



# Corner Inlet Marine National Park



Management Plan September 2005

This Management Plan for Corner Inlet Marine National Park is approved for implementation. Its purpose is to direct all aspects of management of the park until the plan is reviewed.

A Draft Management Plan for the park was published in November 2004. Seventeen submissions were received and have been considered in preparing this approved Management Plan.

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### **Copies**

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**CORNER INLET MARINE NATIONAL PARK  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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**September 2005**

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Corner Inlet Marine National Park management plan

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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 South Gippsland Marine Protected Area Management Plan Advisory Group which comprises representatives of the following organisations: Australian Marine Science Association, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Central Gippsland Aboriginal Health and Housing Co-operative, Fisheries Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Gippsland Coastal Board, Gunai/Kurnai Council of Elders, Prom Country Regional Tourism Inc., SCUBA Divers Federation of Victoria, Seafood Industry Victoria, South Gippsland Conservation Society, South Gippsland Shire Council, Victorian Boonerwung Elders Land Council, VRFish, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and Yerrung Kurnai.

Note

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

Disclaimers

This plan is prepared without prejudice to any negotiated or litigated outcome of any native title determination applications covering land or waters 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 Aboriginal 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 that may arise from you relying on any information in the publication.

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## FOREWORD

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Corner Inlet Marine National Park makes an important contribution to Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, protecting nine marine ecological communities. Marine flora and fauna within the park is diverse, with the park protecting a representative area of the most extensive beds of Broad-leaf Seagrass in Victoria.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park also protects areas of national environmental significance, including parts of the Corner Inlet Ramsar site, and international migratory bird species.

The park has long been part of the sacred *Country of Yiruk* for the Gunai / Kurnai and *Wamoom* for the Boonwurrung Indigenous people. Seascapes of the park and surrounding landscapes and waters are culturally and spiritually significant to relevant Indigenous communities.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Corner Inlet Marine National Park came to occupy an important place in the lives of many more recent arrivals, particularly European and Asian anglers.

Today, waters of the park provide an excellent setting for a range of boat-based recreation activities, including canoeing, sailing and sea-kayaking. The park also offers unique opportunities for diving and snorkelling.

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 both current and future generations.

The care of Corner Inlet 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 the management of the park, particularly with Indigenous communities, local community groups and individuals, and key government agencies.

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

Hon John Thwaites MP  
Minister for Environment

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## APPROVED MANAGEMENT PLAN

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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 Corner Inlet 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

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

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Victorians are custodians of some of the most remarkable, diverse and culturally important 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 off-shore 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 areas of significance to relevant 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. octopus, abalone, 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 described 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’.

### **Contribution of Corner Inlet Marine National Park to the statewide system**

As the only Marine National Park in Victoria’s third largest and most easterly bay, Corner Inlet Marine National Park (1550 ha) makes an important contribution to Victoria’s system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. It does this through protecting a representative area of the only extensive Broad-leaf Seagrass meadows in Victoria, and a complex network of mangroves, saltmarsh, mud banks, subtidal reef environments and deep channels.

### **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 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 to, or past use of, underwater places 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 Corner Inlet Marine National Park and to strengthen its protection while respecting cultural and community associations with the area.

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## SUMMARY

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As the only Marine National Park in Victoria's third largest bay, Corner Inlet Marine National Park (1550 ha) makes an important contribution to Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries.

The park protects areas of national environmental significance and internationally significant shorebird habitat, forming part of the Corner Inlet Ramsar site listed under the Ramsar Convention. Marine flora and fauna within Corner Inlet Marine National Park is abundant and diverse, with the park protecting a representative area of the most extensive beds of Broad-leaf Seagrass in Victoria.

Indigenous tradition indicates that as part of Corner Inlet, the park is part of the *Country* of the Gunai / Kurnai<sup>1</sup> and Boonwurrung<sup>1</sup> people. The park contains Indigenous places and objects that are integral to the *dreaming* of the Traditional Owners, and is highly significant to Indigenous communities. At the time of publication there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of areas within the park.

The waters of the park provide a natural setting for a range of boat-based recreation activities, including canoeing, sailing, sea-kayaking and boat tours. Corner Inlet Marine National Park also offers opportunities for unique diving and snorkelling activities in seagrass communities.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park will be managed within the broader context of Corner Inlet, as a world-class Marine National Park for conservation and appropriate recreation. It will contribute to the overall maintenance of marine biodiversity in the Victorian Embayments bioregion, protecting a range of threatened marine mammals, significant seagrass communities, shorebirds and associated habitats.

