: the steamship *Gilbert San* (1929), formerly HMAS *Gunundaal* (section 5.2).

Throughout World War 2 the East Gippsland coast was used for surveillance activities. The Royal Australian Air Force had a base at Mallacoota. Ships are reported to have been torpedoed in the vicinity of Cape Howe and military personnel undertook target practice on passing whales in Gabo Harbour (T. Symes pers. comm. 2004).

In more recent years, the area of coast which was to become Cape Howe Marine National Park has made important social and economic contributions. Commercial fishing activities included seining and mesh netting for a variety of species, but the most common fishing activity was abalone harvesting which occurred in the area for more than 40 years. The fishing industry has a sense of guardianship towards the area and holds a wealth of knowledge about the park and its surrounding waters. Recreational harvesting of a range of species, including rock lobster and abalone, also occurred, but to a lesser extent. As a result of the proclamation of Cape Howe Marine National Park, all forms of extraction, including commercial and recreational fishing, are prohibited.

2.4 The park visitor

Being remote and often difficult to access, Cape Howe Marine National Park has low visitation. The main recreational activities in the park are hiking, boating and sightseeing.

There is no public vehicle access into the park. Access is generally by boat from Mallacoota or Eden, or by foot along a section of the Wilderness Coast Walk. The nearest vehicle-based boat-launching facility is at Bastion Point (Mallacoota) or Eden (NSW). Boat access to the park can be difficult and subject to weather and sea conditions. Walkers require a permit to camp overnight between Mallacoota and Eden, and need to be self-sufficient as the area is extremely remote and isolated. Minimal impact camping is provided for adjacent to the park at Lake Wau Wauka and just east of Cape Howe.

Mallacoota, 15 km to the west, offers accommodation and a range of facilities for tourists. The majority of visitors to Mallacoota come for nature-based or boat-based activities. The *East Gippsland Planning and Development Strategy 1997–2010* (East Gippsland Shire Council 1997) recommends that Mallacoota be enhanced as a nature-based tourism venue.

2.5 Legislation and ECC recommendations

Legislation

Cape Howe Marine National Park is reserved and managed under the provisions of the National Parks Act. The Act requires the Secretary to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to preserve and protect the natural condition of the park and its natural and other features and, subject to this, to provide for the use of the park by the public for enjoyment, recreation and education. Appropriate research activities are also provided for under the Act. The National Parks (Park) Regulations 2003 apply to the park.

All forms of extraction, including recreational and commercial fishing and shellfish collection, are prohibited within the park under the National Parks Act and regulations. A Statewide Compliance Strategy and East Region Marine Compliance Plan have been developed in partnership with Fisheries Victoria – Department of Primary Industries to manage compliance with the no-fishing provisions within the park (section 8.3).

The objects and provisions of the National Parks Act set the framework for the management of Cape Howe Marine National

Park (appendix 1). Specific legislation and ECC recommendations accepted by government also govern particular aspects of management of the park, as described below and in subsequent sections of the plan.

The National Parks Act provides for an area to be prescribed in Cape Howe Marine National Park to exclude certain prescribed classes of vessels and equipment, to assist in reducing illegal harvesting of abalone in the area (section 6.3).

The *Coastal Management Act 1995* (Vic.) applies to the use and any development of the whole of the park.

The *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972* (Vic.) and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (Cwlth) apply to the park and protect all Aboriginal cultural heritage values including places and objects (section 5.1).

The *Native Title Act 1993* (Cwlth) applies to the management of the park.

An application for a native title determination which covers the park among other areas was lodged with the Native Title Tribunal by the Bidwell Clan in 2002 and has since been discontinued.

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) applies to the whole of the park with respect to actions that have, will have, or are likely to have, a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance, including listed threatened species in the park.

The *Parks Victoria Act 1998* (Vic.) enables management services for Cape Howe Marine National Park to be provided by Parks Victoria on behalf of the Secretary to the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Other legislation, and policies and guidelines (section 2.6) at both the Commonwealth and State levels apply to management of the park and specific activities and uses.

ECC recommendations

The former Environment Conservation Council (ECC) in its *Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation Final Report* (ECC 2000), recommended the creation of Cape Howe Marine National Park for its

contribution to a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of marine protected areas along the Victorian coast (ECC 2000). It also recommended the park for its remoteness and for the fact that it adjoins one of only three wilderness areas on the Victorian coast.

The ECC also made a number of recommendations that relate to the park. The recommendations included:

Recommendation A Use of Cape Howe Marine National (A13) in accordance with the general recommendations for Marine National Parks.

R3 Planning and management relating to traditional interests and uses in coastal marine areas will be based on recognition of and respect for the traditional relationship of Aboriginal people with the land and sea.

R13 Further research will be undertaken on biological community composition and structure, both within and external to marine protected areas, with an emphasis on assessing the impacts of harvesting marine fauna.

R14 Assessments will be made and strategies developed for protection of vulnerable or threatened marine species and communities, using the provisions of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.) as appropriate.

R18 Measures will be implemented by responsible agencies to reduce the risk of marine pest species arriving in Victoria, and to ensure a rapid and effective response in the event of an introduction.

R26 Public land and waters will continue to be available for a wide range of tourism and recreational uses. Development should not preclude public access to foreshore and offshore areas other than to meet safety and security requirements that cannot be achieved in other ways.

R34 Priority will be given to establishing monitoring programs for Marine National Parks to determine the extent to which these areas are meeting their objectives.

The ECC also recommended that the Victorian Government initiate discussions with the New South Wales Government to develop a joint

proposal for a Victoria – New South Wales marine protected area.

The Victorian Government accepted these recommendations for Cape Howe Marine National Park with alterations, including the exclusion of an area incorporating the Iron Prince Reef (approximately 303 ha) from the park. In addition, commercial and recreational fishing was allowed to continue in the park until 1 April 2004 (Government of Victoria 2002).

2.6 Policies and guidelines

The park is managed in accordance with Parks Victoria's operational policies and, as appropriate, consistent with other relevant policies and guidelines including:

- *National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity* (ANZECC 2001)
 - *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* (COAG 1992)
 - *Heritage Management Strategy* (Parks Victoria 2003b).
- The park is also managed within a broader context of a number of other plans and strategies, including:
- *East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy 2005* (EGCMA 2005)
 - *Integrated Coastal Planning for Gippsland – Coastal Action Plan* (GCB 2002)
 - *Nature Based Tourism – Directions and opportunities for Victoria 2000 – 2003* (Tourism Victoria 2000)
 - *Policy for Sustainable Recreation and Tourism on Public Land* (NRE 2002)
 - *Victorian Coastal Strategy* (VCC 2002)
 - *Victorian Heritage Strategy – Shipwrecks 2005* (Heritage Victoria 2000).
- *Victoria's System of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries Management Strategy 2003 – 2010* (Parks Victoria 2003a).
 - *Indigenous Partnership Strategy and Action Plan* (Parks Victoria 2005a)
 - *Guidelines for Working with Aboriginal Communities and Protection of Cultural Sites* (Parks Victoria 2002b)
 - *Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy* (NRE 1997a)

3 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

3.1 Park vision

A future visitor to Cape Howe Marine National Park finds outstanding marine environments renowned for their remoteness, rich and unique diversity of warm and cool water species, and off-shore granite and sandstone reefs.

A visit to the area reveals a wilderness coastline formed from mobile sand dunes, bordered by ancient pink granite and purple sandstone. Subtidal soft sediments, subtidal reefs, intertidal reefs and sandy beaches are maintained to support a diverse range of colourful marine life including sponges, ascidians, seaweeds, algae and fish. Annual migration of larger marine mammals such as Humpback Whales and Southern Right Whales continues, and shorebird habitats remain.

Research and monitoring programs underpin sound management and an increased understanding of the park's natural values, ecological processes and the specific requirements of significant marine flora and fauna.

Indigenous cultural heritage is respected, protected and managed through a strong working relationship with Indigenous communities, informed by a sound understanding of the cultural and spiritual significance of the park to the Traditional Owners. This significance includes cultural lore and the interests and rights of Indigenous people in waters and land.

Post-settlement cultural heritage is protected and managed, with an increased understanding of historical values and their physical condition. The linkages between Indigenous cultural heritage and post-settlement cultural heritage are well understood and are incorporated in contemporary park management.

Community groups, educational institutes and volunteers work collaboratively with Parks Victoria to foster an appreciation of marine environments and to achieve common goals, which are consistent with the management aims for the park.

Visitation to the park is low, with wilderness hikes and boating the most common recreational activities. All activities are sustainably managed to ensure that disturbance to natural and cultural values is minimal and that the area's wilderness values are maintained and protected for future generations.

3.2 Zoning

A park management zoning scheme is normally used to define the different parts of parks, or different parks, where various types and levels of use are appropriate. However, management zones do not need to be defined in Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries because the management aims for these areas are clearly outlined in the National Parks Act and are consistent across all Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries (section 2.5 and appendix 1).

3.3 Management directions

Major management directions for the park are outlined below.

Natural values conservation

- Natural processes, including competition, predation, recruitment and disturbance, will be protected to ensure an overall benefit to the biodiversity and variety of marine ecological communities in Cape Howe Marine National Park.
- Identified threats to the park will be minimised through addressing the outcomes of ongoing monitoring, risk assessment and, where feasible, complementary adjacent, coastal and catchment management.
- Compliance with legislated provisions that prohibit extractive activities, including fishing and shellfish collection, will be ensured through education, information, community support, and improved surveillance and enforcement.
- Impacts of changes to water quality will be minimised through cooperation with catchment managers and other relevant agencies.

- Research and monitoring to improve the scientific basis for management, including baseline data collection, marine habitat mapping and threat assessment, will be undertaken as outlined in the statewide Management Strategy (Parks Victoria 2003a) and through collaborative research links.

Cultural values conservation

- Indigenous places and objects will be protected from interference or damaging activities.
- The Traditional Owners' cultural lore, interests and rights in the park and aspirations for *Country* will be reflected in the park's planning and management, in accordance with legislation and policies.
- Historic relics and places, including shipwrecks, will be conserved by protecting them from damaging activities.
- Indigenous cultural lore relating to *Country* will be respected, promoted and interpreted in accordance with the views of the Traditional Owners.
- Research into Indigenous and historic cultural heritage of the park, including places, objects and cultural lore, will be encouraged and supported as appropriate in conjunction with the relevant Indigenous and wider communities.

The park visit

- Visitors and the community will have opportunities to learn about the park and its special values.
- Visitor understanding and appreciation of the park's natural and cultural values will be enhanced by a range of information services and interpretation and education programs.
- Historic cultural values and places, including shipwrecks, will be interpreted off-site to reflect the historic theme 'Shipping Along the Coast'.

- Visitor enjoyment will be enhanced by appropriate management of recreation activities.
- Recreational opportunities will be provided in accordance with table 1.
- Visitors will be encouraged to adopt minimal-impact techniques and to adhere to industry-developed standards appropriate to their activity.
- Management of visitor access will be integrated with management of the adjoining Croajingolong National Park (Cape Howe Wilderness Zone).

Community awareness and involvement

- Strong collaborative partnerships will be developed with the Traditional Owners to facilitate the reflection of their cultural lore, rights and interests and aspirations in the park's planning and management.
- Friends, volunteers, educational institutions, Indigenous and other community groups will be encouraged and supported to participate in areas of park management that relate to their interests.
- An awareness and understanding of the park and its management, and a sense of custodianship, will be encouraged among local communities and visitors.
- Strong relationships will be developed and maintained with people, groups and communities with strong connections with or interests in the park, as a basis for encouraging their appropriate participation in the park's management.
- There will be ongoing opportunities for individuals, groups, communities and government agencies to discuss aspirations and issues of mutual concern relating to the park.
- Collaborative partnerships will be established with relevant agencies to ensure ongoing compliance and future protection of the park.

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

ACTIVITY	CAPE HOWE MARINE NATIONAL PARK
Aircraft (incl. hang-gliding, paragliding) — landing or taking off (section 6.6)	N
Anchoring (section 6.3)	Y
Bait collection	N
Bird watching	Y
Boat launching/ landing (motorised) (section 6.3)	N
Boat launching/ landing (non- motorised, no facilities, no vehicle/trailer access) (section 6.3)	Y
Camping (boat-based)	Y
Diving and snorkelling (section 6.4)	Y
Dogs (section 6.6)	N
Feeding wildlife	N
Fires on beaches	N
Fishing (all forms)	N
Fossil collection	N
Guided activities	Y
Hovercraft - over water (section 6.3)	Y
Kite boarding and wind surfing	Y
Licensed tours (section 6.7)	Y
Mooring	N
Motorised boating (incl. personal water craft) (section 6.3)	Y
Nature observation, photography, painting	Y
Non-motorised boating (section 6.3)	Y
Picnicking	Y
Prospecting and metal detecting	N
Rockpool rambling (section 6.5)	Y
Sailing (section 6.3)	Y
Shell collection	N
Sightseeing (section 6.5)	Y
Surfing, body boarding, surf skiing (section 6.5)	Y
Swimming (section 6.5)	Y
Walking in the intertidal zone (section 6.2)	Y
Water skiing, wake boarding	Y
Whale, dolphin, seal watching (section 6.3)	Y

Note: The park is remote and isolated. Recreational activities should only be carried out by those experienced in the activity and all visitors need to be self-reliant.

Key:

Y Yes, subject to conditions prescribed by legislation or, permits or elsewhere in the plan as indicated.

N Not permitted.

4 STRATEGIES FOR NATURAL VALUES CONSERVATION

4.1 Geological and geomorphological features

Croajingolong National Park, which adjoins Cape Howe Marine National Park, is one of the most significant conservation reserves in Victoria for protecting an outstanding variety of coastal landform features and examples of active geomorphic processes (NRE 1996). The coastline within and adjoining the park is an active example of coastal processes at work in an environment relatively undisturbed by human influences.

The park contains sandy beaches, intertidal and subtidal reefs and subtidal soft sediments (ECC 2000). Subtidal reefs are comprised of either granite or sandstone. There are high-profile reefs (Plummer et al. 2003) and low-profile reefs which have been eroded into pits and gutters, and heavy boulder reefs with gutters and ridges up to three metres high (ECC 2000). The lithology comprises basalt, granite, sandstone and calcarenite (Plummer et al. 2003).

There are no known geological and geomorphological sites of significance within the park (Plummer et al. 2003), as there have been few surveys of the Victorian marine environment. Nevertheless, a comprehensive survey of geological and geomorphological features in Victoria's marine environment may reveal sites of significance within the park.

Areas nearby or adjacent to the park, including the Cape Howe dune system and Telegraph Point, have been identified as being of national significance (Ecology Australia n.d.; Plummer et al. 2003), and the Iron Prince Reef is of State significance (Plummer et al. 2003).

Many geomorphological features are significant elements of *Country* for the Traditional Owners in accordance with tradition.

