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Point Hicks Marine National Park



Management Plan July 2006

POINT HICKS 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

Point Hicks Marine National Park makes an important contribution to Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, protecting a diverse and colourful array of marine species and communities. The area including the park is enriched with cultural significance, from early Indigenous occupation to reputedly being the first land on the south-eastern Australian mainland to be sighted by Europeans, in 1770.

Granite intertidal and subtidal rocky reefs, sandy shores and open oceans provide habitat for a diversity of marine flora and fauna species, including sessile invertebrates, algae, fish and transient whales.

Indigenous tradition indicates that the park is part of the *Country* of the Bidwell and Gunai / Kurnai Indigenous people and that other Indigenous people including the Monero-Ngarigo people also have an association with the coastal region of this area. At the time of publication, there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas within the park.

The history of the park since European settlement is also rich in diversity, involving maritime exploration, commercial fishing and wartime surveillance.

Today, the waters and shores of the park provide an ideal location for visitors to undertake a range of self-reliant nature-based activities. Opportunities exist for activities such as diving and snorkelling and a range of boat-based activities. Visitors can also take in the scenic vistas of the area by visiting the neighbouring Point Hicks Lighthouse, which overlooks the park.

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 the Point Hicks Marine National Park is not a task for the 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 Management 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 the development of the plan, and I look forward to the community's ongoing support for the management of Point Hicks 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 Point Hicks Marine National Park. It was finalised following consideration of the 17 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 Point Hicks Marine National Park to the statewide system

The reefs of Point Hicks Marine National Park are among Victoria's most interesting and beautiful. The majestic Point Hicks Lighthouse dominates the cliff tops above the park, providing an ideal viewing area. The park is immersed in a rich Indigenous and maritime heritage and is renowned for its colourful variety of 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 Point

Hicks 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 and objects 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 Indigenous 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 Point Hicks Marine National Park and to strengthen its protection while respecting cultural and community associations with the area.

SUMMARY

Point Hicks Marine National Park (4000 ha) makes an important contribution to Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. Point Hicks is considered to be the first land on the south-eastern Australian mainland sighted by Europeans, in 1770. The Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve, which abuts the park, overlooks a granite reef where a rich and colourful array of marine life flourishes. The park's open, windswept ocean, sandy shores and granite reefs contrast strikingly with the sand dunes and native heathland vegetation of the adjoining Croajingolong National Park.

Much information is yet to be discovered regarding marine flora and fauna, and associated ecological process of Point Hicks Marine National Park. Nevertheless, 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. Faunal diversity is likely to be high, as reefs just outside the park support more species than any other reef on the Victorian coast. These reefs support an array of colourful species, including sessile invertebrates, algae and fish.

The park has high landscape and seascape values. Pristine waters and a long sandy coastline that is relatively undisturbed by human influences provide a feeling of isolation and remoteness. The area includes a variety of coastal landforms and examples of active coastal processes. The granite headland of Point Hicks contrasts strongly with the adjacent sandy shorelines.

Indigenous tradition indicates that Point Hicks Marine National Park is part of *Country* of the Bidwell and Gunai / Kurnai¹ people.

Indigenous tradition also indicates that other Indigenous people, including the Monero-Ngarigo¹ people, have an association with the coastal region of this area. At the time of publication, there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas within the park.

The park has a long history of shipping and maritime use. Two shipwrecks listed on the Victorian Heritage Register – the steamships

Kerangie (1897) and *Saros* (1937) – are within the park. Timbers from the wreck of the *Kerangie* were used in constructing some of the Point Hicks Lighthouse buildings. The remains of the *Saros* are still visible from shore today.

The most popular activity in the park is sightseeing and appreciating the seascape values. There are snorkelling and diving opportunities for visitors with relevant training and experience. Most visitors come from the neighbouring Croajingolong National Park or Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve by vehicle and a short stroll, although some access the park from boats or by hiking along a section of the Wilderness Coast Walk.

Point Hicks 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 Point Hicks 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, 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 programs for the adjoining Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks 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 encouraged.
- Impacts of illegal harvesting will be minimised through information, interpretation and education, 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 they include 'Bidawal', 'Biduelli', 'Bid doo wal', 'Bidwal', 'Biduell-mittang', 'Bidwilli', 'Bidwelli', 'Birtowall', 'Biddiwell' and 'Birdhawal'. For the Gunai / Kurnai these include 'Ganai', 'Gun-na', 'Kanny', 'Kani', 'Knai' and 'Kannnai'. For the Monero-Ngarigo they include 'Monaro' and 'Ngarigu'.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and planning area

Point Hicks Marine National Park is approximately 450 kilometres east of Melbourne and 25 km south of Cann River (figure 1). The park adjoins Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve and Croajingolong National Park, and covers a total of 4000 hectares of land and waters reserved under Schedule 7 of the National Parks Act.

The park extends from the east of Clinton Rocks to the eastern end of Stable Bay and includes Whaleback Rock (figure 2), and from the high water mark seaward three nautical miles to the edge of Victorian waters. The vertical boundary of the park extends to 200 m below the seabed.

1.2 Creation of Point Hicks Marine National Park

Point Hicks 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. Point Hicks 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.

Point Hicks Marine National Park includes areas between the high and low water mark that were formerly part of Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve.

1.3 Plan development

This final management plan for Point Hicks 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 Point Hicks 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 17 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:

- refined and more detailed background text to assist in understanding 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 of incidents and illegal activities
- an increased emphasis on the no-fishing provisions of the park
- enhanced background text and strategies to encourage visitor safety

- additional text to allow for boat launching and landing without facilities or vehicle/trailer access.

The final management plan will direct future management of Point Hicks Marine National Park until reviewed.

2.1 Regional context

Point Hicks 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).

Point Hicks 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 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 (Point Hicks Marine National Park, Cape Howe Marine National Park, Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park and Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary) occur 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. Water temperatures are generally warmer than those elsewhere in Victoria because of the East Australian Current. The continental shelf is close to the shore and brings upwellings of cold water into the bioregion. The marine flora and fauna of the region include eastern temperate, southern temperate and cosmopolitan species (Parks Victoria 2003a).

Indigenous tradition indicates that the park is part of *Country* for the Bidwell and Gunai / Kurnai Indigenous people (section 5.1).

Indigenous tradition indicates that the Monero-Ngarigo people also have an association with

the coastal region of this area. At the time of publication, there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas within the park.

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

The coastline adjacent to the park is part of Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve within the Shire of East Gippsland, and is managed by Parks Victoria under the provisions of the National Parks Act and the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.).

The area is renowned for its beauty and remoteness and is an ideal location to undertake nature-based activities and relaxation.