Enabling natural processes to occur unimpeded will be an important management goal, as will improving relationships with community groups and volunteers, 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 the park.
- Intertidal feeding and roosting habitat for migratory and threatened shorebirds will be preserved and protected.
- Identified threats to the park will be minimised through ongoing monitoring, risk assessment and where feasible complementary adjacent, coastal and catchment management.
- Impacts of changes to water quality will be minimised through cooperation with catchment managers and other relevant agencies.
- 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.
- Visitor understanding and appreciation of the park's natural and cultural values will be enhanced by information, interpretation and education programs, integrated with management of the adjoining Wilsons Promontory National Park and Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park.
- Indigenous cultural lore relating to *Country* will be respected, promoted and interpreted in accordance with the wishes of the Traditional Owners.
- Community and interest groups, including Indigenous communities, will be encouraged and supported to become actively involved in areas of park management that relate to their interests.

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<sup>1</sup> This plan adopts the spellings used by the Native Title Unit, Department of Justice. There are a number of alternative spellings and pronunciations. For the Gunai / Kurnai these include: 'Ganai', 'Gun-na', 'Kanny', 'Kani', 'Knai' and 'Kannnai'. Boonwurrung may also be spelt in a number of different ways, including 'Boonerwung' and 'Bunurong'.

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# CONTENTS

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FOREWORD	iii
APPROVED MANAGEMENT PLAN	iv
INTRODUCTION TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT	v
SUMMARY	vii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Location and planning area	1
1.2 Creation of the park	1
1.3 Plan development	1
2 BASIS	3
2.1 Regional context	3
2.2 Park significance and values	3
2.3 Evidence of past use	5
2.4 The park visitor	5
2.5 Legislation and ECC recommendations	5
2.6 Policies and guidelines	7
3 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	8
3.1 Park vision	8
3.2 Zoning	8
3.3 Management directions	8
4 STRATEGIES FOR NATURAL VALUES CONSERVATION	12
4.1 Geological and geomorphological features	12
4.2 Catchment and water quality	13
4.3 Hydrodynamics	16
4.4 Habitats and communities	17
4.5 Landscape and seascape	19
4.6 Marine pests	21
5 STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL VALUES CONSERVATION	23
5.1 Indigenous cultural heritage	23
5.2 Maritime and other cultural heritage	24
6 STRATEGIES FOR VISITORS	26
6.1 Information, interpretation and education	26
6.2 Access	27
6.3 Recreational boating and surface water sports	28
6.4 Diving and snorkelling	30

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6.5	Swimming and shore-based activities	30
6.6	Tourism services	31
6.7	Public safety	32
7	STRATEGIES FOR AUTHORISED AND ADJACENT USES	34
7.1	Authorised uses	34
7.2	Boundaries and adjacent uses	34
8	STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT	36
8.1	Community awareness	36
8.2	Community participation	37
8.3	Agency partnerships	38
9	PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	41
9.1	Delivery and reporting	41
9.2	Plan amendment	42
9.3	Evaluation and review	42
	REFERENCES	43
	GLOSSARY	47
	TABLES	
1	Management overlay	9
2	Summary of recreational opportunities	11
	APPENDICES	
1	Management objectives for Marine National Parks	50
2	Marine Ecological Communities	51
3	Submissions on Draft Management Plan	52
	FIGURES	
1	Location	End of plan
2	Corner Inlet Marine National Park	"
3	Management overlay	"



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Location and planning area

Corner Inlet Marine National Park (1550 ha) is situated 180 kilometres southeast of Melbourne, adjacent to Wilsons Promontory National Park and integrally linked to Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park (figure 1).

The planning area comprises the two separate sections of the park which are on the south-eastern coast of Corner Inlet (figure 2).

The northern boundary of the northern section of the park follows a line extending from the peak of Mount Singapore in a south-westerly direction to an in-water boundary marker at the western apex (approximately 6 km). An on-shore boundary marker near White Dog Point and an additional in-water boundary marker at the western edge of Bennison Channel also aid boundary identification along this line.