Because of the remoteness of the park, low visitation and protection provided by the adjoining Croajingolong National Park, direct threats to geological and geomorphological values of the park are low.

Aims

- Allow natural geological and geomorphological processes to continue without human interference.
- Provide opportunities for appropriate research, appreciation of, and education about geological and landform features.

Management strategies

- *Encourage research into geological and geomorphological features within the park, and protect them from damaging activities.*
- *Provide information, interpretation and education programs that promote visitors' appreciation of geological and landform features (section 6.1).*
- *Identify, interpret, respect and protect geological and geomorphological features of special cultural importance to the Traditional Owners in cooperation with the relevant Indigenous communities (sections 5.1 and 8.2).*

4.2 Catchment and water quality

Cape Howe Marine National Park adjoins the Genoa Catchment Planning Unit, which is within the Far East Gippsland Basin (basin 21) of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority region (EGCMA 2005 & EGCMA 2006). The Genoa Catchment Planning Unit incorporates the Genoa and Wallagarough Rivers and their tributaries. The upper catchment of these rivers is located in NSW, therefore much of the planning and management of this catchment area is conducted in consultation with NSW State agencies.

Direct discharges into the park occur infrequently from Lake Wau Wauka and intermittent creeks. Lake Wau Wauka is ponded back from opening into the park by large mobile sand dunes, but occasionally opens to the sea. The lake is within the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park, and therefore highly protected.

Although there are no major rivers or drains discharging directly into the park, a number of

major rivers, creek systems and smaller streams flow into the nearby Mallacoota Inlet, which can be open to the sea. The Far East Gippsland Basin is considered to be in a relatively undisturbed state, with greater than 70% of the river and stream lengths in good to excellent condition (EGCMA 2005). Water quality is monitored in Mallacoota Inlet by Waterwatch, and in the upper Victorian catchment by the Gippsland Regional Water Monitoring Partnership.

Cape Howe Marine National Park is considered to be at low risk from deleterious impacts of land-derived pollution (e.g. storm water) because of its remote location and protection afforded by adjoining parks.

However, pollution may result from nearby Gabo Island human waste disposal facilities, although the risk to the park is believed to be low. The site will be monitored to ensure compliance with EPA standards and conditions. There is also potential for contamination of the park from oil, chemical or fuel spills originating from Gabo Island. There is a small saline waste water outfall originating from the Mallacoota Abalone Fisherman's Cooperative to the west of the Mallacoota Inlet, but this is unlikely to influence park values. Off-site effects of catchment flooding and the opening of the Mallacoota Inlet and subsequent management are unknown, but may influence park water quality.

Land-derived litter and litter originating at sea can pose a threat to the marine environment, including injury or death to marine wildlife through entanglement or ingestion. Animals such as Little Penguins, Southern Right Whales, Australian Fur Seals and New Zealand Fur Seals are known to pass through or forage in the park. Waste and debris from stranded or wrecked vessels could impact on park values. Hikers accessing the park via the Wilderness Coast Walk (section 6.2) are required to carry all litter out of the park and to follow minimal impact codes for camping to reduce impacts on park values. The threat posed by land-derived pollution is considered to be low.

The proximity of the park to heavy shipping movement (section 7.2) makes it vulnerable to potential oil or chemical spills. Although the likelihood of such spills is low, their impacts

could be catastrophic to marine life. Records for the past 30 years indicate that no major oil or chemical spills have come ashore in the park (D. Melzer pers. comm. 2003). Any oil spills that have occurred have dissipated offshore or have been cleaned up before reaching the coast.

Localised pollution may result from bilge discharge from recreational or commercial vessels operating near the park.

There have been a number of earlier and recent vessel strandings, sinkings and mishaps within the park that have resulted in the removal, salvage or on-site destruction of the vessel. Such incidents pose a pollution risk.

Park visitors can play a role in the early reporting of pollution incidents such as oil or chemical spills within the park.

Parks Victoria works with and supports many other agencies such as Department of Sustainability and Environment, Marine Safety Victoria and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in catchment and water quality management (section 8.3).

As the manager of around 70% of Victoria's coastal areas, Parks Victoria plays a significant support role in the response to marine incidents (section 8.3). Responses to marine incidents often require a diverse range of skills and resources, involving coordination between multiple agencies including Parks Victoria and members of the community. In Victorian waters the *Victorian Marine Pollution Contingency Plan (VICPLAN)* (MSV 2002) outlines broad response arrangements to a potential oil or chemical spill. The *Gippsland Region Marine Pollution Contingency Plan* (Gippsland Ports 2005) describes the arrangements made for the Gippsland region to provide effective emergency response during a marine pollution incident, under VICPLAN.

All wildlife is protected under the *Wildlife Act 1975* (Vic), and DSE has the responsibility for collecting, assessing, cleaning and rehabilitating wildlife affected by marine pollution (section 4.4). DSE has developed the *Wildlife Response Plan for Oil Spills* (NRE 1997b) to manage such situations.

Marine Safety Victoria has responsibility under the *Marine Act 1988* (Vic) and the National Plan to combat Pollution of the Sea

by Oil and other Noxious and Hazardous Substances to ensure that there is an effective response to marine pollution incidents in Victorian waters (section 8.3).

The *Integrated Coastal Planning for Gippsland — Coastal Action Plan* (GCB 2002) emphasises the importance of an integrated approach to planning and management of the marine and coastal environment. It seeks to achieve integration between municipal planning schemes, public land policy and public land management plans in Gippsland, including the park.

The *East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy 2005* (EGCMA 2005) applies to land and water within the East Gippsland CMA region (basins 21 to 24), including the park. The strategy provides a strategic management framework for the protection of natural and cultural values within the catchment, including coastal and marine environments.

The *East Gippsland Regional River Health Strategy (2005–2010)* (EGCMA 2006) aims to protect rivers and streams to meet the environmental, economic, recreational and cultural needs of current and future generations.

Gippsland's Water Quality Action Plan 2005 (WGCMA & EGCMA 2005) aims to protect and preserve water quality throughout West and East Gippsland, by identifying water quality issues and prioritising actions across the regions. This action plan supports existing programs such as Waterwatch (section 8.2) and the Gippsland Regional Water Monitoring Partnership. The Gippsland Regional Water Monitoring Partnership is a group of agencies, authorities, local government and industries that have made a commitment to water quality and quantity monitoring in the Gippsland region.

Aims

- Ensure the integration of planning and management for the park and adjacent Croajingolong National Park and nearby public and private land.
- Maintain a high quality of water within the park and surrounding waters to ensure that natural biological and physical processes can occur.

- Minimise impacts of threatening processes from activities in the catchment.

Management strategies

- *Encourage visitors to the park to follow minimal impact codes and leave no trace of their visit.*
- *Encourage visitors to report pollution incidents such as oil or chemical spills to the EPA and Marine Safety Victoria.*
- *Ensure that management actions for Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve address threats to water quality from catchment-related activities, including waste disposal and pollution.*
- *Work collaboratively with the East Gippsland CMA, Gippsland Coastal Board and other agencies to ensure the objectives for the park are considered and incorporated into the current and future planning and development of the Regional Catchment Strategy, Regional River Health Strategy, Water Quality Action Plan, Regional Catchment Investment Plan and Coastal Action Plans, and support actions that seek to reduce catchment-derived impacts and implement the park's vision.*
- *Liaise with East Gippsland Shire Council regarding future developments in the coastal zone nearby, ensuring that impacts to catchment values and water quality within the park are given due consideration.*
- *Work collaboratively with Marine Safety Victoria and Gippsland Ports in the event of oil or chemical spill, in accordance with the Victorian Marine Pollution Contingency Plan (MSV 2002) and the Gippsland Region Marine Pollution Contingency Plan (Gippsland Ports 2005).*
- *Integrate themes relating to oil spills, marine plastics pollution, bilge discharge, catchment pollution and litter reduction into existing marine information, interpretation and education programs (section 6.1).*
- *Support water quality monitoring in the catchment by Waterwatch and the Gippsland Regional Water Monitoring Partnership.*

- *Work collaboratively with Marine Safety Victoria to ensure that vessels stranded or wrecked in the park are salvaged to minimise pollution.*

4.3 Hydrodynamics

Located within the Twofold Shelf marine bioregion, the park's waters are warmer than elsewhere in Victoria because of the influence of the East Australian Current travelling down the east coast of Australia (Parks Victoria 2003a). As the continental shelf is quite close to the far eastern Victorian shore, cold water upwellings are frequent and mix with the warmer waters, bringing increased nutrients and creating an ecosystem high in productivity (section 4.4).

Prevailing winds and swells are generally from the south-west and north-east. The coastline is influenced by high-energy waves and swells. Weather originating from the south-west and east influences water activity and movement, as do twice-daily tides. Tidal variation ranges from 0.9 metres for spring tides and 0.6 metres for neap tides (Plummer et al. 2003).

Surface water temperatures on average are 19 C in summer and 14 C in winter. Water depths range from 0 metres to 110 metres (Plummer et al. 2003).

Because human-induced changes to local hydrodynamic processes could affect park values, any proposals for new infrastructure, including artificial reefs, are generally inappropriate in Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. Natural hydrodynamic events such as storm surges and regular sand erosion or deposition are considered to be ongoing natural processes.

There is no existing or proposed infrastructure within the park. Infrastructure developments in the nearby coastal zones of Mallacoota could influence hydrodynamic processes such as sand or water movement.

Aim

- Minimise impacts on park values from human-induced changes to local hydrodynamic processes.

Management strategies

- *Encourage research to improve the understanding of hydrodynamic processes.*

- *Provide advice to East Gippsland Shire Council on planning applications for developments that could affect local hydrodynamic processes (section 7.2).*

4.4 Habitats and communities

Cape Howe Marine National Park supports five known marine ecological communities: subtidal soft sediment, subtidal reef, intertidal reef, sandy beaches and pelagic communities (Plummer et al. 2003). These communities reflect a diversity of habitats that provide important substrates, food, shelter, and spawning and nursery areas for a variety of marine flora and fauna.

Marine ecological communities represent a 'community-level' classification approach to provide an overview of the larger, more visible and common species (Plummer et al. 2003). Within the marine environment there are complex and dynamic food webs and interactions. Species interact and influence one another. The Long-spined Black Sea Urchin, found at Cape Howe in high abundances, grazes on erect algae species such as Bubble Weed, creating barren habitats where encrusting coralline algae flourish (Edmunds et al. 2005). The Herring Gull inhabits the subtidal reefs of the park where it feeds on kelp and can influence the structure of algal species growing in the area (Edmunds et al. 2005). These examples indicate the importance of grazing and predatory relationships in the marine environment. Physical factors such as substrate, exposure to swell and water depth, clarity and temperature can influence the nature and composition of communities (Edmunds et al. 2005).

Many species from warmer northern waters reach their southern limit in the park (ECC 2000).

New species are found within Victoria's marine environment every year, even in intertidal areas. There is still much to be learned about the habitats and communities occupying the marine environment, including within the park. Broad-scale habitat mapping of the park commenced in 2005 and this information will assist in improving knowledge and understanding about ecological communities within the park.

Subtidal soft sediment communities are the most widespread communities in the park. Although no biological surveys have been undertaken of these communities in the park to date, it is anticipated that the diversity of invertebrates will be high. Subtidal soft sediment areas consist of a mixture of fine and medium sand with some silt, shell and worm tubes (ECC 2000).

Intertidal rocky platforms occur along the eastern section of the park's coastline. Dominant algae species such as Sea Lettuce, Neptune's Necklace and various coralline red algae are present (Plummer et al. 2003). Bull Kelp occurs on the intertidal fringe. Upper intertidal rocks are unvegetated. A range of invertebrate species dominate the area, including barnacles, sea stars and Elephant Snails (Plummer et al. 2003) and the diversity of invertebrates is high (ECC 2000). Little is known about the intertidal fish, however Sea Mullet are sometimes seen in the park's rockpools.

High-energy sandy beaches extend uninterrupted along the western section of the park's coastline. Sandy beach species are largely unrecorded for the park, but sandy beaches provide a source of food for scavenging birds and contribute to the detrital cycle that nourishes many invertebrates living within the sand, such as bivalves.

Subtidal reef communities in the park have been studied in greater detail. The park contains both high-profile granite and low-profile sandstone reefs (Plummer et al. 2003). The subtidal reefs within the park are dominated by warm temperate species that are common in southern NSW but rare elsewhere in Victoria (Plummer et al. 2003).

The brown algae Bubble Weed forms monospecific stands and dominates the granite reefs at 5–12 m depth (Plummer et al. 2003, Edmunds et al. 2005). Barren habitats with unvegetated substrates and encrusting coralline algae dominate, particularly along the eastern boundary of the park (Edmunds et al. 2005). In waters deeper than 34 metres, no macroflora grows but sparse red algae grows on low-profile sandstone reefs (Roob & Currie 1996).

Subtidal reef invertebrate fauna composition varies with depth and substrate within the park. A survey of shallow (5 m depth) subtidal high

profile granite reef found that the dominant sessile invertebrates included sponges, bryozones and ascidians, which supported a diverse epifauna (O'Hara 2000). Motile invertebrates present include large gastropods, sea stars, several syllid polychaetes, ophiuroids and crabs (O'Hara 2000).

Subtidal reef monitoring surveys have found several common fish species within the park, including Herring Cale, Blue-throated Wrasse, Maori Wrasse, Banded Morwong, Striped Mado and Six-spined Leatherjacket (Edmunds et al. 2005).

Current research and ongoing monitoring is targeted at collecting baseline biological information that will be used to understand long-term changes in population, abundances, community structure and ecological processes during the life of this plan. In 2004, four long-term subtidal reef monitoring sites were established within Cape Howe Marine National Park, and four sites were established in comparable areas outside the park (Edmunds et al. 2005). Three of the long-term monitoring sites within the park and three outside the park had also been surveyed in 2001. Research and monitoring compares areas outside the park boundaries with those inside the park. This on-going subtidal reef monitoring program will assist in identifying indicator species and habitats, and in the monitoring of marine community changes and trends over time. The results, available on Parks Victoria's website, will enable an assessment of the ecological condition of the park to be made.

Introduced marine pests (section 4.6), oil and other chemical spills (section 4.2), litter (section 4.2) and anchor damage (section 6.3) can all pose a threat to marine communities and species, particularly subtidal reef areas.

The pelagic community occurs in open waters of the park. It is made up of a diverse range of plankton, many invertebrates, an array of fishes, and transient reptiles and mammals such as dolphins and whales. Southern Right Whales, Humpback Whales, Killer Whales (Orcas), Australian Fur Seals, New Zealand Fur Seals, Bottlenose Dolphins and Common Dolphins are transient visitors to the park. There is the potential for cetaceans passing through the park to become stranded, entrapped, entangled or wounded. The

Victorian Cetacean Contingency Plan (NRE 1999c) details arrangements for incident response. The *Wildlife Response Plan for Oil Spills* (NRE 1997b) guides the rescue and treatment of injured or oiled wildlife.