Point Hicks Marine National Park is in Tourism Victoria's Destination Gippsland marketing and promotion region. The adjoining Croajingolong National Park attracts many visitors in holiday periods, many of whom camp in the Thurra and Mueller campgrounds or stay within the Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve. The nearby township of Cann River is an access point to the parks, providing a range of facilities and accommodation. The *East Gippsland Planning and Development Strategy* (East Gippsland Shire Council 1997) identifies the need to enhance nature-based tourism in the Cann River area. Some 51% of visitors to Gippsland partake in nature-based activities, which is 5% above Victoria's regional average (Tourism Victoria 2004). Marine and water-based experiences are an important strength of the region (Tourism Victoria 2004).

Point Hicks Marine National Park protects approximately 7.5 km of coastline from east of Clinton Rocks to the eastern end of Stable Bay, and is complemented by the adjoining Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve and other natural attractions in the region (figure 2).

2.2 Park significance and values

Point Hicks 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.

Point Hicks 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 the Nadgee Nature Reserve in New South Wales. The Marine National Park provides a complementary buffer for 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

- a diversity of habitats, including subtidal and intertidal reefs, subtidal soft sediment and sandy beaches
- a very high diversity of fauna, including intertidal and subtidal invertebrates
- co-occurrence of eastern temperate, southern cosmopolitan and temperate species, as a result of the mixing of warm eastern and cool southern waters
- a range of rocky habitats, from large boulders to smaller rocks and stones
- marine mammals such as dolphins, whales, Australian Fur Seals and New Zealand Fur Seals.

- transient reptiles from northern waters, including turtles and sea snakes
- threatened fauna, including whales and several bird species
- outstanding landscapes, seascapes and spectacular underwater scenery
- outstanding active coastal landforms within and adjoining the park, such as granite reefs and mobile sand dunes
- 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 of significance to Indigenous people
- a diverse and rich maritime and post-settlement history, including shipwrecks and evidence of shipping history.

Recreational and tourism values

- opportunities for a range of remote nature-based recreational activities within a pristine environment
- spectacular views of Croajingolong National Park and the Point Hicks Lighthouse
- opportunities to view the park from the shore and explore the park without going underwater, by walking along the sandy beaches or investigating the rocky intertidal area
- 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 approximately 50 metres lower and Victoria was connected to Tasmania by a 'land bridge' (Wallis 1998). During this time much of Point Hicks 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. 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.

Whaling and sealing are thought to have occurred in the area, although there is no recorded evidence in the park today.

The maritime history of the park and surrounding area is rich and diverse. Point Hicks is believed to have been the first part of the south-eastern Australian mainland seen by Europeans, in 1770 (Nelson et al. 1991). European explorers had trouble negotiating this dangerous stretch of coastline, and many vessels were wrecked in the area. The Point Hicks Lighthouse commenced operating in 1889 to warn mariners of the dangers. Evidence of infrastructure associated with the lighthouse remains in the park (section 5.2).

Two shipwrecks listed on the Victorian Heritage Register are within the park — the steamships *Kerangie* (1879) and *Saros* (1937). Other ships are thought to have been wrecked in the vicinity of Point Hicks, or were lost in the area and could be within the park, but the wrecks are yet to be found.

During World War 2 the East Gippsland coast was used for surveillance activities. Point Hicks was a coastal watching point for protecting the important shipping route (section 5.2).

In more recent years, the area of coast which was to become Point Hicks Marine National Park has made important social and economic contributions. Commercial fishing 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 Point Hicks Marine National Park, all forms of extraction, including commercial and recreational fishing, are prohibited.

2.4 The park visitor

The main recreational pursuits in the park are sightseeing, hiking and occasionally boating. Visitation to the park is low. Most visitors enter the park from the adjacent Croajingolong National Park, where bush camping is available in the Thurra and Mueller campgrounds. Accommodation is also available at the Point Hicks Lighthouse complex.

Access is by vehicle from Cann River and a short walk, by hiking along a section of the Wilderness Coast Walk, or by boat. The nearest vehicle-based boat-launching facilities are at Lakes Entrance, Cape Conran and Mallacoota.

Cann River, 25 km to the north, is the main access point into the park. Cann River provides a range of accommodation and facilities for tourists. Most visitors to Cann River are passing through on the way to other destinations, or staying in the area to undertake nature based activities. The *East Gippsland Planning and Development Strategy 1997–2010* (East Gippsland Shire Council 1997) recommends that Cann River be enhanced as a nature-based tourism venue.

2.5 Legislation and ECC recommendations

Legislation

Point Hicks 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 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).

Under Section 45B of the National Parks Act, approval is required for a person in possession or charge of a boat carrying priority species (abalone and rock lobster) to enter and remain within a permitted stopping area in Point Hicks Marine National Park, in non-emergency situations (section 7.1).

The objects and provisions of the National Parks Act set the framework for the management of Point Hicks 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 *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 made by the Gunai / Kurnai people for a Native Title determination covering areas of Crown land and waters in East Gippsland including the park was lodged with the Native Title Tribunal on 1 April 1997 (VC97/4) and registered on 1 April 1999. An application lodged by the Bidwell Clan covering Far East Gippsland has 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 Point Hicks 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 the 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 Point Hicks 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 rich and diverse marine life and opportunities for diving and snorkelling.

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

Recommendation A Use of Point Hicks Marine National (A12) 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.

All of these recommendations were accepted by the State Government in 2002 (Government of Victoria 2002).

2.6 Policies and guidelines

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

- *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)
- *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).

3 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

3.1 Park vision

A future visitor to Point Hicks Marine National Park finds outstanding marine environments renowned for their beauty, colour, and abundant and diverse marine flora and fauna.

A visit to the area reveals a living example of Victoria's world-class system of marine protected areas, preserving some of Victoria's most interesting and beautiful reef environments. Frequent clear waters reveal underwater crags and massive granite boulders supporting a huge diversity of marine life. Subtidal soft sediment, subtidal and intertidal reefs and sandy floors are preserved to protect organisms such as seaweeds, sea squirts, abalone and brittle stars. The great diversity of life in the park is protected into the future.

Research and monitoring programs underpin sound management and provide 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 collaborative 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 into contemporary park management.

Community groups, educational institutions 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.

Some visitors enjoy the park's unique marine environment through activities such as diving, snorkelling, swimming and rockpool rambling. Many visitors explore the surrounding Lighthouse Reserve and Croajingolong National Park and simply enjoy the seascape values of the Point Hicks Marine National Park. Visitor numbers to the park are generally low and activities are sustainably managed to ensure that disturbance to natural and cultural values is minimal and that park values are 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 Point Hicks 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, interpretation, 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 the 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 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 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.
- Management of visitor access will be integrated with management of the adjoining Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve.
- Visitors will be encouraged to adopt minimal-impact techniques and to adhere to industry-developed standards appropriate to their activity.
- Visitors will have opportunities to observe marine life, enjoy water sports and participate in other recreational activities compatible with management objectives.