The southern boundary of the northern section of the park follows a line from the in-water marker at the western apex, through the peak of Granite Island and to the peak of Tin Mine Hill. An on-shore boundary marker at the base of Tin Mine Hill, south of Tin Mine Cove assists boundary identification. The landward boundary of the northern section follows the mean high water mark.

The northern boundary of the southern section of the park follows a line that runs due east from the most northerly point of Bennison Island at the high water mark to an on-shore marker on Chinaman Long Beach. The western boundary follows a line joining the peak of Barry Hill, extending through the peak of Bennison Island. An on-shore marker near Barry Hill helps to identify this boundary. The landward boundary of the southern section is the mean high water mark.

The park extends to 200 m below the seabed.

## 1.2 Creation of the park

Corner Inlet 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 the establishment of the new Marine National Park under the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.).

In its response to the ECC recommendations, the Government modified the recommended boundary of the Corner Inlet Marine National Park to exclude areas on the north-western and north-eastern sides of the recommended park. Following negotiations between the Government and the Opposition prior to passage of the legislation in 2002, the boundary of the park was amended again to reduce the impact of the park on commercial fishers.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park was included on Schedule 7 of the National Parks Act on 16 November 2002 (appendix 1). Fishing was allowed to continue in the park until 1 April 2004.

When created, very 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 of fauna, plants or objects from these areas.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park includes areas between the high and low water marks that were formerly part of Wilsons Promontory National Park, including parts of Bennison and Granite Islands, and areas beyond the low water mark that were formerly part of Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park.

## 1.3 Plan development

This first Management Plan for the Corner Inlet Marine National Park was prepared by Parks Victoria, with significant input from the South Gippsland Marine Protected Area Management Plan Advisory Group and other stakeholders. It takes into account existing information, reports and research findings that relate to the park. The plan 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 Corner Inlet 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 to 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 the 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 2004, and 17 submissions were received (appendix 2).

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

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

- the addition of a Special Protection Area management overlay to all areas of the park except Bennison Channel, to protect significant seagrass beds and bird habitats
- introduction of a 'voluntary code of practice' to guide and encourage motorised vessel operators within the Special Protection Area to avoid shallow areas of the park, supported by an integrated community education and awareness program
- further refinements in differentiating between the park and the adjoining areas of Wilsons Promontory National Park, Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park and Corner Inlet
- enhanced and more defined management strategies
- permitting appropriate Defence Forces training activities
- greater detail about plan implementation, reporting, performance measuring and evaluation at the end of the plan
- clarification of the role of Parks Victoria and other government agencies.

This Final Management Plan will direct future management of Corner Inlet Marine National Park, until reviewed.

### 2.1 Regional context

Corner Inlet 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). The NRSMPA contributes to the establishment of a global representative system of marine protected areas (TFMPA 1998).

Corner Inlet Marine National Park is one of eight Marine National Parks in the Victorian Embayments 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 (TFMPA 1998).

The Victorian Embayments marine bioregion encompasses bays, inlets and estuaries, including Port Phillip, Western Port, Corner Inlet, Shallow Inlet, Gippsland Lakes and Mallacoota Inlet (ANZECC 1998). It is characterised by sheltered waters with extensive areas of subtidal and intertidal sediments. In contrast, some shallow reef areas are present in the larger embayments of Port Phillip and Western Port (Parks Victoria 2003a).

Indigenous tradition indicates that the park is part of *Country* of Gunai / Kurnai and Boonwurrung people (section 5.1). At the time of publication there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of the park.

As part of the Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park sub-catchment, the park is influenced by certain activities within the South Gippsland basin, which is managed by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA).

The foreshore adjacent to the park, including both Granite and Bennison Islands above the high water mark, are part of the Wilsons Promontory National Park and are managed by Parks Victoria.

Spectacular and diverse natural environments, interspersed with farmland and small rural

townships, typify the region surrounding the park. The extensive tidal inlets of Corner Inlet and Nooramunga contrast with the impressive granite outcrops and sandy beaches of Wilsons Promontory. The inlets are heavily influenced by the surrounding catchment, which is dominated by dairy farms and other agricultural industries. Most islands within Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Parks are vegetated with coastal woodland, mangrove and saltmarsh communities. Coastal attractions surrounding the park contrast with the region's popular rainforest and Mountain Ash forests of Tarra-Bulga National Park, in the Strzelecki Ranges north of Yarram.