Park visitors can play a role in the early reporting of wildlife strandings or entanglements within the park.

The Wildlife Act and Wildlife (Whale) Regulations afford protection to marine mammals. Two whale species are listed as ‘matters of national environmental significance’ under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act: the Southern Right Whale is listed as endangered and the Humpback Whale is listed as vulnerable. The Southern Right Whale is also listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.

Very few shorebird sightings have been recorded for the park. However, many species have been recorded in surrounding areas and it is highly likely that these also occur in the park. The park contains foraging areas for Little Penguins from neighbouring Gabo Island, which supports a significant breeding colony with an estimated 35 000 breeding pairs (Plummer et al. 2003). Hooded Plovers have been observed along the shoreline of the park; other threatened birds recorded in the area include White-bellied Sea Eagle, Australasian Gannet, Caspian Tern and Little Tern. The Hooded Plover, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Little Tern and Caspian Tern are listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. The Caspian Tern and White-bellied Sea Eagle are both listed on the China – Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) and the Caspian Tern is also listed on the Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA).

Transient northern reptile species are occasionally sighted in the park, including the Loggerhead, Green, Pacific and Leatherly Turtles, and Yellow-bellied Sea Snakes. All four turtle species are listed as ‘matters of national environmental significance’ under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and are included in the IUCN Red List of threatened animals (www.redlist.org).

All species recorded within the park to date that are listed as threatened or protected by

international agreements or other legislation are birds, reptiles or marine mammals. This reflects the current vertebrate focus of threatened species management.

Environmental management within the park takes a habitat-based rather than a species – based approach. Management of marine ecological communities within the park, rather than threatened species, is also likely to lead to protect and enhancing threatened species populations. Whole-of-habitat management may also result in the protection of species not yet identified, because of their rarity, cryptic nature, or lack of search effort.

Illegal harvesting of fauna, including fish, from the park poses a significant threat, particularly to subtidal reef communities. Fisheries Victoria has primary responsibility for enforcing fishing prohibitions under the National Parks Act, with support from Parks Victoria (section 8.3).

All forms of extraction, including recreational and commercial fishing, are prohibited within the park. The feeding of animals, including fish and birds, is not permitted in the park.

The diversity and abundance of marine fauna and flora are significant to Traditional Owners and other relevant Indigenous communities today (section 5.1).

Aims

- Protect marine ecological communities and indigenous flora and fauna, and allow natural processes to continue.
- Improve knowledge of marine ecological communities, flora and fauna and threatening processes to aid management, protection and appreciation.

Management strategies

- *Map habitats at scales suitable for management purposes in accordance with statewide habitat mapping programs.*
- *Establish and implement an appropriate long-term habitat monitoring program as part of relevant statewide marine habitat monitoring programs.*
- *Implement priority actions from approved action statements or recovery plans to address threats to threatened species or*

communities listed under the FFG and EPBC Acts.

- *Ensure that all significant sightings of marine flora and fauna are recorded on Parks Victoria's Environmental Information System.*
- *Undertake regular risk assessments to assess major threats to flora, fauna and marine communities in the park, and review management programs as appropriate.*
- *Encourage research into key threatening processes and major knowledge gaps, including baseline data collection for sandy beach, subtidal soft sediment and pelagic communities.*
- *Work collaboratively with DSE to ensure the collection, assessment, cleaning and rehabilitation of wildlife affected by marine pollution, in accordance with the Wildlife Response Plan for Oil Spills (NRE 1997b).*
- *Manage visitor activities to minimise impacts on flora, fauna and communities, particularly in relation to compliance with no-fishing provisions (section 8.3).*
- *Respond to cetacean incidents in accordance with the Victorian Cetacean Contingency Plan (section 8.3).*
- *Work collaboratively with DSE to ensure that wildlife affected by marine pollution are collected, assessed, cleaned and rehabilitated in accordance with the Wildlife Response Plan for Oil Spills (NRE 1997b).*
- *Encourage visitors to report wildlife strandings or entanglements the Department of Sustainability and Environment.*
- *Encourage research to identify Indigenous cultural lore relating to communities and species (section 5.1). Reflect Indigenous knowledge of communities and species in management practices as appropriate, and ensure that their significance to the Traditional Owners is respected in all management and visitor activities.*

4.5 Landscape and seascape

The vast open expanse of ocean, pristine shoreline and interesting underwater habitats give the park high scenic values. The backdrop of large mobile sand dunes, the Howe Range and, to the west, Gabo Island, forms a stunning wild outlook protected by the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park, Nadgee Nature Reserve and Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve.

Granite and sandstone reefs interrupt the sandy coastline and create homes for a variety of marine life. The relatively unexplored marine environments are diverse and spectacular.

The landscape and seascape values of the park are intrinsic elements of *Country* for the Traditional Owners, in accordance with tradition (section 5.1).

Landscape setting types are used to broadly characterise different landscape types (VCC 1998a). The park is within the Victorian Coastal Council's Landscape Setting Type 34 (Coastal Plain and Estuaries) (VCC 1998a). This Landscape Setting Type recommends special considerations, including the following:

- Avoid any development on the coastal side of dunes and contain new works to inland inlets and rivers to ensure that the coastline retains its rugged non-developed wilderness character.
- This area is of outstanding scenic quality and requires special landscape protection to ensure that development does not impact on landscape values.

Landscape and seascape types are sensitive to human-induced change. The protection afforded by the adjacent land is high, but future development in waters nearby the park (such as oil platforms) could potentially have an impact on landscape and seascape values of the park. Impacts on seascape could also arise from human-induced changes to hydrodynamic processes (section 4.3).

The East Gippsland Planning Scheme (www.dse.vic.gov.au/planningschemes/eastgippsland/home) provides a statutory framework for managing proposals and developments for land near the park. East Gippsland Shire Council administers the planning scheme, including the assessment of developments that

could have an impact on landscape and seascape values. Parks Victoria provides input into planning applications to ensure the protection of park values.

There are no existing facilities within the park, and no facilities are planned. The adjacent Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park is managed in accordance with the wilderness provisions of the National Act (section 7.2).

Aims

- Preserve and protect landscape and seascape values of the park, including the natural character, aesthetic qualities and values of significance to Indigenous communities.
- Minimise the visual impact of developments and management activities, including those adjacent to the park.

Management strategies

- *Ensure that other agencies whose activities have the potential to affect landscape values, including East Gippsland Shire Council, consider the importance of the park's landscape and seascape values in planning and managing their activities.*
- *Ensure that boundary markers for the park and any infrastructure works in the adjacent Croajingolong National Park and nearby Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve do not adversely affect on the landscape and seascape values of the park.*
- *Consider the traditional significance of landscape and seascape values to the Traditional Owners in planning and implementing management activities, interpretation and education programs (sections 5.1, 6.1 and 8.2).*

4.6 Marine pests

Over 100 exotic marine species are known to have become established in Victorian marine waters (Hewitt et al. 1999). Some have become marine pests.

The New Zealand Screw Shell (*Maoricolpus roseus*) is likely to be present in the park, occupying soft sediment habitats. The New Zealand Screw Shell is a large gastropod with

a broad conical spire, and is established in Bass Strait. The impacts of New Zealand Screw Shell have yet to be fully understood, however it could reduce the numbers of native suspension feeders if it occurs in high densities via direct competition for food and by changing sediment characteristics (NIMPIS 2002). A number of other introduced marine pests also have the potential to colonise the park from both Victorian and NSW waters, although there are no known records.

The park is vulnerable to pest introductions from ballast water and biofouling because of its proximity to domestic and international shipping lanes (section 7.2). Recreational vessels and users are also potential vectors for exotic species and diseases (e.g. from contaminated diving equipment) (section 6.4). The provision of boat-launching facilities outside the park may influence boating activity and levels of use, thereby influencing the potential for marine pest incursions within the park.

Marine pests can have a devastating impact on Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. The introduction of marine pests into Victorian waters is listed as a potentially threatening process on Schedule 3 of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG). Victoria's management priorities in relation to marine pests are set out in the relevant FFG Action Statement (NRE 1999b).

Impacts from introduced marine pests are as diverse as the species themselves and include altering natural nutrient cycles and out-competing native species for food and or space. Introduced marine pests can have economic (e.g. commercial fisheries) and social impacts (e.g. affect public health and safety).

Prevention of marine pest invasions is the most effective management option. Prevention involves reducing the risk that a pest will be introduced to the park. In a very limited number of cases, with specific criteria, control measures may be attempted for established pest populations, generally as part of a coordinated regional or national response. However, experience elsewhere has shown that proposals to control established marine pests need to consider fully their likely effectiveness. The interconnectedness of the marine environment and the ability of many

marine pests to migrate over long distances mean that control measures may be feasible only in limited circumstances. For example, using techniques that are successful on land, such as physical removal by hand, might make the situation worse, as some marine pests regenerate fully from fragments dislodged during removal. Where implemented, control measures will meet national guidelines for managing marine pests. Because of the possibility of misidentifications or exacerbating the pest problem, control measures will need to be part of authorised programs. In some cases, further nationally coordinated research is required for control measures.

Victorian marine pest emergency management arrangements (*Interim Victorian Protocol for Managing Exotic Marine Organism Incursions* NRE 1999a) will form the basis for responding to new introductions and existing incursions of marine pests. The adoption of the EPA's *Waste Management Policy (Ships' Ballast Water)* (EPA 2004) for Victorian waters will help reduce the risk of marine pest incursions from ships' ballast water. Emergency responses to marine pest outbreaks in Victoria are managed as part of agreed national arrangements for marine pest emergencies. The Consultative Committee for Introduced Marine Pest Emergencies provides national oversight. Parks Victoria actively supports the protocol, by adopting best practice within the organisation and educating and informing the community about prevention measures.

Vessel cleaning and maintenance guidelines (DSE 2004) aim to reduce the risk of spreading marine introduced pests by providing practical solutions for vessel operators for cleaning gear and hulls. Supporting initiatives include *Cleaner Marinas: EPA Guidelines for Protecting Victoria's Marinas* (EPA 1998).

Parks Victoria rangers, Fisheries Victoria fisheries officers, community-based organisations (e.g. dive clubs), and park visitors play an important role in the monitoring and early detection of marine pests in the park.

Aims

- Minimise the risk of introduction of marine pests by human activities, and their subsequent establishment in the park.

- Establish arrangements for the detection of new incursions within the park in support of Victorian marine pest management arrangements.
- Implement national or Victoria-wide control arrangements as they relate to the park.

Management strategies

- *Support DSE in educating Parks Victoria staff, Fisheries Victoria officers and the community to identify marine pests.*
- *Encourage community groups, researchers, licensed tour operators and contractors to integrate the identification of marine pests into their activities and to report any sightings (sections 6.7 and 8.2).*
- *Ensure the detection of marine pests is reported in accordance with Victorian pest management arrangements and recorded on Parks Victoria's Environmental Information System (EIS) and other relevant databases.*
- *Manage all pest incursions in accordance with the Interim Victorian Protocol (NRE 1999a) (section 8.3).*
- *Establish an ongoing program to minimise the risk of marine pest introduction and subsequent spread that addresses improving the understanding of potential means of introduction and spread and formalise arrangements for prevention, reporting, monitoring and response.*
- *Undertake authorised pest programs only where research indicates that control or eradication is feasible and likely to be effective or as part of a co-ordinated regional or national response.*
- *Avoid translocation or new introductions by promoting boat-cleaning protocols for all recreational boats, park permit holders, licensed tour operators and contractors in accordance with the DSE brochure 'Aquatic pests: Treat 'em mean – keep your boat clean' (section 6.3).*
- *Ensure that management vessels operating in the park are maintained according to Victorian Government boat-cleaning protocols (DSE 2004).*

- *Include boat cleaning protocols in contracts, licences or permits for contracted vessels, research vessels, and licensed tour operator vessels operating in the park.*
- *Investigate opportunities for monitoring for marine introduced pests by community groups (e.g. Reef Watch and dive clubs) (section 8.2).*
- *Encourage recreational divers and snorkellers to adopt protocols to ensure that all diving equipment is clean (section 6.4).*
- *Seek to involve Indigenous communities in planning and implementation of marine pest programs.*

5 STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL VALUES CONSERVATION

5.1 Indigenous cultural heritage

Indigenous tradition indicates that Cape Howe Marine National Park is part of *Country* of the Bidwell Indigenous people¹. Indigenous tradition also indicates that other Indigenous people, including the Yuin Nation, may also have an association with the area now park. Other Indigenous people may also have an association with the park. At the time of publication, there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas within the park.

Throughout periods of changing sea levels, the Traditional Owners have maintained a strong and continuing association with the park for thousands of years. This association continues today.

Cape Howe Marine National Park contained important areas for food collection, story telling, tool making, teaching and learning. Children were taught important techniques for the hunting, collection and preparation of seasonally abundant food and other resources. These resources were found in both marine and terrestrial environments. Stories were shared, and children developed an ongoing spiritual association, understanding and respect for the area now park.

Indigenous tradition suggests that neighbouring Gabo Island is highly significant to the Traditional Owners as a place for ceremony. During such time, the island was a seasonal source of food, including mutton birds and seals. These food resources would have been more readily obtained during periods of lower sea levels, when the island was connected to the mainland.

Areas adjacent to Cape Howe Marine National Park contain evidence of a range of places and objects of particular significance to Indigenous people (Fullagar 1984). The abundance of food remains, including rock platform, sandy shore and estuarine shellfish species and flaked

stone, at nearby sites on the mainland indicates that the area was important for food collection, camping, tool making, learning and teaching (Fullagar 1984).

Marine, coastal and inland resources were important to Indigenous communities. In more recent years wetlands near the park, including Lake Barracoota and Lake Wau Wauka, were a source of fish, bird and eels.

As significant Indigenous places and objects within the park become known, some may require active management to ensure their protection, while others may be relatively secure because of their location. Degradation by erosion and pillaging of material are threats to the integrity of cultural places and objects. Monitoring and management of cultural places and objects will be determined in collaboration with the relevant Indigenous communities.

All Indigenous places and objects are protected under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act and the Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act. It is an offence to damage, interfere with or endanger an Aboriginal site, place or object without obtaining prior written consent from the relevant scheduled Aboriginal Community. Issues relating to the protection of such cultural heritage and the involvement of the scheduled Aboriginal Community are approached in accordance with these Acts.

As the Far East Gippsland Aboriginal Corporation (the scheduled Aboriginal Community) is currently not in operation, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs currently has cultural heritage responsibilities for the Far East Gippsland area including Cape Howe Marine National Park in accordance with Part IIA of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) is to be contacted regarding cultural heritage matters within the community area.

Issues relating to Native Title are dealt with according to the Native Title Act (section 2.5).

Parks Victoria respects the Traditional Owner's cultural lore, interests and rights in the land, and aspirations for *Country* and seeks

¹ Unless cited otherwise, information is based on oral history information provided by relevant Indigenous communities.

to reflect these in planning and management (Parks Victoria 2005a).