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, 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 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	POINT HICKS MARINE NATIONAL PARK
Aircraft (incl. hang-gliding, paragliding) — landing or taking off (section 6.6)	N
Anchoring	Y
Bait collection	N
Bird watching	Y
Boat launching/ landing (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 incl. shellfish collection) (section 4.4)	N
Fossil collection	N
Guided activities	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
Sea kayaking (incl. launching/landing)	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 6.5)	Y
Water skiing, wake boarding	Y
Whale, dolphin and 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

Point Hicks Marine National Park contains sandy beaches, intertidal and subtidal rocky reefs and subtidal soft sediments (ECC 2000). There are various rocky habitats in the park, ranging from large boulders up to six metres tall to clusters of small rocks and stones (ECC 2000). The lithology consists of basalt, granite and calcarenite (Plummer et al. 2003). The reefs directly below Point Hicks, Whaleback Rock and Satisfaction Reef are the best-known geological features of the park.

Point Hicks itself is a granite headland with a wide rocky and bouldery shore formed up to 10 000 years ago, but includes some Ordovician (436 – 510 million years ago) metamorphic outcrops west of the lighthouse. Sandy beaches flank the headland. Inland, Pleistocene (10 000 – 2 million years ago) and Holocene (<10 000 years ago) dunes and extensive parabolic dunes dominate the landscape (Bird 1993).

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 could reveal sites of significance within the park.

Croajingolong National Park, which abuts Point Hicks 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). This stretch of coastline now includes the intertidal areas of Point Hicks Marine National Park (section 1.2). Intertidal areas within the park provide active examples of coastal processes at work in an environment relatively undisturbed by human influences.

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

Because of the remoteness of the park, the relatively few visitors, and the protection provided by the adjoining Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve, direct threats to the 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 and education in relation to geological and geomorphological 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

Point Hicks Marine National Park adjoins the Thurra–Wingan Catchment Planning Unit, which is within the Far East Gippsland Basin (basin 21) of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority region (EGCMA 2005; 2006). There are no direct discharges into the park from rivers or streams, although the Thurra and Mueller Rivers flow into the ocean to the east of the park. These rivers are heavily forested and are protected largely by Croajingolong National Park. There is no water quality monitoring program for either of these rivers.

The *Coasts and Estuary Assessment 2000* report (NLWRA 2000) identified estuaries within the Croajingolong National Park as

being 'near pristine'. 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).

The risk to Point Hicks Marine National Park from land-derived pollution, such as storm water, is low because of the park's remote location and the protection afforded by adjoining parks. However, contamination of the park from oil, chemical or fuel spills originating from the adjacent Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve is possible, and major flooding within the catchment may influence sediment levels.

Litter derived from land or 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. Visitors to Croajingolong National Park and the Point Hicks Lighthouse are encouraged to carry all litter out of the park and to follow minimal-impact codes for camping to reduce impacts on park values.

The proximity of the park to major shipping routes (section 7.2) makes it vulnerable to oil or chemical spills. Although the likelihood of such spills is low, their impacts could be catastrophic to marine life in the park (section 4.4). 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 vessels or commercial fishing vessels operating near to the park or sheltering within 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 the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Marine Safety Victoria and the Environment Protection Authority 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 for 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 Catchment Management Authority 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.

East Gippsland CMA aims to raise awareness of the impacts of recreational use on water quality through surveillance and education of visitors and campers at the Thurra River campground of Croajingolong National Park, with the support of Parks Victoria (WGCMA & EGCMA 2005).

Aims

- Ensure the integration of planning and management for the park, Croajingolong National Park, Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve and nearby public and freehold 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.*

- *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 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).*
- *Ensure that management actions for Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve address threats to water quality from catchment-related activities, including pollution.*
- *Work collaboratively with Marine Safety Victoria to ensure that vessels stranded or wrecked in the park are salvaged to minimise pollution.*
- *Support water quality monitoring in the catchment by Waterwatch and the Gippsland Regional Water Monitoring Partnership.*

4.3 Hydrodynamics

Located within the Twofold Shelf marine bioregion the park's waters are generally warmer than elsewhere in Victoria (Parks Victoria 2003a). The mixing of colder southern waters with warmer northern waters results in higher nutrient levels, creating an

ecosystem with high productivity (section 4.4). The seafloor of the park drops away rapidly to 90 metres in depth.

Prevailing winds and swells are generally from the south-west and north-east. The coastline is influenced by high energy waves and twice-daily tides. Tidal variation is 0.9 metres for spring tides and 0.6 metres for neap tides (Plummer et al. 2003).

Surface water temperatures average 19° C in the summer and 14° C in the winter. Water depths range from 0 to 90 metres within the park (Plummer et al. 2003).

Because human-induced changes to local hydrodynamic processes could affect park values, new infrastructure, including artificial reefs, will generally be inappropriate for 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.

Aim

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

Management strategy

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

4.4 Habitats and communities

Point Hicks 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 substrate, food, shelter, and spawning and nursery areas for a variety of marine flora and fauna.

Marine ecological communities represent a 'community-level' classification approach that provides an overview of the larger, more visible and common species (Plummer et al. 2003). Within marine environments there are complex and dynamic food webs and interactions. Species interact with and

influence one another. Such interactions indicate the importance of grazing and predatory relationships within the marine environment. Physical factors such as substrate, exposure to swell and water depth, clarity and temperature can influence the nature and composition of the park's marine ecological communities (Edmunds et al. 2005).

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.

The park contains areas of subtidal soft sediment with a mixture of fine, medium and coarse sand with some silt, pebbles and shell (ECC 2000). These areas are generally very steep, and sediment characteristics vary with depth, with higher silt fractions being found with increased depth (Roob & Currie 1996). Between 62 m and 83 m depth silty sand and shell rubble are common, whereas at 46 m depth, coarser sand fractions are more common (Roob & Currie 1996).

Subtidal soft sediment areas within the park are unvegetated, although large numbers of cerith molluscs have been observed in waters shallower than 46 m (>30 per square metre) (Roob & Currie 1996). In contrast, macrofauna is absent at depths of 62–83 m (Roob & Currie 1996). A variety of pelagic fish, including School Whiting, Sparsely Spotted Stingaree, Piked Dog Shark, gummy sharks, salmon and tailor are believed to feed in subtidal soft sediment areas within the park.

Although poorly studied, intertidal rocky reefs are diverse and interesting areas found within the park. Many invertebrates such as molluscs, barnacles, worms and sea-stars, some fish species and many types of algae are present (Plummer et al. 2003).