Corner Inlet is in Tourism Victoria's Gippsland marketing and promotion region. Camping and accommodation areas close to the park include Port Albert, Port Welshpool, Yanakie, Tidal River, Sandy Point and Walkerville. The Gippsland region receives 7% of all tourist visits to Victoria (Tourism Victoria 2002a), comprising 1.7 million domestic overnight visitors, 3.6 million domestic day visitors, and 56 000 international overnight visitors (Tourism Victoria 2002b).

The waters of Corner Inlet, including the park, are part of the Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert. Port services, including the maintenance of navigation aids, are managed by Gippsland Ports.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park protects sections of inshore coastline along the north-eastern end of Wilsons Promontory, including Freshwater Cove, Shallow Bight, Tin Mine Cove and areas southeast of Bennison Island. The park is complemented by a number of nearby parks, including Corner Inlet, Nooramunga and Shallow Inlet Marine and Coastal Parks, Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park, Wilsons Promontory Marine Park, Wilsons Promontory National Park and Cape Liptrap Coastal Park, as well as a range of other natural attractions in the region.

### 2.2 Park significance and values

Corner Inlet Marine National Park makes a valuable contribution to Victoria's parks and reserves 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.

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

In 1982 a Biosphere Reserve, based on Wilsons Promontory National Park, was designated under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program. There are 12 Biosphere Reserves in Australia, of which four are in Victoria. Corner Inlet Marine National Park provides a complementary buffer for this reserve.

The park forms part of an area that has been recognised as a wetland of international significance under Article 2 of the Ramsar Convention. The strategic management plan for Corner Inlet Ramsar site was published in May 2002 (NRE 2002a).

In recognition of the area's outstanding values and its heritage importance, Corner Inlet Marine National Park has also been nominated for listing on the Register of the National Estate, as part of the listing for the South Gippsland Marine and Coastal Parks Area.

The area included in the park is significant to many people in the broader community. The park is of particular significance to the Traditional Owners who are connected to the area by cultural lore and others who have traditional attachments.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park contains a representative area of the only extensive Broad-leaf Seagrass meadows in Victoria. This seagrass community supports the most diverse fauna of all marine habitats in the Corner Inlet and Nooramunga area (ECC 2000).

The unique composition of species that characterise Corner Inlet Marine National Park results in part from an overlap in the distributions of warm-water species found on the NSW coast and cool-water species found throughout Victoria.

Waters of the park provide an excellent setting for a range of boat-based recreation activities, including canoeing, sailing, sea-kayaking and boat tours.

Important values for the park are listed below.

#### **Natural values**

- internationally significant wetland listed as part of the Corner Inlet Ramsar site
- many open bay habitat types, such as seagrass, mangrove, intertidal sandy beaches and subtidal soft sediments
- extensive seagrass communities with a particularly high faunal diversity
- extensive Broad-leaf Seagrass meadows offering excellent opportunities for scientific investigation and learning about ecological processes
- very high diversity of invertebrates in soft sediments
- important habitat for threatened shorebird species, including species listed under international migratory bird agreements.

#### **Cultural values**

- seascape of high cultural significance to Indigenous people
- cultural places and objects of significance to Traditional Owners
- an important area for maritime and other cultural history, including over 100 years of commercial fishing
- opportunities for community involvement in protecting the cultural significance of the park.

#### **Recreation and tourism values**

- opportunities for a range of recreational activities on remote areas of coastline
- boat-based touring opportunities in remote areas
- spectacular views of Wilsons Promontory National Park.

### 2.3 Evidence of past use

As recently as 10 000 years ago sea levels were approximately 50 metres lower than today, and Victoria was connected to Tasmania by a 'land bridge' (Wallis 1998). During this time Corner Inlet Marine National Park was a terrestrial habitat and was certainly inhabited by Indigenous people (Coutts 1968).

Cultural places and objects within the park and the adjoining Wilsons Promontory National Park indicate Indigenous occupation and sustained collection and harvesting of coastal resources from at least 6500 years ago (section 5.1). Indigenous people of the area would have hunted and gathered seasonally abundant food, including terrestrial and aquatic animals, fruits, yams and eggs. They would have fished the streams and coastal waters with net or line, or by spear from the shore and from bark canoes (Collett 1994).

The park and adjoining terrestrial areas have a history of resource use and commerce dating back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, including tin mining and commercial fishing (section 5.2). Evidence of these activities is present today, including relics of the Mount Hunter tin mine in Wilsons Promontory National Park.