Aims

- Protect Indigenous cultural heritage from interference or damaging activities.
- Nurture Indigenous cultural lore relating to the park.

Management strategies

- *Protect all Indigenous places and objects from disturbance and damage in partnership with the Traditional Owners and in co-operation with the scheduled Aboriginal community and AAV (section 8.3), and in accordance with:*
 - *the provisions of relevant legislation, including the Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act*
 - *Parks Victoria's Guidelines for Working with Aboriginal Communities and Protection of Cultural Sites (Parks Victoria 2002b).*
- *Assess annual park programs to integrate relevant Indigenous practices and minimise the potential for impact of park management activities on Indigenous cultural heritage, in consultation with the Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community.*
- *Maintain confidentiality in respect of Indigenous cultural lore, places, objects and aspirations, in accordance with tradition and the views of the Traditional Owners (sections 6.1 and 8.2).*
- *Ensure that all management actions are in accordance with the Native Title Act.*
- *Respect Indigenous cultural lore and the Traditional Owners' aspirations for Country and in collaboration with them and the scheduled Aboriginal community and in accordance with Parks Victoria's operational policies, reflect the Traditional Owners' cultural lore, interests and rights in all planning and management of the park (sections 4.1, 4.5, 6.1 and 8.2).*

- *Encourage the identification, recording and risk assessment of Indigenous places, objects and cultural lore relating to the park, in collaboration with the relevant Indigenous communities and in liaison with AAV (section 8.3).*
- *Assess and identify Indigenous cultural heritage suitable for promotion and interpretation in collaboration with the Traditional Owners and in liaison with AAV (section 6.1).*

5.2 Maritime and other cultural heritage

Captain James Cook, on board the HM Bark *Endeavour* in 1770, was the first European to sight and name Cape Howe (Summer 1979). The first non-Indigenous people to walk this stretch of coastline were the survivors of the *Sydney Cove* in 1797. When the *Sydney Cove* beached off Preservation Island, Tasmania, a small crew was despatched by longboat to raise the alarm. They were washed ashore somewhere on the 90 Mile Beach and proceeded to walk east to Botany Bay past Cape Howe (Love 2003).

Rescuers of the *Sydney Cove*, and the explorers George Bass and Matthew Flinders, reported large populations of seals in Bass Strait, which led to a rush of sealers to the area (Nelson et al 1992). Seal products became the main export of the colony of NSW. Gabo Island to the west of Cape Howe Marine National Park may have been visited by sealers (Nelson et al 1992, Lawrence & Davies 2000). Given Gabo Island's location it is highly likely that it would have been a suitable location for sealing operations.

Whaling became a major industry in the mid-19th century. Santa Barbara Bay in north-west Gabo Island is reported to have been the site of a whaling establishment formerly used by the Imlay brothers of Twofold Bay (Lawrence & Davies 2000). The Imlay brothers owned several whaling stations at Twofold Bay in NSW and in Tasmania. Later they are reported to have operated a shore based station at Refuge Cove within Wilson's Promontory National Park (Lennon 1974; Buttrose ms). Another attempt to establish a whaling station on Gabo Island was made in 1848 by John Morris. The venture was not successful following the termination of Morris's contract

as the first lighthouse builder (Lawrence & Davies 2000). Indigenous people from the region played a significant role in the Twofold Bay whaling industry in the 1840s (Clarke 1998).

Although no physical evidence of sealing or whaling activity has been found within the park, both industries are likely to have operated there.

In 1853 the wreck of the gold rush steamer *Monumental City* off Tullaberga Island prompted the construction of the Gabo Lighthouse. The lighthouse, constructed of locally sourced pink granite, was completed in 1862. The lighthouse is listed as a Commonwealth Heritage place under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, and is also listed on the Register of National Estate. The lighthouse played a vital role in Bass Strait and Tasman Sea shipping.

One shipwreck within the park is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register: the steamship *Gilbert San*, formerly the HMAS *Gunundaal*. The *Gunundaal* served as an auxiliary minesweeper with the Royal Australian Navy from 1917 to 1918, sweeping mines off Gabo Island that were laid by the German raider *Wolf* during the war (R. Anderson pers. comm. 2005). In 1928 the ship was renamed the *Gilbert San* and used as a steam trawler until 1929 when it ran aground on a reef near Cape Howe (R. Anderson pers. comm. 2004). Today remains of the wreck can be seen on the shore and in the waters of the park and adjoining Croajingolong National Park, at the Victorian and NSW border. Many other ships have been lost in the area but are yet to be found. Recent strandings and wrecks are known to have occurred (L. OpDen Brouw pers. comm. 2004).

Pillaging of shipwreck remains has occurred in the past and continues to pose a threat to the integrity of the shipwrecks within the park. Parks Victoria supports Heritage Victoria to ensure the protection of these remains.

During World War 2, German raiders laid mines between Cape Howe and Gabo Island and they are known to have claimed at least one ship (T. Symes pers. comm. 2004). Throughout World War 2 the East Gippsland area and the south-eastern Australian coast

assumed a degree of strategic military importance. It was an important shipping route and therefore a potential target for enemy action (Allom Lovell & Associates 1994), with Japanese submarines and German raiders conducting operations in the area. Although no World War 2 sites have been found in the park, the area and its surrounds were used by military personnel and civilian volunteers undertaking surveillance of the coastline. Whales in Gabo Harbour were used as target practice (T. Symes pers. comm. 2004). Three ships were torpedoed in the vicinity of Cape Howe. In 1942 the SS *Barwon* was attacked but not sunk and the SS *Iron Crown* was torpedoed and sunk with 38 lives lost, and in 1943 the SS *Recina* was torpedoed and sunk (Allom Lovell & Associates 1994). The Royal Australian Air Force formed an advanced operations base at Mallacoota. Gabo Island today retains evidence of wartime activities, having operated as a radar station and recuperation centre.

Early European settlement of the surrounding area was largely associated with pastoralism. A number of leases began in the 1840s, including Mallacoota and Genoa. Indigenous people worked on pastoral stations in the Mallacoota district throughout the 1850s. Mallacoota, the closest town to the park, was only accessible by rough bush tracks or water craft until 1918, when the road from Genoa was established (Simmons 1983). The road opening was followed by the establishment of a local fishing industry, hardwood extraction, apiculture and bush grazing (Simmons 1983). Goods such as fish and timber products were often shipped from Mallacoota to Sydney through Eden. The regular seasonal holiday trade began only in the late 1950s. The land immediately abutting the park remained remote and isolated and therefore largely untouched and in 1979 Croajingolong National Park was proclaimed (Summer 1979).

Commercial fishing began in the 1880s, when vessels from Lakes Entrance and Paynesville fished the Mallacoota Inlet and surrounding seas for bream and salmon. Abalone and Rock Lobster have been commercially and recreationally caught from the area prior to the parks declaration. The Iron Prince Reef, which is surrounded by the park, is still a popular commercial fishing location (section 7.2). The south-east trawl fishery, Danish seine boats,

long-line fishing, mesh fishing, netting, trolling and purse seining had all previously operated in the area (LCC 1996).

Historical and cultural places are managed in accordance with the *Heritage Act 1995* (Vic.), *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* (Vic.), the *Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* (Australia ICOMOS 1999), and *Parks Victoria's Heritage Management Strategy* (Parks Victoria 2003b).

Heritage Victoria has primary responsibility for the management of shipwrecks and other maritime artefacts within the park. A Memorandum of Understanding between Parks Victoria and Heritage Victoria identifies respective roles and responsibilities with regard to protection, compliance and interpretation of shipwrecks, shipwreck artefacts and other archaeological sites within the park (Parks Victoria & Heritage Victoria 2004).

'Shipping Along the Coast' is a priority historical theme identified within Parks Victoria's *Heritage Management Strategy* (Parks Victoria 2003b). Opportunities are available for off-site interpretive programs (e.g. at neighbouring Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve) relating to this theme, and sub-themes including early exploration and discovery, sealing and whaling, commercial fishing, war and defence, lighthouses, the gold rush and shipwrecks (section 6.1).

Aims

- Conserve places of historic and cultural significance.
- Encourage learning about and understanding of the historic heritage of the park.

Management strategies

- *Manage historic places including shipwrecks and values of historic and cultural significance in accordance with the provisions of the Heritage Act, the Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS, Parks Victoria's Heritage Management Strategy, the Historic Shipwrecks Act and the Victorian Heritage Strategy – Shipwrecks 2005.*
- *Continue to work collaboratively with Heritage Victoria in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding, including the provision of compliance activities to protect cultural values (section 8.3).*
- *Cooperate with and support Heritage Victoria to document heritage values and assess the risks to those values. Ensure that such information is entered into Parks Victoria's Asset Management System.*
- *Encourage research into the heritage associated with the park, and incorporate information gained into management programs and information, interpretation and education programs.*
- *Support dive clubs in locating, photographing and monitoring historic shipwrecks within the park and record the information in Parks Victoria's Asset Management System.*
- *Integrate the promotion of maritime and other cultural heritage values related to Parks Victoria's key historic theme 'Shipping Along the Coast' into existing and new information, interpretation and education programs for the park, surrounding Croajingolong National Park and Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve (section 6.1).*

6 STRATEGIES FOR VISITORS

6.1 Information, interpretation and education

Providing information, interpretation and education can help orientate and inform visitors, increase visitor enjoyment and satisfaction, foster an understanding and appreciation of the park's special natural and cultural values, and management activities, and help visitors to experience the park in a safe and appropriate manner. Parks Victoria delivers information, interpretation and education to visitors by various means, including its website, interaction with visitors, Marine Notes, signage, tourism brochures and other publications, displays, and licensed tour operators. These services may be developed and provided in collaboration with other agencies.

Having a representative system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries in Victoria presents a unique opportunity to educate visitors and the broader community about the features and benefits of a statewide system of protected areas. At the same time, a range of information, interpretation and education products that are specific to the key features of the park will be provided.

Parks Victoria supports the provision of tourism and marketing information that highlights the natural and cultural values of the park, fosters an awareness of Indigenous culture and heritage, and promotes appropriate behaviours that are compatible with the conservation of natural and cultural values.

The park is within Tourism Victoria's Destination Gippsland marketing and promotion region. Local tourism groups include the Cann River Progress and Tourism Association, Mallacoota Business and Tourism Association and Orbost Chamber of Commerce.

Parks Victoria's information and interpretation programs are also integrated with the statewide and regional marketing strategies of Tourism Victoria (e.g. Tourism Victoria 2002, 2004).

There is potential to raise public interest in and awareness of the park. Promotion of the park as a unique destination for remote nature-based experiences to Victorian and overseas visitors

is consistent with the *Gippsland Regional Tourism Development Plan 2004–2007* (Tourism Victoria 2004). The *Gippsland Regional Tourism Development Plan 2004–2007*, the *Far East Gippsland Eco-tourism Strategy* (NRE & Parks Victoria 1997), *East Gippsland Planning and Development Strategy 1997–2010* (East Gippsland Shire Council 1997) and the East Gippsland Shire Council's Tourism Policy, set the tourism framework for Gippsland, including the park.

Information, interpretation and community education will build on themes related to the park's marine diversity, its remote and natural character and pristine waters, and cultural values, as well as emphasising the need for minimal impact and self-reliance in undertaking activities in the park. The relative inaccessibility of the park and the existing services and facilities at Mallacoota and in Croajingolong National Park will be considered in planning interpretation and education programs.

Pre-visit orientation information for the park is available at accredited information centres and other local outlets, including the Mallacoota office of Parks Victoria, Mallacoota Information Shed, Eden Gateway Visitor Information Centre and Merimbula Visitor Information Centre. Parks Victoria's website also offers pre-visit orientation information to a wide range of visitors. There are opportunities to supply pre-visit information about the park to hikers obtaining a permit for the Wilderness Coast Walk.

The *Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries Resource Kit* (Parks Victoria 2003d) gives educators, students, community and Friends groups a comprehensive collection of materials that communicate the importance and values of Marine National Parks. Parks Victoria's *Discover Victoria's Marine National Parks and Sanctuaries Activity Book* (Parks Victoria 2004) is designed to increase children's interest in the marine environment. Both resources are available from Parks Victoria's website.

Parks Victoria has developed minimal impact Guidelines (Parks Victoria 2003c) in partnership with providers of education to help

minimise the impact of interpretive activities on natural and cultural values within the park.

Information panels present information on orientation, natural and cultural values and rules and regulations. These panels are located outside the park at the Mallacoota main jetty, the Mallacoota Parks Victoria office, the Mallacoota Bastion Point boat ramp, and on Gabo Island. Installation of interpretive signs within the park would compromise the wilderness values of the adjoining Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park (section 7.2) and the nearby Nadgee Nature Reserve (managed by NSW Department of Environment and Conservation – National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)). A boundary marker is located at Cape Howe to assist in identification of the eastern boundary of the park (section 7.2). Again hikers can be given additional information about the park when obtaining a permit for the Wilderness Coast Walk.

Interpretive walks, talks and other activities are a powerful method of communicating targeted messages to a variety of visitors. The location of the park is not conducive to on-site ranger-guided activities, but off-site interpretive talks to the public and community groups are an ideal way of increasing awareness and understanding of the park's importance, values and threatening processes.

Education opportunities within the park are limited because of its inaccessibility to educational institutions. However, there are off-site opportunities in the surrounding Croajingolong National Park and nearby Mallacoota township.

Although there are currently no tour operators licensed to operate within the park (section 6.7), opportunities do exist for such operators and relevant Indigenous communities to provide interpretation and educational services through guided activities and adventure activities such as diving and snorkelling. Weather conditions and the park's remoteness are likely to influence business opportunities in this area.

Collaboration with other organisations involved in environmental education in the local area, including Fisheries Victoria, Coast Action/Coastcare, Waterwatch, Friends of Mallacoota, Mallacoota P-12 college,

Marshmead Methodist Ladies College, Cann River P-12 college and Noorinbee Primary School, will also be important in communicating key messages about the park.

Aims

- Promote and encourage visitors to discover, enjoy and appreciate the park's natural and cultural values in a safe and appropriate manner through information, interpretation and education.
- Encourage public support for the park and park management practices.
- Foster relevant collaborative education projects with other organisations or groups delivering environmental education in the East Gippsland area.
- Provide opportunities for people to learn about and understand the cultural and spiritual significance of the park to Indigenous people.