High-energy sandy beaches extend uninterrupted between the western boundary of the park and the rocky outcrops of Point Hicks. Species of invertebrates, macrophytes and fish inhabiting these sandy beaches are largely unknown (Plummer et al. 2003). Sandy beach

communities provide a source of food for scavenging birds and contribute to the detrital cycle that nourishes many invertebrates living among sand grains, such as bivalves.

Subtidal reef areas within the park have been surveyed in greater detail than other marine ecological communities. Most subtidal reef areas are close to the shore, although significant reefs occur at Whaleback Rock near the eastern boundary and Satisfaction Reef near the western boundary (Plummer et al. 2003).

A prominent biological component of the subtidal reef areas is kelp and other seaweeds. Large species of brown algae, such as Common Kelp and Crayweed, are found along the open coast in dense stands (Plummer et al. 2003, Edmunds et al. 2005). Giant species of seaweeds such as String Kelp and Bull Kelp also occur. In a survey by Kraft (2001), some rarely encountered algae species have been found in the park outside their previously known range. In this same survey, a specimen of a benthic alga (*Porphyropsis minuta*) was the first Victorian record other than Lawrence Rocks near Portland, and another recorded species of alga (*Erythroneaema ceramoides*) has not been recorded in Victoria since its original discovery at Port Phillip Heads in 1880 (Kraft 2001). Another rare alga (*Scageliopsis patens*) was previously only known from Adelaide (Kraft 2001).

A diverse and colourful assemblage of sessile invertebrates inhabits these subtidal reef areas, including sponges, bryozoans, corals, gorgonians and octocorals (Plummer et al. 2003, Edmunds et al. 2005). A survey within the holdfasts of Common Kelp just outside the park found a rich assemblage of bryozoans and hydroids, and between the holdfasts numerous species of sponges and ascidians were present (O'Hara 2000). The same survey also recorded large invertebrates including sea stars, several ophiuroids, crinoids, gastropods, fan worms and nudibranchs (O'Hara 2000). Motile invertebrate fauna was also species-rich and abundant (O'Hara 2000).

There is an abundance of fish species and high abundances of predatory gastropods and sea-stars inhabiting the subtidal reef areas of the park (Plummer et al. 2003; Edmunds et al. 2005). Fish assemblages are dominated by Blue-throat Wrasse and Purple Wrasse. Other

common species include: Rock Cale, Herring Cale, Banded Morwong, Zebra Fish and Port Jackson Sharks (Edmunds et al. 2005). Total faunal diversity of the subtidal reef areas within the park is likely to be high, as subtidal reefs just outside the park have recorded more species than any other reef on the Victorian coast (ECC 2000; Plummer et al. 2003).

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 are established within Point Hicks Marine National Park, and four sites were also established in comparable areas outside the park (Edmunds et al. 2005). Three of the long-term monitoring sites within the park had also been surveyed in 2001. Research and monitoring compares areas outside the park boundaries with those inside the park. This ongoing 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.

Pelagic communities occur in open waters of the park. The community 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. Whales and dolphins passing through the park could 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 1998 (Vic.) afford protection to marine mammals. Two whale species are listed as matters of national environmental significance under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act; the Southern Right Whale is listed as endangered and Humpback Whale is listed as vulnerable. The Southern Right Whale is also listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act.

Very few shorebird sightings have been recorded for the park, but many species have been recorded in surrounding areas. It is highly likely that these species also inhabit the park. Hooded Plover nesting sites have been recorded along the coast to the east of the park and at the mouth of the Mueller and Thurra Rivers, and it is likely that they forage along the park's shore. The Hooded Plover is listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Other threatened birds recorded in the area include the White-bellied Sea Eagle and Crested Tern, also listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. The White-bellied Sea Eagle is also listed on the China – Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (CAMBA).

Transient northern reptile species are occasionally sighted in the park, including the Loggerhead, Green, Pacific and Leathery 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 (available at www.redlist.org).

All species recorded within the park 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 protect and enhancing threatened species populations. Whole-of-habitat management may also result in the protection

of species not yet identified due to their rarity or cryptic nature, or lack of search effort.

Illegal harvesting of fauna, including fish, from the park poses a significant threat. 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 the 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 and intertidal communities.*
- *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 to 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, rocky and treacherous shores, windswept beaches and fascinating underwater habitats give the park high scenic values. Although overlooked by the majestic Point Hicks Lighthouse, the park has a remote and isolated feel. Large, mobile sand dunes in Croajingolong National Park rising in the distance form a spectacular backdrop.

The park's reefs are among Victoria's most interesting and beautiful, supporting a colourful array of species. The granite outcrops of Point Hicks, Whaleback Rock and Satisfaction Reef are some of the best-known scenic features of the park.

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). 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 Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve is high, but future developments (such as oil platforms in waters nearby the park) could have an impact on landscape and seascape values of the park.

Consideration of the *Siting and Design Guidelines for the Victorian Coast* (VCC 1998b) can assist in the protection of coastal landscape values.

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. Future siting of infrastructure, such as boundary markers, in the park or the adjacent national park and reserve could affect the landscape and seascape values of the park.

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 the 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 Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve do not have detrimental impacts on 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.

There are no known records of introduced marine pests or diseases within Point Hicks Marine National Park. The New Zealand Screw Shell possibly occurs 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 this species 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, especially in the sheltered waters of Stable Bay and the western side of Point Hicks.

The park is vulnerable to pest introductions from ballast water and biofouling because of

its proximity to international and domestic 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 can influence boating activity and levels of use, thereby influencing the potential for exotic 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 1999a).

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 impacts (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 1999b) 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 1999b) (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 coordinated 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 all 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 implementing marine pest programs.*

5 STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL VALUES CONSERVATION

5.1 Indigenous cultural heritage

Indigenous tradition indicates that Point Hicks Marine National Park is part of the *Country* of the Bidwell and Gunai / Kurnai Indigenous people. Indigenous tradition also indicates that other Indigenous people, including the Monero-Ngarigo people, have an association with the coastal region of this area². At the time of publication, there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas within the park.

Indigenous tradition suggests the park and surrounding coastal waters are significant in that they comprise an area of shared *Country* between the Bidwell and Gunai / Kurnai people to the south, and the Monero-Ngarigo people to the north. It is believed the Monero-Ngarigo people were permitted by the Bidwell and Gunai / Kurnai people to access the coastal region to obtain seasonally abundant food. This relationship was built on mutual respect for the seasonal availability of marine food resources. Evidence of this shared *Country* is available today: similar tools have been found in both areas, and the same stories have been told by Elders of each community.

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

Point Hicks Marine National Park contained important areas for shelter, 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 within the park.

² Unless stated otherwise, information is based on oral history information provided by relevant Indigenous communities.