In more recent years the park has made important social and economic contributions. Commercial fishing activities have included seining and mesh netting for a variety of species (ECC 2000). Recreational fishing of the area has also been popular. The area within the park is now highly protected and all forms of extraction, including commercial and recreational fishing, are prohibited.

### 2.4 The park visitor

Corner Inlet Marine National Park has a low level of visitation, despite Corner Inlet attracting many thousands of visitors, as well as residents from the surrounding region, including the townships of Foster, Port Franklin, Toora, Welshpool and Port Welshpool. Visitors include:

- day and overnight boat visitors (including sea kayaks)
- recreational walkers in the intertidal areas adjacent to the national park
- people seeking to appreciate the marine flora and fauna of the park.

Prior to the proclamation of the park and the prohibition of commercial and recreational fishing, the area attracted a large number of visitors who visited primarily for recreational fishing. As fishing is no longer permitted in the park, it is difficult to estimate future visitor numbers in the area. Time of year, weather and tides will influence visitation to the park.

The northern section of the park is visited by boat from Port Welshpool and other points of departure, and recreational walkers appreciate the wilderness experience of the northern Promontory. Larger commercial and recreational vessels are known to anchor in the northern section of the park, as shelter can be found there during easterly weather.

The southern section of the park attracts visitors for nature observation from non-motorised vessels, including sea kayaks.

### 2.5 Legislation and ECC recommendations

#### Legislation

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

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

The objects and provisions of the National Parks Act set the framework for the management of Corner Inlet 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 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 *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.

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

A joint application for a native title determination, covering the park among other areas, was lodged with the Native Title Tribunal on 17th March 1997 (VG6005/98 Gunai / Kurnai / Boonerwung) and registered in 1998. The implementation of this Management Plan will take into account the existence of this and any subsequent native title applications, and any native title found to exist under the Native Title Act.

The *Parks Victoria Act 1998* (Vic.) enables management services for Corner Inlet Marine National Park to be provided by Parks Victoria on behalf of the Secretary to DSE.

### **ECC recommendations**

The ECC recommended the creation of Corner Inlet Marine National Park for its contribution to the representative system of marine protected areas along the Victorian coast (ECC 2000). It protects a variety of sheltered habitats such as intertidal mudflats, channels and seagrass beds, including a sample of the only substantial beds of Broad-leaf Seagrass in Victoria (ECC 2000).

In addition to its general recommendations, the ECC made specific recommendations (R38A and B) with respect to uses and activities that should be permitted and prohibited in Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries (ECC 2000).

The Victorian Government accepted these recommendations for Corner Inlet Marine National Park with alterations, including the division of the recommended area into two separate areas and a reduction in area from 4150 ha to 1550 ha (Government of Victoria 2002).

The Victorian Government also accepted recommendations of the ECC's *Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation* (Government of Victoria 2002), including the following recommendations.

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

R13 Further research to 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 to 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 to 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 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 be given to establishing monitoring programs for Marine National Parks to determine the extent to which these areas are meeting their objectives.

## 2.6 Policies and guidelines

The park is managed in accordance with Parks Victoria's operational policies and, as appropriate, is consistent 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: Draft for Discussion* (Parks Victoria 2004a)
- *Heritage Management Strategy* (Parks Victoria 2003b)
- *Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy* (NRE 1997a)
- *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* (COAG 1992)
- *National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity* (ANZECC 2001).
- *Gippsland Boating – Coastal Action Plan* (GCB 2002a).
- *Integrated Coastal Planning for Gippsland – Coastal Action Plan* (GCB 2002b)
- *Management of Victoria's Ramsar Wetlands: Strategic Directions Statement* (NRE 2002b)
- *Nature Based Tourism - Directions and Opportunities for Victoria 2000–2003* (Tourism Victoria 2000)
- *Policy for Sustainable Recreation and Tourism on Victoria's Public Land* (NRE 2002c)
- *Victorian Coastal Strategy 2002* (VCC 2002)
- *Victorian Heritage Strategy — Shipwrecks 2005* (Heritage Victoria 2000)
- *West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy 2004–2009* (WGCMA 2004)
- *Gippsland Estuaries – Coastal Action Plan* (GCB in prep.).