Management strategies

- *Ensure that pre-visit information about the park is available via Marine Notes, Parks Victoria offices, tourist information centres, hiker permits and ParkWeb.*
- *Maintain and update the information signs outside the park at the Mallacoota main jetty, Mallacoota Parks Victoria office, the Mallacoota Bastion Point boat ramp, and on Gabo Island.*
- *Provide visitor information, interpretation and education on the park's recreational opportunities, minimal impact techniques, reporting of marine related incidents such as wildlife strandings/ entanglements (section 4.4) and oil spills (section 4.2), visitor safety, park values and threatening processes (section 4.4, chapters 5 and 6), through a variety of methods.*
- *Regularly evaluate information and interpretive programs related to the park.*
- *Ensure that any interpretive facilities provided within the park are not in conflict with, or do not compromise, the remote and wilderness values of the adjacent area.*

- *Liaise with NSW Department of Environment and Conservation – NPWS to:*
 - *ensure that any interpretive facilities provided complement the management of Nadgee Nature Reserve (section 6.2)*
 - *investigate opportunities for promotion of the park in NSW.*
- *Promote greater public understanding and appreciation of, and respect for, Indigenous culture by incorporating information about Indigenous cultural lore, places and objects in information, interpretation and education programs, in collaboration and accordance with the views of the Traditional Owners (sections 5.1 and 8.2).*
- *Encourage and support relevant Indigenous communities to participate in interpretation of Indigenous cultural heritage relating to the park (section 8.2).*
- *Provide face-to-face interpretation of park values and threatening processes.*
- *In conjunction with Fisheries Victoria, continue to provide information, interpretation and education material through a variety of means to achieve voluntary compliance with fisheries regulations, and where necessary, enforcement (section 8.3).*
- *Work collaboratively with local educational providers, community groups, local tourism/ business groups and other agencies to improve knowledge and understanding of marine environments, to foster custodianship of the park and encourage research.*
- *Liaise with State and regional tourism authorities to ensure that the park is appropriately promoted in regional visitor information centres and in regional tourism strategies.*
- *Ensure that staff and licensed tour operators (section 6.7) are adequately trained in interpreting the marine environment and in promoting minimal impact practices.*

- *Assist licensed tour operators in identifying opportunities for providing appropriate interpretive and educational experiences (section 6.7).*

6.2 Access

Access to Cape Howe Marine National Park is generally by boat from Mallacoota or Eden, or walking via Croajingolong National Park or Nadgee Nature Reserve in NSW. There is no public vehicle access to the park, as it abuts the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.

Walkers access the park by the section of the Wilderness Coast Walk that runs from the eastern side of the Mallacoota Inlet through to Merrica River near Wonboyn in NSW. The coastal walk offers remote windswept beaches, tranquil coastal lagoons and a diversity of plant life. The walk is recommended only for experienced hikers, as it is very remote from vehicle access and requires overnight camping. Camping locations are allocated adjacent the park at Lake Wau Wauka and just east of Cape Howe. All walkers require a permit issued from Parks Victoria through the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation – NPWS to access this section of the track. Maximum group sizes and total hiker limits apply, to ensure the protection of wilderness values in both states.

Accessibility via boat to the park and within the park depends on weather and sea conditions and can be difficult (section 6.8). Visitors therefore need to be experienced, well prepared and self reliant.

Vehicle-based launching facilities are available outside the park at Mallacoota or Eden and some users may travel by boat to or through the park from other parts of Victoria. Boat access from Bastion Point at Mallacoota or Mallacoota Inlet (which can be closed), can be challenging, and therefore limits offshore boating to favourable conditions.

Development of a new boat launching facility at Mallacoota, outside the park, providing offshore access, has been under discussion for some time. Outcomes of future launching facility proposals may influence visitation to the park.

Aim

- Provide for the use and enjoyment of the park by visitors, while protecting the park's natural and cultural values.

Management strategies

- *Ensure that access to the park is integrated with facilities and access provided within the adjacent Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.*
- *Work collaboratively with NSW Department of Environment and Conservation – NPWS to ensure that pre-visit and directional information is appropriate to enable safe and enjoyable access to the park via the Wilderness Coast Walk.*
- *Work collaboratively with NSW Department of Environment and Conservation – NPWS to ensure appropriate levels of access via the Wilderness Coast Walk, through maintaining maximum group sizes and total group limits, to protect wilderness, recreational and natural values.*
- *Liaise with recreational users and groups when determining levels of access along the Wilderness Coast Walk.*
- *Evaluate and monitor changes to boating facilities outside the park that may influence park values.*

6.3 Recreational boating and surface water sports

Boating is the most popular recreational activity within the park, although visitation is generally low. Weather and sea conditions can restrict access (section 6.2). Boat operators need to be experienced and self reliant (section 6.8).

Boats travel through the park, particularly those of commercial and recreational fishers accessing the Iron Prince Reef (figure 2) through the west and south-west sections of the park.

The National Parks Act provides for an area in the Cape Howe Marine National Park to be prescribed as an area in which certain prescribed classes of vessels or equipment are prohibited. The purpose of this provision is to

allow regulations to be made to assist in reducing illegal harvesting of abalone in the area which borders NSW waters. The National Parks (Cape Howe Marine National Park) Regulations 2006 have the effect of prohibiting commercial fishing vessels (with some exceptions to accommodate legitimate activities involving these vessels).

All vehicle-based boat access points are located outside the park, the closest being at Mallacoota and Eden (section 6.2). Facilities provided at these sites are important to local communities, as is the provision of pre-visit information. There are no jetties, permanent moorings or similar structures within the park.

The landing and subsequent launching of non-motorised vessels including sea kayaks and canoes is permitted within the park (table 1). Motorised vessels are not permitted to land or launch within the park, in accordance with management of the adjoining Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park (NRE 1996) (section 7.2).

Yachts pass through the park, including those participating in the annual Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

Sea kayaking is a popular activity outside the park in Mallacoota Inlet. Kayaking also occurs infrequently in the park when conditions are suitable.

The level of use of personal water craft (PWCs) and hovercraft in the park is low. PWCs and other vessels if used inappropriately could disturb wildlife and reduce the remote recreational experience offered by the park and adjoining Cape Howe Wilderness Zone.

Boating activity within the park is expected to increase over time, as the population of coastal towns like Mallacoota increases. The provision of any future boat launching facilities outside the park could also influence trends in boat use.

Anchoring has the potential to impact on sensitive marine environments (section 4.4), although the level of visitation is such that impacts are thought to be minor. Impacts of pollution from litter and faecal material are also thought to be relatively low.

Recreational vessels are potential vectors of marine pests (section 4.6).

State Environment Protection Policies prohibit vessel operators from discharging sewerage, oil, garbage, sediment, litter or other wastes to surface waters in all Victorian State waters. While the EPA has primary responsibility for pollution management, Parks Victoria supports the provision of waste receiving and pump out facilities at marinas, ports, and other suitable sites.

As in all Victorian coastal waters, a speed limit of five knots applies in specified circumstances in the park (MSV 2005). Parks Victoria works collaboratively with Marine Safety Victoria to ensure compliance with these regulations (section 8.3).

Parks Victoria, Victoria Police and Fisheries Victoria interact regularly with park visitors (including boat users), providing opportunities to learn about the park.

Marine mammal viewing occasionally occurs in the park, usually by independent boat operators taking advantage of chance encounters with seals, whales and dolphins.

Under the Marine Act and the Wildlife (Whale) Regulations recreational vessels and PWCs must stay at least 100 metres from whales and dolphins, while a minimum distance of 30 metres applies to swimmers and 50 metres to surfers. Other conditions apply to licensed tour operators and commercial vessels.

Aims

- Allow for a range of recreational boating activities, surface water sports and marine mammal viewing while protecting natural, cultural and recreational values.
- Promote safe boating and water safety within the park.

Management strategies

- *Permit a range of boating activities in the park in accordance with table 1 and the 5 knot speed restriction within: 50 m of a swimmer or other vessel, 100 m of a vessel or buoy with a diver below signal, 200 m of the shoreline and 300 m of a whale or dolphin.*
- *Integrate messages regarding boating access and safety into existing information, interpretation and education programs for*

Croajingolong National Park and Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve (section 6.1).

- *Liaise with organisers of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race (Cruising Yacht Club of Australia) to facilitate access through the park, and implement and monitor permit conditions as required.*
- *Ensure that boat operators, kayakers and other visitors comply with the Wildlife Act and Wildlife (Whale) Regulations, when observing marine mammals (sections 4.4 and 6.1).*
- *Monitor the impacts of visitor use, including boating and anchoring to ensure the protection of natural and cultural values, and implement management actions as necessary.*
- *Encourage the use of minimal impact techniques for boating and surface water activities.*
- *Encourage boat users to adopt best practice vessel cleaning and maintenance standards before entering the park (section 4.6).*

6.4 Diving and snorkelling

Snorkelling and scuba diving enable visitors to experience the underwater habitats and view species and habitats that are difficult to observe from above the surface, particularly smaller or cryptic animals such as seahorses, sea urchins, nudibranchs, sponges, octopuses and cuttlefish.

Because of the park's remoteness and accessibility, diving by scuba and snorkelling occurs only infrequently. Weather conditions often preclude this activity, making conditions unsafe for diving (section 6.8) or preventing access to the park by boat (section 6.2).

Historically the majority of divers have been commercial abalone operators, who are experienced and highly familiar with the area. Today, these commercial divers continue to pass through the park to access the Iron Prince Reef, one of the most popular diving locations in the area. The rocky platforms off Cape Howe within the park also provide opportunities for recreational diving.

Diving and snorkelling should only be undertaken by accredited and experienced

visitors, as sudden changes in weather and strong tidal currents are common (section 6.8). The current low levels of diving and snorkelling could increase as promotion and awareness of the park and its diversity of marine life develops.

Potentially threatening processes associated with diving include anchor and fin disturbance to plants and animals and ocean floor, translocation of marine pests (section 4.6), intertidal trampling and disturbance or damage to historic shipwrecks (section 5.2).

Educating divers and snorkellers about historic shipwreck protection (section 5.2) and minimal impact practices, particularly those new to these activities, will help minimise impacts and assist with park management. Divers should refer to the Dive Industry Victoria Association (DIVA) *Code of Practice for Commercial Providers of Recreational Snorkelling & Scuba Diving Services in Victoria* (DIVA 2004) or the Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria (SDFV) *Codes of Practice: General Operating Guidelines for Recreational Scuba Diving and Related Activities* (SDFV 2005). Snorkellers and scuba divers should refer to the *Snorkelling, Scuba Diving, and Wildlife Swims – Adventure Activity Standards* at www.orc.org.au (ORC 2004).

Divers and snorkellers need to be aware of the no-take provisions within the park (section 4.4) and can assist in the early detection of marine pests in the park (sections 4.6 and 8.2), and the detection of unrecorded species, and cultural places and objects.

Aim

- Provide opportunities for diving and snorkelling in the park, while protecting natural and cultural values.

Management strategies

- *Continue to allow visitors to explore the park by diving and snorkelling.*
- *Encourage safe diving and snorkelling practices and integrate safety messages into existing information, interpretation and education programs (section 6.1).*
- *Promote compliance of snorkellers and recreational scuba divers with relevant codes of practice and Adventure Activity Standards.*

- *Integrate minimal impact messages into existing information, interpretation and educational programs to protect the natural and cultural values of the park (section 6.1).*
- *Encourage the use of clean diving equipment to prevent the translocation of marine pests (section 4.6).*
- *Encourage divers and snorkellers to participate in Reef Watch and other community-based marine monitoring programs (section 8.2).*
- *Support dive clubs and industry representatives to develop codes of practice that promote environmentally responsible diving practices.*
- *Liaise with dive clubs and visitors to determine the level of use and opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the values of the park.*

6.5 Swimming and shore-based activities

The shoreline of Cape Howe Marine National Park is remote and largely inaccessible.

The majority of visitors who access the park on foot undertake nature study, rock and beach walking and occasionally swimming. The waters can be rough and are not patrolled so swimming is not encouraged (section 6.8). All shore-based activities need to be consistent with management objectives for the adjacent Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.

Visitors undertaking shore-based activities are generally experienced walkers who have an understanding and appreciation of the environment.

In the period July 2004 to June 2005, 567 hikers walked the Wilderness Coast Walk along the section of track between Mallacoota and Cape Howe (M. Barker pers. comm. 2006). A greater number walked the section from Merrica River in New South Wales to Cape Howe. The number of hikers accessing the park is likely to increase, as nature-based tourism activities become more sought after by both Australian and international visitors. The challenge will be to provide opportunities to experience the park's values whilst still retaining the remoteness and natural values of

the park and adjacent areas. Minimal impact use will play an important role in ensuring that park values are protected.

At low tide visitors can access the intertidal areas of the park to explore crevices and rock pools. Unless adequately managed, trampling by visitors and other potentially damaging shore-based activities could threaten the natural and cultural values of intertidal areas (sections 4.4, 5.1 and 5.2). Current impacts associated with shore-based activities in the park appear minimal, but will nonetheless be monitored over time.

Collection of living or dead organisms, including shells, is prohibited within the park, including the intertidal zone.

Lighting fires on beaches within the park or adjacent areas is not permitted.

Aim

- Provide for appropriate shore-based activities while minimising impacts to sensitive natural and cultural values within the park and the adjacent Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.

Management strategies

- *Permit shore-based recreational activities in accordance with table 1.*
- *Work collaboratively with NSW Department of Environment and Conservation – NPWS to monitor shore-based activities within the park, and manage accordingly to minimise impacts on park values and the adjacent Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.*
- *Monitor sensitive intertidal areas for damage associated with trampling and take appropriate action to minimise any impacts.*
- *Continue to prohibit collection of intertidal organisms, including shells, in the park.*
- *Integrate minimal-impact messages for sensitive intertidal areas into information, interpretation and education programs, and provide information to walkers on the Wilderness Coast Walk (section 6.1).*

- *Continue to prohibit the lighting of fires on beaches within the park.*

6.6 Other activities

Local pilots at Mallacoota and Merimbula offer domestic charters and sightseeing tours of the area.

Light aircraft and helicopters sometimes fly over the park and make opportunistic wildlife sightings. Under the Wildlife (Whale) Regulations, aircraft and helicopters must stay a minimum distance of 300 m from whales. Restrictions also apply to flying heights under Commonwealth legislation.

‘Fly Neighbourly’ agreements can specify appropriate flying times, behaviours and activities to ensure that park values and experiences are protected, while allowing opportunities for flying activities. Such agreements may be implemented if necessary.

Helicopters and aircraft are not permitted to take off or land within the park, except for emergency response and management purposes.

Dogs are not permitted in the park, unless confined within a vessel at all times. Dogs are not permitted within the adjacent Croajingolong National Park.

Aims

- Monitor and minimise the impact of helicopters and aircraft on natural and cultural values.
- Minimise impacts of dogs on the natural and cultural values of the park.

Management strategies

- *Monitor the level of activity of aircraft and helicopters in the vicinity of the park and implement a ‘Fly Neighbourly’ agreement if required.*
- *Prohibit the landing and take-off of aircraft and helicopters within the park, except for emergency response and management activities.*
- *Liaise with scenic flight operators and Air Services Australia as necessary to encourage sensitive flight practices over the park.*

- *Allow dogs in the park if confined to a vessel.*

6.7 Tourism services

Licensed tour operators can play a key role in nature-based tourism in Victoria, by offering guided tours, supported recreation activities and information that can promote park values and appropriate use.