Areas adjacent to Point Hicks Marine National Park contain evidence of a range of places and objects of particular significance to the relevant Indigenous communities. The abundance of food remains (entirely marine species) and small hand tools indicate the area was important for food collection, tool-making, camping, learning and teaching. Seasonally abundant shellfish, fish, bird and seal were all important components of the diet of Indigenous people of the area, as was a variety of plant material (Coutts 1984).

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 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 has cultural heritage responsibilities for the Far East Gippsland area including Point Hicks Marine National Park in accordance with Part IIA of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria is to be contacted regarding cultural heritage matters within the community area (section 8.3).

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 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 and care for all Indigenous places and objects in partnership with the Traditional Owners and in cooperation with the scheduled Aboriginal community and AAV (section 8.2) 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 Owner's 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, interest and rights in all planning and management of the park (sections 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 6.1 and 8.2).*

- *Encourage the identification, recording and risk assessment of Indigenous places and objects and cultural lore relating to the park, in collaboration with 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 (sections 6.1 and 8.2).*

5.2 Maritime and other cultural heritage

The mainland of Point Hicks is believed to have been the first European sighting of the south-eastern Australian mainland, by Lieutenant Zachary Hicks on board HM Bark *Endeavour* on 20 April 1770 (Nelson et al. 1991; Haldane 2001). Although debate exists about whether Point Hicks itself could have been seen from the ship, it was most certainly the closest point of land to the ship when the mainland was sighted. The same location was named Cape Everard in 1843 by John Lort Stokes, commander of the survey ship HMS *Beagle*. In 1970 the Victorian Government changed the name back to Point Hicks.

The first Europeans to visit the coast were the survivors from the wreck of the *Sydney Cove* (1797), which foundered on Preservation Island in Bass Strait. The reports from the survivors prompted George Bass to explore the coast in 1797 in a whaleboat. He was followed by Matthew Flinders in HMS *Investigator* in 1798 and 1802 (Summer 1799). Subsequent reports by these explorers prompted a rush of sealers to the Bass Strait area in the early 1800s (Lawrence & Davies 2000).

In later years whaling commenced at Eden and Boyd Town. Several whaling stations were owned by the Imlay brothers at Twofold Bay and in the Tasmanian colony (Welling 1931; Howard 1998). Ships were used to transport stock, supplies and whale oil between New South Wales and Tasmania, and in 1841 and 1842, the Imlay brothers operated a whaling station at Refuge Cove on Wilsons Promontory (Lennon 1974; Buttrose ms). Although no physical evidence exists today that whaling or sealing occurred in Point Hicks Marine National Park, it is highly likely that whaling

and sealing did occur in the park and its adjacent waters.

The Point Hicks Lighthouse began operating in 1889 to warn mariners of this hazardous stretch of coast, where numerous ships had been wrecked and lives lost (NRE 1996). Remains of the jetty and sledge track, where supplies and materials were offloaded for the people living and working at the lighthouse, are present in the park and are a reminder of the isolation and lifestyle of lighthouse keepers and their families (Nelson et al. 1991). A conservation plan guides management of historic sites within the Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve, including the jetty remains now within the park (Nelson et al. 1991).

The treacherous coast, reefs and rocks within Point Hicks Marine National Park have claimed many vessels and lives. Two shipwrecks within the park are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register — the steamships *Kerangie* (1879) and *Saros* (1937). The remains of the *Saros* are visible from the shore. Timbers from the *Kerangie* wreck were used in the construction of some of the lighthouse buildings (Nelson et al. 1991). The *Circassian* (1864) and *Mimmie Dike* (1866) are known to have been lost in the vicinity of Point Hicks and could lie within the park. As yet a comprehensive maritime archaeological survey has not been undertaken within Point Hicks Marine National Park (R. Anderson pers. comm. 2004).

Throughout World War 2 East Gippsland, particularly its vast and isolated coastline, assumed a degree of strategic military importance. The coast was adjacent to an important shipping route and therefore a potential target for enemy action. Military personnel and civilian volunteers undertook surveillance of the coastline. Point Hicks was a coastal watching station during the war (Allom Lovell & Associates 1994). Surveillance activities ceased at the end of the war in 1945.

Until the declaration of Captain James Cook National Park in 1969 and later Croajingolong National Park in 1979, timber from the forests around the Marine National Park was harvested. Logs were shipped to New Zealand and elsewhere from Eden (New South Wales) between 1940 and 1956 (Summer 1979).

As early as the 1880s, commercial fishing vessels from Lakes Entrance and Paynesville sailed through these waters to fish for bream and salmon in Mallacoota Inlet and the nearby seas. Often these boats experienced adverse weather conditions when rounding Point Hicks. Abalone and rock lobster were harvested in the area until the park's declaration. The south-east trawl fishery, Danish seine boats, long-line fishing, mesh fishing, netting, trolling and purse seining have all previously operated in the area (LCC 1996).

Historic 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).

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

'Shipping Along the Coast' is a priority historical theme identified within Parks Victoria's *Heritage Management Strategy* (Parks Victoria 2003b). Point Hicks Marine National Park provides opportunities for interpretive programs relating to this and related themes of exploration and discovery, sealing and whaling, commercial fishing, lighthouses and lighthouse keepers, shipwrecks and coastal trade (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, the Victorian Heritage Strategy – Shipwrecks 2005 and the Conservation Plan for Point Hicks Lightstation.*
- *Integrate management of historic places including shipwrecks into management of the adjoining historic Point Hicks Lighthouse complex and ensure future planning documents consider values in the Point Hicks Marine National Park.*
- *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).*
- *Support Heritage Victoria to document the heritage values of the park and to assess the risks to those values. Ensure that such information is entered in Parks Victoria's Asset Management System.*
- *Encourage research into heritage values associated with the park, and incorporate information gained into management programs and information, interpretation and education programs.*
- *Support dive clubs in locating, photographing and recording 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 and the adjacent national park and 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, ranger visits, Park 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.

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

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 behaviour that is compatible with the conservation of natural and cultural values.

There is considerable potential to raise public interest and awareness of the park, and to promote the park and appropriate recreational opportunities to a diverse range of Victorian, interstate and overseas visitors. Parks Victoria's information and interpretation programs are integrated with statewide and

regional marketing strategies of Tourism Victoria (e.g. Tourism Victoria 2002; 2004).

The *Gippsland Regional Tourism Development Plan 2004–2007* (Tourism Victoria 2004), *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 natural character and pristine waters, cultural values as well as emphasising the need for minimal impact and self reliance in undertaking activities in the park. Existing services and facilities provided within Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve will be considered in planning information, interpretation and education programs.

Pre-visit orientation information for the park is available on the Parks Victoria website and at accredited information centres and other local outlets, including Parks Victoria's Cann River office. Pre-visit information on the park can also be provided to hikers when they obtain 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 Marine 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.