The park is also managed within a broader context of a number of other plans and strategies, including:

- *Corner Inlet Ramsar Site: Strategic Management Plan* (NRE 2002a)

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## 3 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

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### 3.1 Park vision

A future visitor to Corner Inlet Marine National Park finds an outstanding Marine National Park renowned for its biologically diverse seagrass meadows and internationally significant wader bird habitat, integrally linked with the broader Corner Inlet and its surrounding catchment.

The park continues to provide feeding and breeding areas for a diverse range of marine fauna. The seagrass communities and associated marine flora and fauna are maintained by improved catchment practices as a result of integrated management in the coastal zone. Significant wader bird habitats, including saltmarsh areas, are managed in accordance with international obligations under a number of conventions and agreements.

Research and monitoring programs enable management to be based on a sound and increasing understanding of the park's natural values and ecological processes, and the specific requirements of its significant marine flora and fauna.

Indigenous cultural heritage of the park is protected, conserved and managed through strong working relationships with Indigenous communities. The relationship is based on mutual respect and a sound understanding of the cultural lore and Indigenous cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in relation to the park.

Post-settlement cultural heritage is conserved and managed through an increasing understanding of physical and historical values.

The park attracts visitors with diverse backgrounds and interests. Visitor numbers and activities are sustainably managed to ensure that disturbance to natural and cultural values is minimal, so that the park is preserved for future generations. Community groups and volunteers work together with Parks Victoria to achieve common goals in accordance with their aspirations for the park.

Visitors enjoy the park's unique marine environments through a diverse range of appropriate recreational activities that complement other activities in the region. Bird watching and boating are popular recreational pursuits. An appreciation of the park's natural and cultural values is fostered, and the park makes a valuable contribution to regional tourism.

### 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).

In this park, a Special Protection Area – Natural Values overlay applies. The Special Protection Area – Natural Values overlay is used to highlight additional special protection requirements. The overlay characteristics are shown in table 1 and figure 3.

### 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 Corner Inlet Marine National Park.
- Viable populations of seagrasses, particularly Broad-leaf Seagrass (*Posidonia australis*), will be maintained subject to natural ecological processes.
- Intertidal feeding and roosting habitat for migratory and threatened shorebirds will be preserved and protected.

**TABLE 1 MANAGEMENT OVERLAY**

OVERLAY	AREA/LOCATION	VALUES	GENERAL MANAGEMENT AIM	ACCESS
Special Protection Area – Natural Values	<p>Areas detailed in figure 3 (80% of area).</p> <p>All areas of the park (both northern and southern sections), except Bennison Channel.</p>	Significant habitat areas, including sensitive Broad-leaf Seagrass beds and feeding areas for wading birds.	Protect sensitive seagrass communities from physical disturbance from vessels, particularly propeller scour, and protect significant wader bird feeding areas.	Motorised vessel operators are encouraged to avoid using motorised vessels in shallow and exposed intertidal areas of the park during and two hours either side of low tide (figure 3). Use is to be guided by a ‘voluntary code of practice’ for motorised vessel operators (section 6.3).

- Identified threats to the park will be minimised through addressing the outcomes of ongoing monitoring, risk assessment, and where feasible, complementary adjacent, coastal and catchment management.
- Compliance with legislated provisions that prohibit extractive activities, including fishing and shellfish collection, will be ensured through education, information, community support, and improved surveillance and enforcement.
- Impacts of changes to water quality will be minimised through cooperation with catchment managers and other relevant agencies.
- Research and monitoring to improve the scientific basis for management, including baseline data collection, marine habitat mapping and threat assessment, will be undertaken as outlined in the statewide Management Strategy (Parks Victoria 2003a) and through collaborative research links.

#### **Cultural values conservation**

- Indigenous cultural places and objects will be protected from interference or damaging activities, and will be managed in accordance with the Wilsons Promontory Site Protection Strategy (Parks Victoria 2002a).
- The Traditional Owners’ cultural lore, interests and rights in the park and aspirations for *Country*, will be reflected in the park’s management, in accordance with legislation and policies.