Opportunities for licensed tour operators are available, although remoteness, weather and sea conditions are likely to limit potential operators. There are currently no tour operators licensed to operate in Cape Howe Marine National Park.

Activities by licensed tour operators are managed by licence conditions that detail access, permitted activities and site-specific restrictions. Licensed tour operators must also adhere to industry standards for safety (section 6.8), including the *Snorkelling, Scuba Diving and Wildlife Swims—Adventure Activity Standards* (ORC 2004).

Parks Victoria works collaboratively with Tourism Alliance Victoria, a membership-based industry association, in administering the tour operator licensing system across Victoria's public land estate, including the park.

Aim

- Encourage the provision of appropriate tourism services, while minimising impacts on the natural and cultural values of the park.

Management strategies

- *Ensure all tour operators using the park are licensed and adhere to permit conditions.*
- *Ensure that all licensed tour operators working in the park have appropriate training and accreditation.*
- *Encourage licensed tour operators and relevant Indigenous communities to develop and deliver guided tours that enhance the experience of visitors and are compatible with the protection of park values.*

- *Work collaboratively with licensed tour operators and Tourism Alliance Victoria to ensure:*

- *provision of a high-quality service*
- *that activities adhere to minimal impact practices as specified in the tour operator licence*
- *that information conveyed to visitors is consistent with objectives for the park.*
- *Monitor activities and use of licensed tour operations to ensure that values of the park are protected, and amend licence conditions if necessary.*
- *Ensure that tour operator licences include appropriate conditions to protect marine mammals.*
- *Liaise with the tourism industry and community to identify and promote visitor opportunities in the park.*

6.8 Public safety

As a result of the exposed coastline and rapidly changing weather and sea conditions, there are inherent dangers associated with a number of activities in the park, including boating, diving, snorkelling, swimming and surfing. In general, the park is not safe for inexperienced visitors. Slippery rocks, venomous organisms and large waves are some of the potential hazards for visitors.

A survey of Victorian beaches in 1996 rated their safety as being in one of four hazard categories; safest, moderately safe, low safety and least safe. Cape Howe Marine National Park is rated in the 'low safety' hazard category (Short 1996). There are no patrolled beaches within the park.

A number of emergency incidents have occurred in the park and the surrounding area, the majority of which have been vessels in distress or that have come aground. Many vessels have become stranded or been wrecked in the park.

Visitors need to familiarise themselves with the specific dangers associated with their chosen activity in the park, prior to arrival.

Public information and education programs are one of the most effective ways of promoting safety (section 6.1). Safety messages are

presented to visitors through signs, Marine Notes and ranger presence.

To assist in achieving safe practice, Adventure Activity Standards are being developed by the outdoor recreation industry for all adventure activities, including diving and snorkelling (section 6.4). The Outdoor Recreation Centre will facilitate the development and continual update of these standards. Visitors are encouraged to ensure they comply with the standards relevant to their activity, and undertake the required training and accreditation before visiting the park.

Any person operating a powered recreational vessel in Victorian waters must have a current boat operator licence. Recreational boating accidents are highest in Victoria during January, and most fatalities are associated with aluminium dinghies (MSV 2005). Marine Safety Victoria conducts safety and awareness programs for recreational boat users, and the *Victorian Recreational Boating Safety Handbook* contains safety information and outlines the requirements for operating a recreational vessel in Victoria (MSV 2005) (section 6.3).

The responsibilities for responding to emergency incidents in Victoria and Victorian waters are outlined in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* (Vic.). Parks Victoria is not the lead agency for most emergency response situations. Instead, it supports other agencies, including the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Marine Safety Victoria, the Country Fire Authority, the State Emergency Service and Victoria Police, in emergency incidents, where required.

Relevant agencies respond to incidents in the park in accordance with the Municipal

Emergency Management Plan. Parks Victoria's response to emergency incidents during normal operating activities in the park is guided by an Emergency Management Plan.

Aims

- Promote visitor safety and awareness of safety issues and risks within the park.
- Promote and observe safe practices, and cooperate with emergency services.

Management strategies

- *Encourage compliance with any Adventure Activity Standards to ensure the safety of visitors undertaking activities such as diving and snorkelling.*
- *Increase visitors' awareness of safety issues and potential hazards in the park through the use of Park and Marine Notes, Parks Victoria's website and signage (section 6.1).*
- *Support responsible agencies in emergency response, and ensure that Parks Victoria staff have adequate levels of training in emergency procedures.*
- *Liaise with East Gippsland Shire Council to ensure that Municipal Emergency Response Plans make adequate provision for likely incidents within the park.*
- *Review and update as required the Emergency Management Plan for the 'Mallacoota / Cann River Ranger in Charge Area' to ensure protocols are identified to address all potential incidents within Cape Howe Marine National Park.*

7 STRATEGIES FOR AUTHORISED AND ADJACENT USES

7.1 Authorised uses

There are a number of uses and activities that may be permitted in the park subject to specified conditions to minimise impacts.

Petroleum extraction, exploratory drilling, mineral exploration and mining, and invasive searching for or extraction of stone and other materials are prohibited in the park under the National Parks Act. Petroleum exploration, such as seismic survey from aircraft or from a vessel, that is carried out in a manner which does not detrimentally affect the seabed or any flora or fauna of the park may be allowed with the consent of the Minister. However, the Government has announced that it will not release any further areas in Victoria that contain Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries for petroleum exploration. There is no petroleum exploration permit over this park. Construction of pipelines or seafloor cables may be permitted with the consent of the Minister in some circumstances.

Protected areas are generally avoided as locations for Defence Force training exercises, although they occasionally host search and rescue, field navigation and incident response activities. Activities are subject to a permit with conditions and are undertaken in accordance with Parks Victoria's operational guidelines to ensure that values of the park are protected.

All research and monitoring planned in a Marine National Park or Marine Sanctuary by external organisations or individuals, requires a research permit under the National Parks Act, issued by the DSE.

Parks Victoria recognises the significant role that the filming and photography industry plays in the social and economic wellbeing of the community, and in providing for these activities seeks to ensure protection of the natural and cultural values of the park. This is achieved through a permit system for all filming and photography conducted as part of a trade or a business. Amateur photographers or people taking film or video for personal or hobby interest do not require a permit.

Aim

- Manage authorised uses and permitted activities in accordance with the National Parks Act, and minimise their impact on park values.

Management strategies

- *Manage authorised uses in accordance with the requirements of legislation and Parks Victoria's operational policies.*
- *Permit Defence Force adventure training or field navigation exercises in the park in accordance with Parks Victoria's operational guidelines and relevant permit conditions.*
- *Monitor authorised activities to ensure that conditions of authorisations are met. Assess the effectiveness of conditions of authorisations in protecting the park, and seek review of authorisations if necessary to arrest impacts.*

7.2 Boundaries and adjacent uses

Management of the park will be integrated with that of the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park (figure 2). The Cape Howe Wilderness Zone is managed in accordance with the wilderness provisions of the National Act and the *Croajingolong National Park Management Plan* (NRE 1996). The general management aims of the Cape Howe Wilderness Zone are to protect and enhance the natural condition of the area, with minimal interference to natural processes and to provide opportunities for solitude, inspiration and appropriate self-reliant recreation.

The landward boundary of the park extends along the high water mark from a point east of Telegraph Point to the Victoria–New South Wales border, excluding the Iron Prince Reef (figure 2). The eastern boundary follows the Victoria–New South Wales border seawards until reaching the limit of Victorian waters. The western boundary is located to the east of Gabo Island. The vertical boundary of the park extends to 200 m below the seabed.

The park extends southwards to approximately three nautical miles where the adjoining waters are managed by the Commonwealth.

The Iron Prince Reef, which is excluded from the park, is used by commercial and recreational fishers. Commercial harvesting of abalone and urchins occurs on the reef, therefore licensed commercial vessels regularly pass through the western and south-western portion of the park.

An international and domestic shipping lane runs adjacent to and through the south-eastern extremity of the park.

State waters and the underlying sea bed adjoining the park are currently unreserved Crown land. The Government accepted the ECC's recommendation that a Coastal Waters Reserve be established under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.) for the major portion of Victoria's marine area not otherwise designated for a particular purpose, to provide for a diverse range of activities that are compatible with long-term sustainable use (ECC 2000).

New South Wales State marine waters adjoin the eastern boundary of the park. The NSW Government is currently assessing marine biodiversity in NSW coastal waters, including the waters adjacent to the park. Future marine protected areas will be considered by NSW following this assessment (A. Read pers. comm. 2006; R. James pers. comm. 2006; Breen et al. 2005).

As fishing is prohibited from the park, but not in adjacent waters, clear boundary identification is paramount. Yellow on-shore and off-shore markers, significant easily identifiable landforms and pre-visit materials can all be used to help identify the boundaries of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. However, the physical nature of Cape Howe Marine National Park is such that the prevailing weather and sea conditions, shifting mobile sand dunes and wave action make it extremely difficult to identify boundaries using markers and landforms. Off-shore boundary markers are not feasible because of their limited effectiveness at being sighted while at sea, the risk of becoming a hazard to vessels and the high costs of installation and maintenance.

A yellow on-shore boundary marker is located approximately 100 metres inland from a border cairn (Wauka pillar) on the eastern boundary of the park (figure 2). Whilst at sea, the Victoria – New South Wales border or eastern boundary of the park can be determined by lining up the pole of the yellow on-shore boundary marker with the centre of the border cairn (Wauka pillar). There are currently no on-shore markers at the western and internal boundaries, because of the mobility of the sand dunes. In general the use of on-shore boundary markers is inconsistent with the management principles of the adjoining Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.

The most practical method of communicating boundaries is by pre-visit information, including Marine Notes, signage and maps at key access points. Pre-visit information will identify map coordinates of the park boundaries, identify landmark features to look for and encourage visitors to use Global Positioning Systems. Face-to-face communication by rangers and fisheries Victoria officers is also important.

Aims

- Ensure the integration of management with adjoining land and waters, consistent with the protection of remote and wilderness values.
- Effectively communicate the location of park boundaries.

Management strategies

- *Ensure that information, interpretation and education programs for the park are integrated with those for Croajingolong National Park (section 6.1).*
- *Work collaboratively with other agencies whose waters abut the park, including DSE and the Commonwealth National Oceans Office whose actions may affect park values (section 8.3).*
- *Provide face-to-face communication by Rangers and Fisheries Officers as required (section 6.1).*
- *Maintain the on-shore yellow boundary marker identifying the eastern boundary of the park in consultation with NSW*

Department of Environment and Conservation – NPWS.

- *Investigate options for on-shore markers at the western boundary and internal boundaries of the park that will not compromise wilderness values and that can be maintained.*
- *Ensure that the boundaries of Cape Howe Marine National Park can be clearly identified from the land and sea, by using a variety of methods including providing pre-visit information and encouraging use of maps and global positioning systems.*

8 STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

8.1 Community awareness

Raising the community's awareness of the park's values is an essential step in developing a sense of custodianship for the park and engagement in its management. People are more likely to develop a sense of custodianship if their views and values are respected and park-related social networks are encouraged and supported. A strong connection with the park among visitors and in the local and wider community will assist in broader public education, raising awareness and reaching others in the community.

Information, interpretation and education programs play an integral role in raising community awareness (section 6.1). Parks Victoria aims to communicate the benefits of a healthy parks system and its contribution to the health of individuals and society through the 'Healthy Parks Healthy People' program.

Dive clubs can assist in raising awareness of the value of marine areas, through information nights and organised dive activities. A number of commercial fishers living in nearby towns have fished or dived in the area before the park's proclamation. These groups, operators and individuals have a wealth of information about the general marine environment.

The Coast Action / Coastcare program works with a variety of volunteer groups and community organisations to build broader community awareness and appreciation of marine and coastal issues.

Waterwatch coordinators undertake information, interpretation and education programs in East Gippsland schools, focusing on overall catchment management. These programs can raise community awareness of the impacts of water quality on marine environments.

The Friends of Mallacoota can raise the awareness of park values through their involvement with the local community and management activities in the surrounding area.

Fishcare volunteers are active in the Mallacoota area and aim to broaden the

community's knowledge on habitat protection for fish, and fishing rules and regulations.

Raising the awareness of the park through working with local schools is a good way of passing knowledge on to children who in turn pass this knowledge on to their parents.

There are opportunities to build broader community awareness of the significance of the park to Indigenous communities. This will aid in the development of greater respect for and recognition of Indigenous culture in the broader community.

Aims

- Increase the community's awareness and understanding of the park's values and management activities.
- Build a sense of shared ownership and custodianship for the park among community groups and individuals.

Management strategies

- *Encourage and support community-based projects aimed at communicating the benefits of marine conservation and protection.*
- *Encourage opportunities to profile and promote the work of Friends groups, volunteers and community groups.*
- *Build broader community awareness through direct involvement in community-based marine monitoring programs, and information, interpretation and education (sections 6.1 and 8.2).*
- *Encourage and support Coast Action / Coastcare, Waterwatch, Fishcare and other volunteer groups operating in Croajingolong National Park and Mallacoota, focusing particularly on community interpretation and education.*
- *Continue to encourage programs outside the park that spread messages about Marine National Park values and catchment protection.*

- *Encourage and support volunteers and community groups to further develop an understanding of the park's values, including Indigenous cultural heritage and its significance to Indigenous communities (section 5.1).*

8.2 Community participation

Participation of community groups and individuals in the park's management is pivotal in effective long-term planning, use and care of the park's values.

Volunteers and community groups can make a valuable contribution to park management. They bring diverse and valuable information, knowledge, skills and experience to the park that may otherwise not be available to park managers. Volunteers can also bring great enthusiasm and add valuable resources to assist with the care of the park.

The interests of community groups often overlap and may not be complementary. There can be considerable mutual benefits when such groups work together and with Parks Victoria to achieve common goals.

The Traditional Owners have considerable interest in and aspirations for the park as part of *Country*. They are an important source of traditional knowledge about the area that has yet to be documented. A strong working relationship with Traditional Owners will be essential to the reflection of their cultural lore in the park's planning and management, and reconciliation of their interests and aspirations with those of other members of the community. Other Indigenous communities may also have a particular interest in the park.

With appropriate training and support, volunteers can produce useful information that complements park management and more detailed scientific surveys of the park, such as the early detection of marine pests (section 4.6).

Reef Watch, a non-profit project developed by the Australian Marine Conservation Society, involves volunteer divers in helping describe and monitor marine life in a variety of habitats. Parks Victoria endorses the Reef Watch program as a mechanism for the involvement of the community in marine monitoring. However, because of the Park's remoteness and skills required to access it, opportunities

for community monitoring programs and Reef Watch activities are limited. The nearest dive clubs and operators are located at Merimbula, Bairnsdale and Sale.