Park 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 (section 6.5).

Interpretive facilities are provided at various locations outside the park. Information on park

boundaries and the park's natural and cultural values and regulations is presented on signs in the adjacent national park and lighthouse reserve, and at Parks Victoria's Cann River office. Minor information signs depicting the park boundary and some basic orientation information are located on-shore at the eastern boundary of the park, and at Mueller and Thurra campgrounds, the Lightstation Track gate and Clinton Rocks, all outside the park. Shore boundary markers are in place at three locations to assist visitors (section 7.2). Further development and installation of signs for the park will be integrated with programs for Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve.

Interpretive walks, talks and other activities are a powerful method of communicating targeted messages to a variety of visitors. The location of the park allows for a range of interpretive activities, particularly in holiday periods when nearby camping venues are busy.

Where appropriate, Parks Victoria provides guided rockpool rambles within the park. There are also opportunities to provide face-to-face interpretation of the park from the Point Hicks Lighthouse. Tour operators (section 6.7) and relevant Indigenous communities could also provide interpretation and educational services through guided walks or adventure activities such as diving and snorkelling, but weather conditions and the park's distance from major town centres may limit opportunities in this area.

Collaboration with other organisations involved in environmental interpretation and 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 an important tool for delivering 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 Park Notes, Parks Victoria offices, tourist information centres, hiker permits and ParkWeb.*
- *Maintain and update information signs at key locations, including Thurra and Mueller campgrounds, Point Hicks Lighthouse, Clinton Rocks and Parks Victoria's Cann River office.*
- *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).*
- *Regularly evaluate information and interpretive programs related to the park.*
- *Integrate information, interpretation and education programs for Point Hicks Marine National Park and associated facilities into existing Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve plans and programs.*
- *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 the interpretation of Indigenous cultural heritage relating to the park (section 8.2).*

- *Provide face-to-face interpretation of park values where appropriate.*
- *In conjunction with Fisheries Victoria, continue to provide information, interpretation and education material to achieve voluntary compliance with 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, lessees 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 interpretative and educational experiences (section 6.7).*

6.2 Access

Point Hicks Marine National Park is accessible by vehicle and a short walk, or less readily by boat or longer walks. Most visitors access the park from Cann River along the Point Hicks Road, although some may also reach the Point Hicks Road from minor tracks (figure 2). The Point Hicks Road terminates just past the Thurra campground; from there visitors must walk a short distance along the beach or Lighthouse Track to access the park. The Lighthouse Track is open only to management vehicles and vehicles belonging to guests staying in the Point Hicks Lighthouse complex. Clinton Rocks Track provides four wheel drive access to within 1.5 km of the park, but is closed in winter.

Walkers can access the park by a section of the Wilderness Coast Walk, which extends from Lake Tyers in the west to Mallacoota and beyond in the east. However, the coastline is

remote and isolated, and crossing rivers and inlets can be difficult. Overnight camping is available close to the park in the Thurra and Muller campgrounds. All walkers on the Wilderness Coast Walk require a permit from Parks Victoria, and there are limits on group sizes and the total number of hikers to ensure that recreational and natural values are protected.

Access 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.

The closest vehicle-based boat launching facilities are at Cape Conran and Lakes Entrance to the west, and Mallacoota and Eden to the east.

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 within the adjacent Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve.*
- *Liaise with the lessees at Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve to ensure that safe access is maintained.*
- *Maintain appropriate levels of access via the Wilderness Coast Walk, through maximum group sizes and total group limits, to protect recreational and natural values.*
- *Liaise with recreational users and groups when determining levels of access to the park via the Wilderness Coast Walk.*
- *Maintain appropriate access to the park via the Point Hicks Road and Clinton Rocks Track.*
- *Evaluate and monitor changes to boating facilities outside the park that may influence park values.*

6.3 Recreational boating and surface water sports

Recreational boating and other surface water activities are infrequent in the park. Boats travelling through the park are more common, particularly commercial vessels from Mallacoota and Lakes Entrance. Yachts may pass through the park, including those participating in the annual Sydney to Hobart yacht race. Vessels, including commercial vessels (section 7.1), sometimes shelter in Stable Bay within the park and Honeymoon Bay outside the park when weather conditions are unfavourable. Weather and sea conditions can restrict access (section 6.2). Boat operators need to be experienced and self-reliant (section 6.8).

There are no jetties, permanent moorings or similar structures within the park. All vehicle-based boat-launching facilities are outside the park (section 6.2). The landing and launching (without a vehicle/trailer) of all vessels (including sea kayaks and canoes) is permitted within the park (table 1).

Sea kayaking in the park is possible when weather conditions are favourable.

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.

Boating within the park can be expected to increase over time, as the population of nearby towns nearby increases. Changes to boat-launching facilities outside the park could also influence the number of boats that visit the park.

Anchoring can have an impact on sensitive marine environments, although the level of visitation in the park is such that impacts are thought to be minor. Pollution from litter and faecal material is also thought to be low.

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

State Environment Protection Policies prohibit vessel operators from discharging sewage, oil, garbage, sediment, litter or other wastes to surface waters in Victorian 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 5 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 observation while protecting natural, cultural and other 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 Point Hicks 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.*
- *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.

Point Hicks Marine National Park is an excellent diving and snorkelling location, providing weather and sea conditions are suitable.

The park offers opportunities for snorkelling and diving from shore or boat. The rocky platforms surrounding Point Hicks provide an ideal location to participate in underwater activities. Whaleback Rock and Satisfaction Reef are two known boat-based diving locations.

As this coastline is highly exposed and sudden changes in weather, strong currents and undertows are common (section 6.8), only accredited and experienced divers and snorkellers should undertake this activity (section 6.8).

Current levels of use are low, but could increase as the promotion and awareness of the park and its diversity of marine life increases.

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 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.*
- *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 other 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

By far the most popular activity in the park is walking and sightseeing. Visitors are able to take in the seascape values of the park from the shoreline or adjacent Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve.

Walking on West Beach and around the point itself is popular. The tracks in the Lighthouse Reserve offer views of the park and are excellent locations to take in the remote seascape values of the park.

Swimmers and surfers occasionally use West Beach and Stable Bay. The waters can be rough and are not patrolled, and swimming and surfing are not encouraged (section 6.8).

Rockpool rambling is increasing in popularity and is easily accessible in the park at low tide. 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). Parks Victoria has produced minimal impact guidelines (Parks Victoria 2003c) to minimise the potential impact of education and interpretation programs. Current impacts associated with shore-based activities in the park appear minimal, but will nonetheless be monitored over time.

Collecting living or dead organisms, including shells, is prohibited within the park.

Lighting fires on beaches within the park 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 Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve.

Management strategies

- *Permit shore-based recreational activities in accordance with table 1.*
- *Monitor shore-based activities within the park and manage them accordingly to minimise impacts on the natural and cultural values of the park and adjacent Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve.*
- *Monitor sensitive intertidal areas for damage associated with trampling and take appropriate action to minimise any impacts.*
- *Integrate minimal impact messages for sensitive intertidal areas into existing information, interpretation and education programs (sections 6.1 and 6.8).*
- *Continue to prohibit the collection of intertidal and other organisms, including shells, in the park.*
- *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 may be used for 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 an agreement may be negotiated for the park if necessary.

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

Dogs are not permitted in the park, except aboard a vessel at all times. Dogs are not permitted within the adjacent Croajingolong National Park or Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve.

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 aircraft activity (including helicopters) in the vicinity of the park, and implement a Fly Neighbourly agreement if required.*
- *Liaise with scenic flight operators and Air Services Australia as necessary to encourage sensitive flight practices over the park.*
- *Prohibit the landing and take-off of fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters in the park, except for emergency response and management purposes.*
- *Allow dogs in the park only 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, but the remoteness, weather and sea conditions of the park are likely to limit potential operators. There are currently no tour operators licensed to conduct tours in Point Hicks 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 Adventure Activity 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 for 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 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 of licensed tour operators 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

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

A survey of Victorian beaches in 1996 rated the safety of beaches as being in one of four hazard categories: safest, moderately safe, low safety and least safe. Point Hicks 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 within the park and surrounding area, the majority of which have been vessels in distress or that have run aground. Many vessels have been stranded or wrecked in the park.

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, Park 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 updating 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 within the park in accordance with the Municipal Emergency Management Plan. Parks Victoria's response to emergency incidents during normal operating activities within 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 Notes, ParkWeb 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 Point Hicks 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 or 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 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.

Circumstances may arise (e.g. weather, sea state, material state of vessel, competency and

capacity of crew) where a vessel undertaking the right of innocent passage through Australia's territorial seas will seek to stop and anchor in cases of *force majeure* or distress.

Vessels carrying priority species as defined under the Fisheries Act (abalone and rock lobster) are not permitted within the park unless travelling by the shortest practicable route from a point outside the park to another point outside the park. In the event of an emergency (*force majeure*) such vessels may need to shelter in the park when there is no other alternative.

Under the National Parks Act, prior approval may be given by the Minister for Environment for a person in possession or charge of a boat carrying priority species to enter and remain within a permitted stopping area in Point Hicks Marine National Park, in non-emergency situations. Such approval is conditional on specified notification procedures.

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 policy and relevant permit conditions.*
- *Promote the requirement for vessel operators carrying priority species on board their vessel, who enter or shelter within the park in an emergency to notify Fisheries Victoria, where possible.*
- *Permit authorised people in possession or in charge of a boat carrying priority species to enter and remain in permitted stopping areas within the park, and monitor activities in accordance with conditions of a permit issued under the National Parks Act.*

- *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 adjoining of Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve (figure 2).

Croajingolong National Park is managed in accordance with the provisions of the National Act and the *Croajingolong National Park Management Plan* (NRE 1996). Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve is managed in accordance with the Crown Land (Reserves) Act.

The landward boundary of the park extends along the high water mark from a point east of Clinton Rocks to the eastern end of Stable Bay (figure 2). From Stable Bay the eastern boundary runs more-or-less southwards and then eastwards, passing north of Whaleback Rock, and then south to the seaward boundary, which follows the limit of the Victorian waters. The western boundary runs more-or-less north-south to meet the north-western corner of the park. The vertical boundary of the park extends to 200 m below the seabed.

Domestic and international shipping lanes lie offshore approximately 9 nautical miles from the park's most southern boundary.

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 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).

The seaward boundary of the park adjoins waters managed by the Commonwealth.

As fishing is prohibited in the park but not in adjacent waters, clear boundary identification is paramount. Yellow on-shore and off-shore markers, easily identified landforms and pre-visit materials can all be used to help identify

the boundaries of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. However, the prevailing weather and sea conditions, shifting mobile sand dunes and wave action make it difficult to identify the boundaries of the park 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.

Yellow on-shore boundary markers are located at the western boundary approximately one and half kilometres east of Clinton Rocks within Croajingolong National Park, and at Stable Bay and on the eastern boundary within Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve (figure 2).

The most practical method of communicating boundaries is by pre-visit information, including Marine Note brochures, signage and maps at key access points. Pre-visit information will identify map coordinates of the park boundaries, identify landmark features and encourage visitors to use Global Positioning Systems. Face-to-face communication by rangers and fisheries 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 and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve (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 of boundaries by rangers and fisheries officers as required (section 6.1).*

- *Maintain the existing on-shore yellow boundary markers.*
- *Ensure that the boundaries of the park can be clearly identified from the land and sea, by using a variety of methods including providing pre-visit information and encouraging the 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. The community is 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 organised club activities. Local commercial fishers who worked in the area before the park's proclamation also have a wealth of information about the 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 also 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 also active in the area and aim to broaden the community's knowledge on habitat protection for fish, and fishing rules and regulations.

Returning family groups and individuals, staying in the Thurra and Mueller campgrounds nearby to the park, have a diversity of knowledge and a strong association to the area. Capturing this transient population's enthusiasm for the area is desirable.

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).*
- *Continue to encourage general programs that promote Marine National Park values and catchment protection.*
- *Encourage and support Coast Action / Coastcare, Waterwatch, Fishcare and other volunteer groups operating in Croajingolong National Park and nearby*

towns, focusing particularly on community interpretation and education.

- 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 the effective long-term planning, use and care of the park's values.

Volunteers and community groups make valuable contributions to park management projects. 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 location, 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 nearest Coast Action/Coastcare and Friends groups, at Mallacoota, could participate in park programs, and a new Friends group for the park and adjoining areas could be formed.

The transient population of campers to Croajingolong National Park and Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve in holiday periods are often keen to become involved in management programs within these parks and may be interested in broadening participation to include the Marine National 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 is undertaken at many locations outside the park, around the Cann River area. It would be possible to establish water quality monitoring in waters entering the ocean, near the park.

Other volunteer organisations including Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (Marine Research Group), Birds Australia, 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.

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 programs in the park.*
- *Encourage existing groups such as Friends of Mallacoota, Coast Action/Coastcare, Waterwatch and dive clubs to expand their interests into the park.*
- *Encourage the formation of a new Friends group for the park and surrounding areas if sufficient interest within the local community exists.*
- *Encourage campers and other park visitors to become involved in park programs.*
- *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). Collaborative activities such as cooperative patrol, 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).

The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is responsible for the protection and sustainable development of land, vegetation and water resources within the region, including the preparation of a regional

catchment strategy to address the impact of land use and management on the catchment (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 (SEPP) for State waters.