The Mallacoota Coast Action group is active in a range of projects around the Mallacoota area. This group can help to raise the profile of the value of Marine National Parks to the broader community, and participate in park programs.

Currently there is no Friends Group for Cape Howe Marine National Park. The Friends of Mallacoota are active in conservation programs surrounding the township of Mallacoota and adjoining Croajingolong National Park. Their skills and energy could be harnessed in participating in park activities such as off site interpretation to raise the profile and awareness of the park.

Sea Search is a community-based monitoring program whereby volunteers can undertake systematic surveys in the park, including intertidal rocky shore and subtidal rocky reef flora and fauna monitoring. Such programs aim to involve community members and existing volunteer groups such as Friends in monitoring programs that increase knowledge of the park's cultural and natural values. Currently no Sea Search activities occur in the park.

East Gippsland Waterwatch is a community-based water quality monitoring program. Monitoring occurs at many locations outside the park, around the Mallacoota and Genoa townships.

Birds Australia undertakes biannual Hooded Plover counts in the park and adjoining Cape Howe Wilderness Zone of Croajingolong National Park.

Other volunteer organisations, including Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (Marine Research Group), Conservation Volunteers of Australia and tertiary and work experience students, may also assist in projects to benefit the park.

Parks Victoria's research partnerships will be expanded to incorporate priorities for marine research. Tertiary student research into the park can be undertaken through research partnerships.

The remoteness and inaccessibility of the park could limit opportunities for volunteer groups to become involved in park programs.

Opportunities to develop networks between interest groups, community organisations and volunteers will be encouraged.

Aim

- Support and encourage the active participation of community groups and volunteers in protection, conservation and monitoring projects to enhance management of the park.

Management strategies

- *Continue to encourage and support volunteer groups in the park, including activities such as marine values monitoring, marine photography and community education.*
- *Encourage and support volunteer and community groups in pursuing funding for appropriate community projects in the park.*
- *Support networks between groups interested or involved in the management of the park.*
- *Continue to build, and strengthen and maintain relationships with relevant Indigenous communities. In particular, seek to further develop a close inclusive working partnership with the Traditional Owners and co-operation with the scheduled Aboriginal community.*
- *Investigate opportunities for involving the community (including dive clubs) in Reef Watch monitoring programs in the park.*
- *Encourage existing groups such as Friends of Mallacoota, Coast Action/Coastcare and dive clubs to expand their interests into the park.*
- *Encourage visitors to assist with compliance management by:*
 - *reporting illegal fishing to the Fisheries Victoria offence reporting hotline*
 - *reporting other offences against the National Parks Act to Parks Victoria.*

8.3 Agency partnerships

Although Parks Victoria is directly responsible for management of the park, a number of other agencies have key responsibilities for planning, managing, or regulating over all or parts of the park.

All activities relating to the park that are carried out by Parks Victoria or other agencies need to accord with all legislation and government policy and, as far as practicable, be consistent with agencies' policies and guidelines. To ensure this occurs, park staff must work closely with staff of relevant agencies and collaborate in implementing activities where appropriate.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) establishes parks, and provides strategic direction and policy advice for the management of the park, including in relation to marine flora and fauna values and threatening processes. Parks Victoria is a support agency for emergency wildlife response including oiled wildlife (section 4.2) and cetacean stranding or entanglement (section 4.4) and operates at the direction of DSE.

As part of agreed service delivery arrangements, Fisheries Victoria – Department of Primary Industries has primary responsibility for enforcing fishing prohibitions under the National Parks Act. Parks Victoria will continue to work in partnership with Fisheries Victoria to ensure compliance with the provisions of the National Parks Act and Fisheries Act in accordance with the *Statewide Compliance Strategy* (Parks Victoria 2002a) and the *East Region Marine Compliance Plan* (Parks Victoria 2005b). Fisheries Victoria is also responsible for administering aquaculture licences within Victorian waters. Collaborative activities such as interagency interaction with visitors, support arrangements, and the sharing of information will have ongoing importance.

The Gippsland Coastal Board provides long-term strategic planning for the eastern coast of Victoria, in accordance with the *Victorian Coastal Strategy 2002* (VCC 2002), including the preparation of Coastal Action Plans (section 4.2).

East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has responsibility to ensure

the protection and sustainable development of land, vegetation and water resources within the region, including preparation of the regional catchment strategy to specifically address impacts of land use and management on the marine and estuarine environment (section 4.2).

Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria has the primary responsibility for environment protection for all waters in Victoria and is responsible for administering and enforcing the *Environment Protection Act 1970* (Vic.), including all activities relating to the discharge of litter and waste to the environment (section 4.2). EPA Victoria also develops State Environment Protection Policies (SEPPs) for State waters.

Marine Safety Victoria is responsible for administering the Marine Act, including planning and implementation of pollution response and marine safety initiatives (section 4.2). Parks Victoria works collaboratively with Marine Safety Victoria to ensure boating safety within the park and is a support agency at a statewide and regional level for marine pollution incidents, contributing on-site response and incident management as well as technical advice.

East Gippsland Shire Council has a key role in administering the planning scheme for land near the park, including assessment of developments with the potential to impact on park values. Parks Victoria provides input into planning applications to ensure the protection of park values.

The Minerals and Petroleum Division (Department of Primary Industries) is responsible for the sustainable development of the extractive, oil and gas, pipelines, geothermal energy, minerals exploration and mining industries in Victoria, through the provision of policy advice, regulation and promotion.

Tourism Victoria is the State government authority responsible for marketing and promoting Victoria to Australian and international travellers.

Through Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV), the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) has responsibility for administering legislation protecting cultural heritage (sections 2.5 and 5.1). AAV and the Gippsland

Cultural Heritage Unit advise Parks Victoria on Indigenous matters.

Heritage Victoria (DSE) is the central government agency which provides information and advice about places listed on the Victorian Heritage Register and Archaeological Inventory. It supports the Heritage Council through research, recommends additions to the Register and issues permits for alterations to heritage places.

Victorian agencies work cooperatively with the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage in the management of regional ecosystem conservation issues.

New South Wales Department of Environment and Conservation – NPWS is responsible for developing and maintaining the parks and reserve system and conserving natural and cultural heritage in NSW.

New South Wales Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries and Agriculture division is responsible for management of fisheries resources and fisheries compliance in NSW waters, including those adjoining the eastern boundary of the park.

Aim

- Enhance park management by collaborating with other agencies to ensure that they give appropriate consideration to park values in planning and implementing activities that may relate to the park.

Management strategies

- *Work collaboratively with all agencies to implement the plan vision and directions. In particular work with:*
 - *DSE regarding future planning and management, including protection of marine flora and fauna from potentially threatening processes*
 - *Fisheries Victoria to implement the fishing prohibition and the East Region Marine Compliance Plan and to ensure licences for aquaculture activities nearby the park, give due consideration to potential impacts on park values*

-
- *Gippsland Coastal Board on any future planning and strategies that relate to the park*
 - *East Gippsland CMA to reduce the impacts of land use and management on the park and development of appropriate actions in the Regional Catchment Strategy*
 - *EPA Victoria to minimise any impacts associated with discharge of waste into the environment, particularly those from litter, stormwater, boating and shipping*
 - *AAV on compliance with the relevant cultural heritage legislation*
 - *AAV and the Gippsland Cultural Heritage Unit on issues to cultural heritage protection*
 - *Heritage Victoria on heritage management and compliance with the Heritage Act and Historic Shipwrecks Act*
 - *State and regional tourism authorities to promote the park in regional visitor information centres and in regional tourism strategies*
 - *Marine Safety Victoria on planning and implementation of marine safety initiatives within the park and adjacent waters*
 - *Marine Safety Victoria to provide support in the management of marine pollution incidents*
 - *East Gippsland Shire Council regarding the effective administration of the planning scheme, including the provision for Parks Victoria input into proposed developments that may impact on the park*
 - *Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage on management of regional ecosystem conservation issues.*
 - *Maintain communications with Minerals and Petroleum Division (DPI), the petroleum industry and other agencies with respect to petroleum activities near the park.*
 - *Provide updated information for contingency plans for marine pollution incidents such as oil and chemical spills and cetacean / wildlife incidents as required, and communicate arrangements to staff, relevant agencies and interested parties.*
 - *Work collaboratively with NSW Department of Environment and Conservation – NPWS, NSW Department of Primary Industries- Fisheries and Agriculture and the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage to integrate management of the park with adjoining land and waters in NSW and Commonwealth areas.*

9 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Delivery and reporting

A range of approaches will be used to implement strategies in this plan. Some will be undertaken as part of routine management activities such as ranger visits; others will be addressed as part of regional programs undertaken across the State each year.

A priority list of all the strategies in the plan will be used to guide routine management, and identify detailed actions in annual regional programs. Priorities for regional programs vary from year to year, depending on available resources and government priorities.

At the end of each year, progress towards implementing strategies in the plan will be reviewed and the priority list updated. Staff report internally against 'on time and within budget' delivery of regional programs and whether the completed strategy has achieved the objective. Parks Victoria reports annually to government on the overall delivery of regional and divisional programs. This broader reporting on management performance is available in annual reports prepared on the National Parks Act and Parks Victoria.

During implementation of the plan Parks Victoria will work in partnership with Traditional Owners and the scheduled Aboriginal community. Ongoing collaborative activities with the relevant Indigenous communities, interested members of the community, scientists and agencies in realising the vision and management directions for the park will be especially important, as outlined in previous sections of the plan.

Implementation of the plan will be consistent with Parks Victoria's commitment to sustainable practices, which involves the delivery of operations, services and facilities in an ecologically and socially responsible manner with minimal use of expendable resources and minimal generation of waste.

In implementing the plan, management will respond to monitoring and research information as it emerges. Parks Victoria's environmental management framework makes this possible. Based on the International Standard for Environmental Management Systems (ISO 14001), the framework ensures

that the future condition of values is considered in identifying threats and developing actions to ameliorate them. Over time the success of actions is reviewed against set objectives to ensure ongoing learning and refinement of management. The selection of actions and treatments of threats are guided by the precautionary principle. Management options are evaluated on the basis of least impact on the environment. Treatment of threats with a potential for serious damage that is not addressed in the plan will not be postponed for lack of information.

Parks Victoria will use a variety of means to report to the community about the progress of implementation of the plan. The primary means will be through routine liaison between Parks Victoria, interested groups and individuals from the local community and relevant government agencies. In addition to giving regular updates, there will be opportunities for input by interested members of the community into annual priority setting and feedback on management performance. Events such as community and volunteer forums will offer similar opportunities for reporting and discussions about annual programs.

The results of monitoring and research work will continue to be available to the community as technical reports available on Parks Victoria's website, www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.

Parks Victoria will also report on evaluation of the plan (section 9.3) at the start of the new or revised plan, through routine liaison and community forums and in the subsequent draft plan.

Future reporting on the Statewide Strategy (Parks Victoria 2003) and State of the Parks reports, which will be available on Parks Victoria's website, will also include information on management performance in the park.

9.2 Plan amendment

During the 10-year life of the plan, amendments to the plan may only be made by the Secretary to DSE, following an authorised process which includes community consultation.

Circumstances that might lead to amendment of the plan include:

- the results of monitoring or research, management experience or new information (such as greater understanding of new threatening processes) which indicate the need for a change in management direction
- significant changes in visitation or use
- a change in policy that calls into question plan objectives
- new legislation (such as significant boundary changes).

The plan may also be amended if an activity, development or use which conflicts with the provisions of the plan is approved by government (such as native title outcomes).

9.3 Evaluation and review

Periodically through the life of the plan Parks Victoria will assess overall progress towards implementing the strategies in the plan and also assess progress towards achieving the plan vision and directions. These evaluations will inform a decision about whether a new or revised plan is required. The achievements of the plan will be assessed by considering performance areas such as:

Protecting natural values

- Overall improvement in biodiversity.
- Compliance with no-fishing provisions and park regulations.
- Timely management intervention to minimise damaging activities and threats.
- Minimal impact of permitted uses.

Protecting cultural values

- Progress towards working with Traditional Owners in managing the park and in protecting and interpreting Indigenous cultural heritage.
- Timely management intervention to avoid damaging activities and threats.

Managing recreation and visitor use

- Managing impact from visitors, including individuals and school and tour groups.
- Meeting community expectations in relation to Parks Victoria's management of the park.
- Improving community and visitor awareness.

Providing for research and promoting understanding

- Improving understanding of the composition and distribution of habitats and ecological processes.
- Ongoing Traditional Owner and community participation.
- Clear identification of major knowledge gaps.

Methods for evaluating the benefits of the plan are likely to be refined over time. Parks Victoria partners with external research agencies to establish benchmarks and indicators for major communities and habitats. By using sound monitoring and assessment methods this monitoring and research work will strengthen the basis for comparing management performance over time.

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GLOSSARY

Algae – plant-like organisms which use light energy to create food. Unlike plants, not differentiated into roots, stems and leaves. Commonly called seaweed.

Ascidian (sea squirt) – common solitary or colonial marine animal. Closest common invertebrate relative to humans in the ocean.

Ballast water – water carried in a ship's tanks for stability; normally discharged to the sea when the ship is loaded, and can be contaminated with pollution or exotic organisms.

Biodiversity – the natural diversity of all life: the sum of all our native species of flora and fauna, the genetic variation within them, their habitats and the ecosystems of which they are an integral part.

Bioregion – an area with particular underlying environmental and ecological features.

Bivalve – type of mollusc possessing two shells (e.g. scallop, mussel).

Catchment – the area of land that drains to a watercourse or estuary.

Coast – in broad terms, the sea and the seabed to the State limit (three nautical miles, or 5.5 km) and the land and inland waters within the coastal catchment.

Coastal action plan – plan that identifies strategic directions and objectives for use and development in the region or part of the region to facilitate recreational use and tourism, and to provide for protection and enhancement of significant features of the coast, including the marine environment.

Coastline – generally, where the land meets the sea.

Country – in Indigenous usage, all of nature, culture and spirituality relating to an area.

Crown land – land belonging to the State.

Cultural lore – tradition about stories, songs, rituals, ceremonies, dances, art, customs and spiritual beliefs.

Ecosystem – a dynamic complex of interacting organisms and their associated non-living environment.

Foreshore – generally, the land between a coastal road and the low water mark.

Gorgonian – soft, often colourful coral fan, generally found in high-flow areas.

Habitat – the preferred location or 'home' of an organism.

Heritage – a, place, activity, cultural way of life, structure or group of structures that have aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for the past, present or future generations.

High water mark – the landward boundary of high water mark is the average of the highest tides (spring and neap).

Hydroid – small tentacled animal related to corals and sea-jellies. Common but often overlooked.

Indigenous cultural heritage – the cultural lore, places and objects of significance to Indigenous people in accordance with tradition.

Indigenous people – people who are descendants of Aboriginal Australians.

Infrastructure – physical structures that facilitate the use of an area (e.g. roads, paths, toilet blocks).