Marine Safety Victoria is responsible for administering the Marine Act, including planning and implementing 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 that 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 the Environment and Heritage in the management of regional ecosystem conservation issues.

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*
 - *Gippsland Coastal Board on any future planning and strategies that relate to the park*
 - *East Gippsland CMA to reduce 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 Gippsland Cultural Heritage Unit on issues relating 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.*

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 the 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 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.

Freehold land – land in private ownership.

'force majeure' - An unforeseeable course of events excusing a person from the fulfilment of a contract.

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

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).

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 human 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.

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.

Public land – see Crown land.

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

Relevant Indigenous communities – includes the Traditional Owners, any scheduled Aboriginal Community/s for areas included in the park and other Indigenous communities and individuals with an interest in the park.

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.

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

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 area that is based on direct descent from the original Indigenous custodians and is in accordance with Indigenous tradition.

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 (Victoria).

ECC – Environment Conservation Council.

EGCMA – East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

EPA – Environment Protection Authority.

GCB – Gippsland Coastal Board.

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

LCC – Land Conservation Council.

MSV – Marine Safety Victoria.

NIMPIS – National Introduced Marine Pest Information System.

NRE – former Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Victoria).

NRSMMPA – National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas.

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 17 submissions were received on the Draft Management Plan (September - December 2005) from the following organisations and individuals.

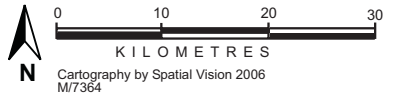
Note: Two submissions were marked confidential.

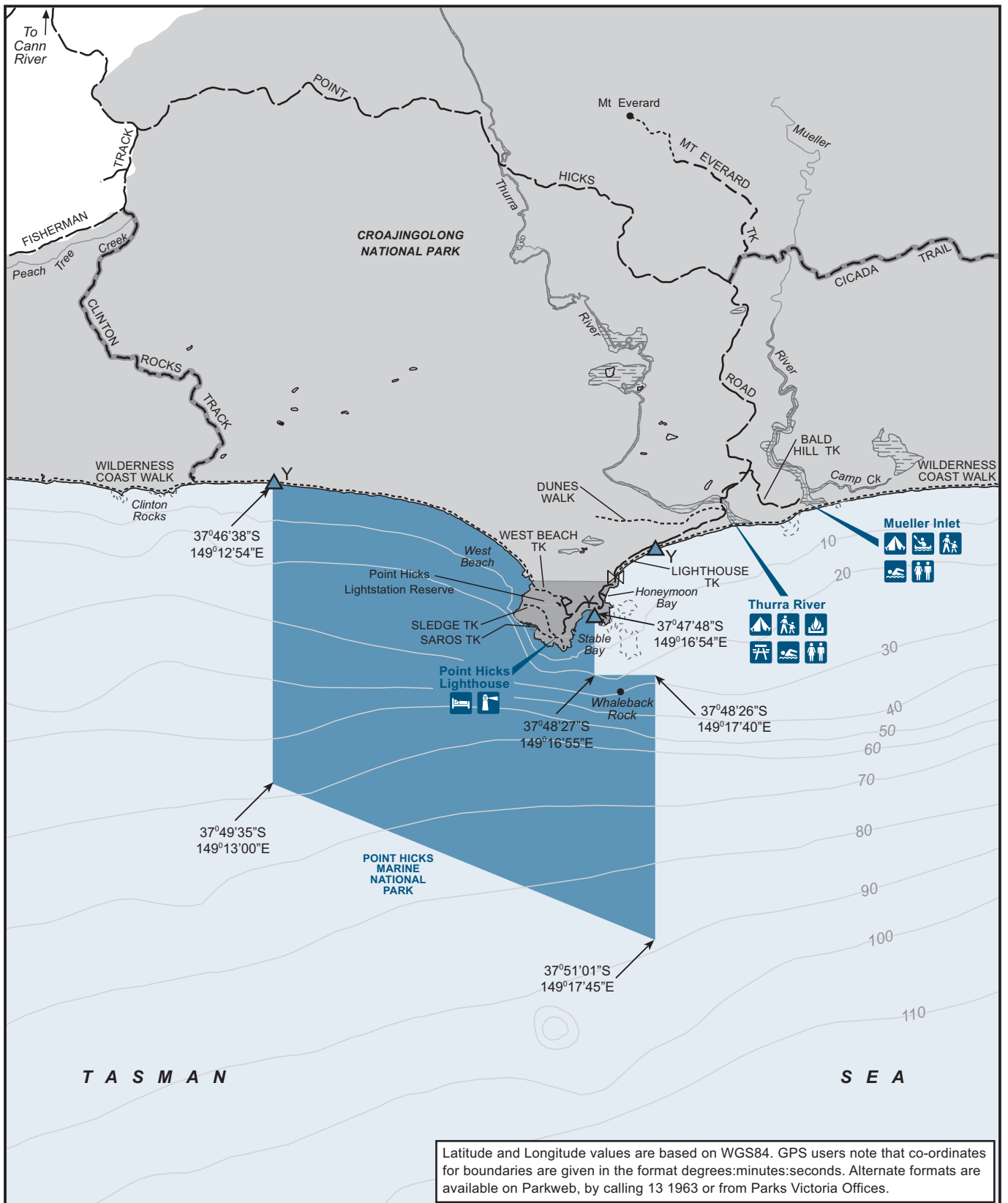
ORGANISATION / GROUP	SUBMISSION No.	INDIVIDUALS	SUBMISSION No.
Submissions from groups	Total: 13	Submissions from individuals	Total: 4
Aboriginal Affairs Victoria	5	Confidential	10
Department of Defence (Commonwealth)	7	Confidential	12
Department of Primary Industries	9	John Ariens	14
Department of Sustainability and Environment	16	Peter Sands	15
Eastern Zone Abalone Industry Association	17		
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
POINT HICKS
MARINE NATIONAL PARK**

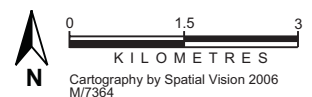
-  Highway
-  Major sealed road
-  Major unsealed road
-  Marine National Park / Marine Sanctuary
-  Victorian Parks & Reserves
-  New South Wales State Forests
-  Nadgee Nature Reserve
-  Lighthouse Reserves
-  Waterbody





POINT HICKS MARINE NATIONAL PARK

Figure 2



- Unsealed road
- - - Vehicular Track
- Walking track
- ▲ Shore boundary marker (Colour indicated by letter)
- ⊗ Gate
- Seasonal Road Closure
- 20- Depth contour (metres)

- Point Hicks Marine National Park
- National Park
- Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve
- Swamp
- Reef / Rocks

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