Intertidal zone – the area between low and high tide levels, which is subject to daily changes in physical and biological conditions from tide movements.

Invertebrate – an animal without a backbone at any stage of development (e.g. worms, sponges).

Marine National Park – in Victoria, highly protected areas that represent the range of marine environments in Victoria, in which no fishing, extractive or damaging activities are allowed.

Marine protected area – term used internationally to describe a marine area that has some form of protection and is managed for conservation objectives.

Marine Sanctuary – in Victoria, a smaller, highly protected area designated to protect special values, in which no fishing, extractive or damaging activities are allowed. These areas complement *Marine National Parks*.

Matters of National Environmental Significance – defined by the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to include: World Heritage Properties; Ramsar wetlands; nationally threatened species and communities; migratory species protected under international agreements; the Commonwealth marine environment; and, nuclear actions.

Mollusc – broad group of animals including snails, sea slugs, squids, octopuses, cuttlefish and mussels.

Outfall – the place where sewage is discharged to the ocean.

Pest – exotic organisms (plants, animals or pathogens) that, if introduced outside their natural or previous distribution, cause significant changes

to habitats, food chains, ecosystems or human health by feeding on or competing with native species. Can refer to either terrestrial or marine species.

Photosynthesis – the process by which organic molecules are made from carbon dioxide and water, using light energy. This process is essential for the growth and survival of plants and algae.

Plankton – mostly microscopic animals and plants that float or swim in the ocean.

Public land – see *Crown land*.

Relevant Indigenous communities – includes the Traditional Owners, the scheduled Aboriginal Community/s for areas included in the park and other interested local Indigenous communities.

Sediment – insoluble material suspended in water, consisting mainly of particles derived from rock, soil and organic material.

Scheduled Aboriginal Community – body or bodies scheduled as the Local Aboriginal Community under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act relating to the park.

Sewage – household or commercial waste water including human and industrial wastes.

Sponge – multicellular, filter-feeding animals that occur in a variety of forms. Sponges are the simplest form of invertebrate life.

Stakeholder – an individual or group that has a vested interest in, or may be affected by, a project or process.

Threatening process – a source of potential harm or situation with potential to cause loss.

Tradition – the body of knowledge, belief and customs that is passed from generation to generation.

Traditional Owners – communities of people that reasonably assert an association with the park area that is based on direct descent from the original Indigenous custodians of *Country* and is in accordance with Indigenous tradition.

Wetland – land where saturation by water is the dominant factor for soil type and plant and animal

communities (e.g. tidal areas, saltmarshes and mangrove).

Abbreviations

AAV – Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

ANZECC – former Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council. ANZECC was represented by government Ministers and guided national policy and programs relating to the management of the environment and its conservation.

CMA – Catchment Management Authority.

CRIMP – Centre for Research on Introduced Marine Pests.

CSIRO – Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

DSE – Department of Sustainability and Environment.

ECC – Environment Conservation Council.

EGCMA – East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Bairnsdale.

EPA – Environment Protection Authority Victoria.

GCB – Gippsland Coastal Board.

IUCN – International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

LCC – Land Conservation Council Melbourne.

MSV – Marine Safety Victoria.

NIMPIS – National Introduced Marine Pest Information System.

NRE – former Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

NRMPA – National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas.

NSW – New South Wales.

NPWS – New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (Department of Environment and Conservation).

VCC – Victorian Coastal Council.

WGCMA – West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

APPENDIX 1 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR MARINE NATIONAL PARKS

Management objectives for marine national parks and marine sanctuaries included on Schedule 7 or 8 of the National Parks Act are in Sections 4 and 17D as listed below. For an up-to-date copy of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.), refer to Victorian Acts on the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website: www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au

4. Objects of the Act

The objects of this Act are-

- (a) to make provision, in respect of national parks, State parks, marine national parks and marine sanctuaries –
 - (i) for the preservation and protection of the natural environment including wilderness areas and remote and natural areas in those parks;
 - (ii) for the protection and preservation of indigenous flora and fauna and of features of scenic or archaeological, ecological, geological, historic or other scientific interest in those parks; and
 - (iii) for the study of ecology, geology, botany, zoology and other sciences relating to the conservation of the natural environment in those parks; and
 - (iv) for the responsible management of the land in those parks;
- (c) to make provision in accordance with the foregoing for the use of parks by the public for the purposes of enjoyment, recreation or education, and for the encouragement and control of that use.

17D Marine national parks and marine sanctuaries

(3)(a) The Secretary, subject to this Act will ensure that each marine national park and marine sanctuary is controlled and managed in accordance with the objects of this Act in a manner that will –

- (i) preserve and protect the natural environment and indigenous flora and fauna of the park and any features of the park which are of geological, geomorphological, ecological, scenic, archaeological, historic or other scientific interest; and
 - (ii) promote the prevention of the introduction of exotic flora and fauna into the park; and
 - (iii) provide for the eradication or control of exotic flora and fauna found in the park; and
- (b) subject to paragraph (a) –
- (i) provide for the use, enjoyment and understanding of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries by the public; and
 - (ii) promote and understanding of the purpose and significance of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries; and
- (c) prepare a plan of management in respect of each marine national park and each marine sanctuary.

APPENDIX 2 SUBMISSIONS ON THE DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

A total of eighteen submissions were received on the Draft Management Plan (September – December 2005) from the following organisations and individuals. Note: Two submissions were marked confidential.

ORGANISATION / GROUP	SUBMISSION No.	INDIVIDUALS	SUBMISSION No.
Submissions from groups	Total: 13	Submissions from individuals	Total: 5
Aboriginal Affairs Victoria	5	Confidential	10
Department of Defence (Commonwealth)	7	Confidential	12
Department of Primary Industries	9	John Ariens	14
Department of Sustainability and Environment	18	Jenny Mason	16
Eastern Zone Abalone Industry Association	17	Peter Sands	15
Environment Protection Authority	1		
Gippsland Ports	2		
Marine Safety Victoria	3		
Scuba Diving Federation of Victoria	8		
Tourism Victoria	4		
Victorian Sea Kayak Club Inc.	6		
VRFish	13		
West & East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	11		

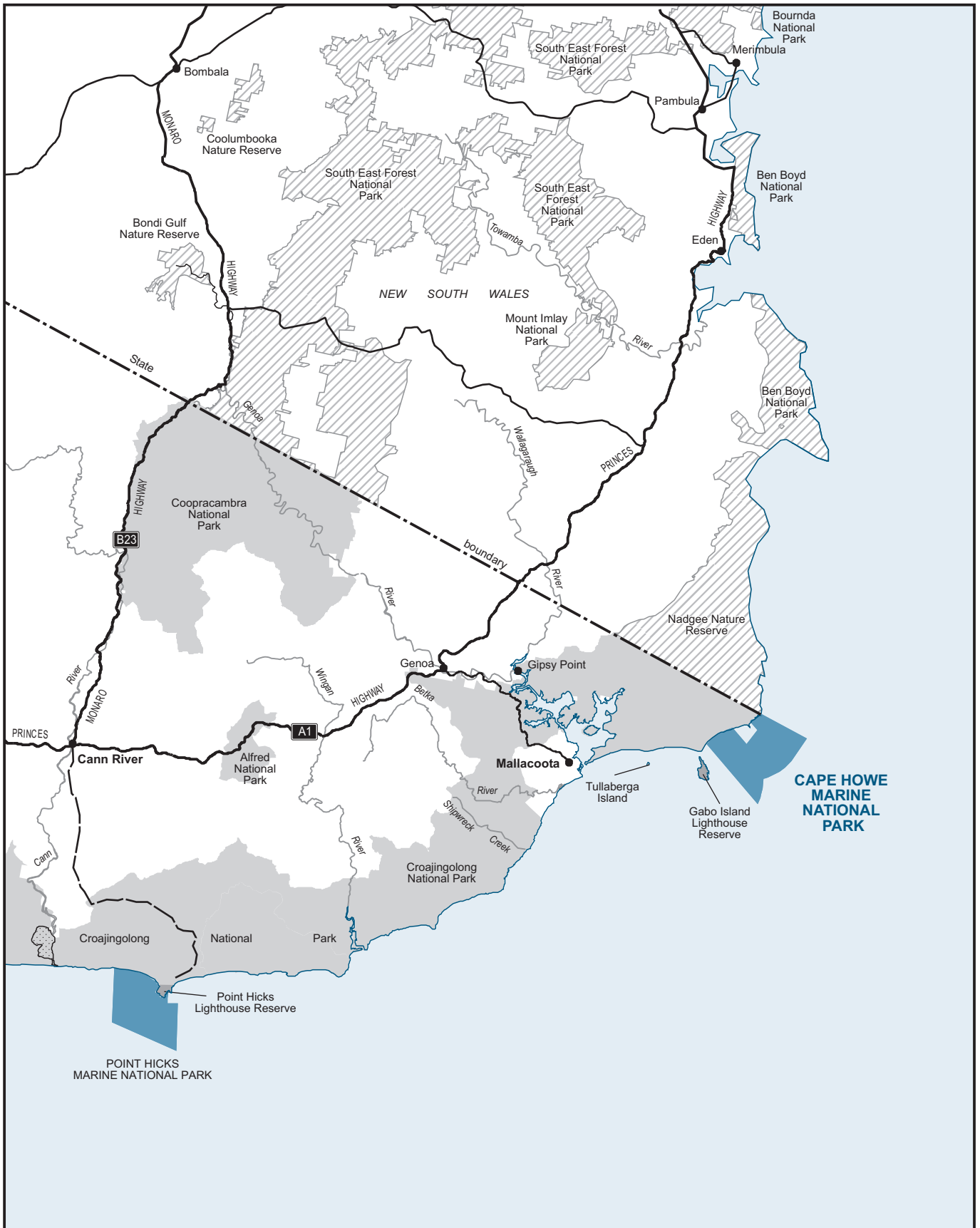








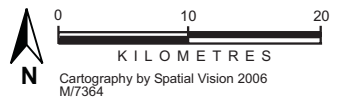
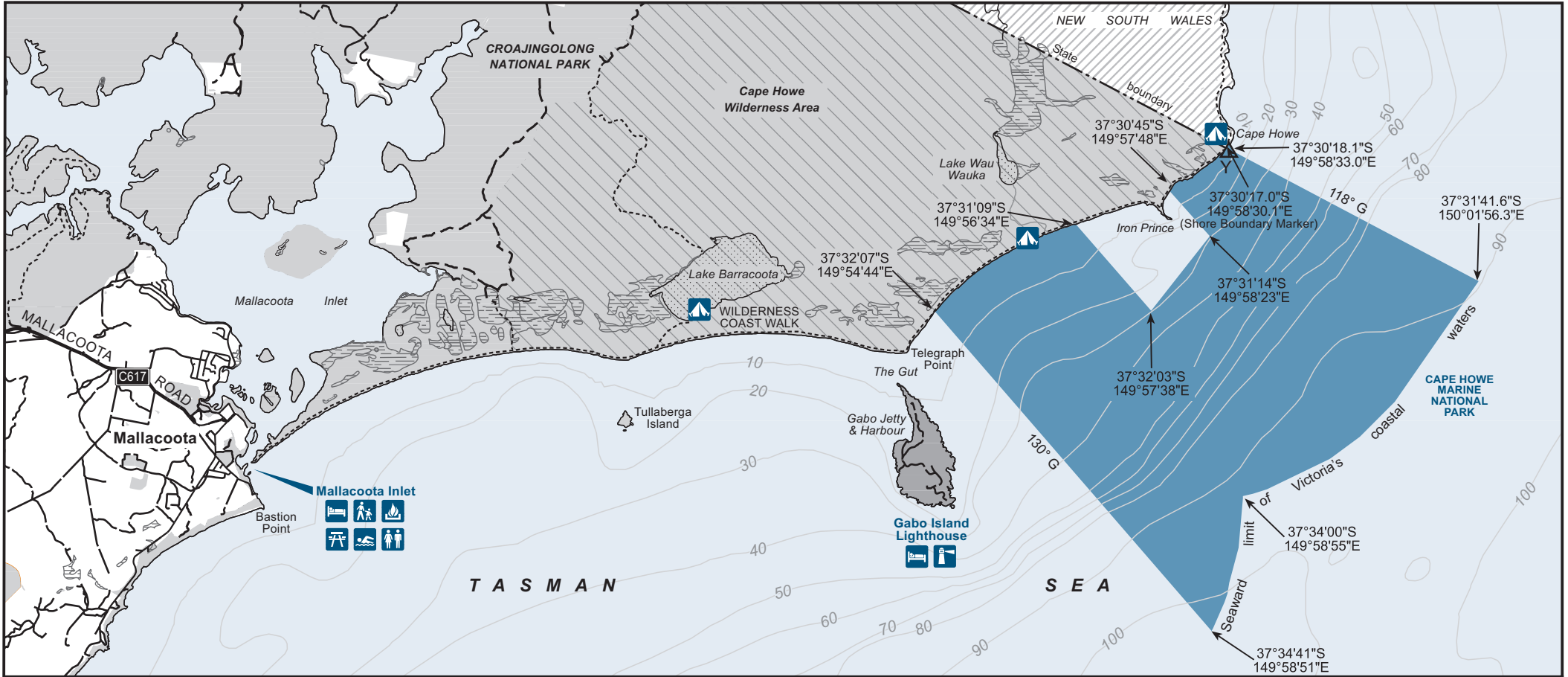


Figure 1 LOCATION
CAPE HOWE MARINE NATIONAL PARK

-  Highway
-  Major sealed road
-  Major unsealed road
-  Marine National Park
-  Victorian Parks & Reserves

-  NSW Parks & Reserves
-  Lighthouse Reserves
-  Waterbody





**CAPE HOWE
MARINE NATIONAL PARK**
Figure 2



- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--------------------------------|
| | Sealed road | | Cape Howe Marine National Park |
| | Unsealed road | | National Park |
| | Walking track | | Wilderness Area |
| | Shore boundary marker
(Colour indicated by letter) | | Gabo Island Lighthouse Reserve |
| | Waterbody | | Nadgee Nature Reserve |
| | Depth contour (metres) | | |
| | Swamp | | |

- Recreation Facilities**
- Camping
 - Family walk
 - Fireplace
 - Lighthouse
 - Picnic table
 - Swimming
 - Toilet

Latitude and Longitude values are based on WGS84. GPS users note that co-ordinates for boundaries are given in the format degrees:minutes:seconds. Alternate formats are available on Parkweb, by calling 13 1963 or from Parks Victoria Offices.

The seaward coordinates are based on the AMBIS data layers which have an accuracy of +/- 150 metres. It is recommended that activities not allowed in the park maintain a minimum distance of 300 metres outside the park boundary. For practical purposes the border between Victoria and New South Wales coastal waters is taken to be 118 degrees (G) from the Wauka pillar. A yellow triangle back mark provides a line of sight with the pillar to identify the park boundary. The bearing is proved to one degree of accuracy only. The park boundary is at the High Water Mark.