- Indigenous cultural lore relating to *Country* will be respected, promoted and interpreted in accordance with the wishes of the Traditional Owners.
- Research into Indigenous and historic cultural heritage of the park will be encouraged and supported as appropriate in consultation with 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.
- Visitor enjoyment will be enhanced by appropriate management of recreation activities.
- Recreation activities will be permitted in accordance with table 2.
- Visitors will have opportunities to observe marine life, enjoy water sports and participate in other recreational activities compatible with management objectives.
- Visitors will be encouraged to adopt minimum impact techniques and to adhere to industry-developed standards appropriate to their activity.
- Licensed tour operators will be encouraged to offer a range of appropriate minimal-impact recreation activities.

**Community awareness and involvement**

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

**TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>CORNER INLET MARINE NATIONAL PARK</b>
Anchoring*	Y (section 6.3)
Bait collection	N
Bird watching	Y
Boat launching	N (section 6.3)
Camping (on boat)*	Y (section 6.3)
Canoeing / sea- kayaking	Y
Diving and snorkelling	Y (section 6.4)
Dogs **	N (section 6.5)
Feeding wildlife	N
Fires on beaches	N (section 6.5)
Fishing (all forms)	N
Fossil collection	N
Guided activities	Y (section 6.6)
Hang-gliding and paragliding	N
Hovercraft – exposed intertidal areas	N (figure 2, section 6.3)
Hovercraft – over water	Y (section 6.3)
Kite surfing / wind surfing	Y (section 6.3)
Licensed tours	Y (section 6.6)
Mooring (Permanent in-water)	N (section 6.3)
Motorised boating*	Y (table 1, figure 3, section 6.3)
Nature photography / painting, etc. (non-commercial)	Y
Non-motorised boating	Y
Personal water craft*	Y (table 1, figure 3, section 6.3)
Picnicking	Y
Prospecting and metal detecting	N
Rockpool rambling	Y (section 6.5)
Sailing	Y (section 6.3)
Shell collection	N
Surfskiing	Y (section 6.3)
Swimming	Y (section 6.5)
Walking (intertidal zone)	Y (section 6.5)
Waterskiing*	Y (section 6.3)
Whale / dolphin / seal watching	Y (section 6.3)
Windsurfing	Y (section 6.3)

**Key:**

- Y Yes, subject to conditions prescribed by legislation, permits or elsewhere in the plan, as indicated.
- N Not permitted.
- \* Special Protection Area Overlay – refer to table 1 for recommendations on recreational use of this area of the park.
- \*\* Dogs confined in or on a vessel permitted.

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## 4 STRATEGIES FOR NATURAL VALUES CONSERVATION

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### 4.1 Geological and geomorphological features

Corner Inlet basin is a shallow, circular, marine embayment with a distinctive network of tidal channels that converge to a single opening into Bass Strait. The coastline of Corner Inlet is generally of low relief with few areas of rock outcrop. Mangrove and saltmarsh areas with extensive intertidal mudflats fringe most shorelines. Active processes of erosion and deposition caused by wave, tidal, wind and biological action occur throughout the Inlet.

The Inlet is bounded by tectonic structures to the north and west (Strzelecki and Hoddle Ranges) and by the granite massif of Wilsons Promontory to the south. The area is still tectonically active, and this may be causing continued subsidence of the basin, causing submergence or erosion of the coastal edge (Rosengren 1989).

The shoreline and floor of Corner Inlet consists largely of a variety of Quaternary sediments (<2 million years), much of which was formed during Pleistocene periods (2 million years – 10 000 years) of lower sea levels when alluvial fans and floodplains formed. Sand has been derived from weathering of Tertiary (65 – 2 million years) outcrops, Wilsons Promontory granite, wind-blown dunes on the Yanakie Isthmus and marine sands carried in by wave and tidal currents (Rosengren 1989). Of great importance is the role of organic matter and processes in trapping, providing and reworking sediment in Corner Inlet.

The longest section of rocky coastline in Corner Inlet occurs in the northern section of the park and consists of steeply plunging granite headlands separated by sandy beaches. Areas of the intertidal rocky shores of Granite and Bennison Islands are also within the Park. The headland separating Tin Mine Cove and Chinaman Long Beach is the main example of a deep subtidal rocky reef within the park.

The southern section of the park straddles three sites of geological and geomorphological significance: Chinaman Creek Delta, Barry Hill to Bennison Point, and Bennison Island (Rosengren 1989; Buckley 1993).

Chinaman Creek Delta is of state significance, providing an example of an active delta infilling a former embayment (Rosengren 1989). The area is subject to natural change, and the potential for human-induced changes is low.

Between Barry Hill and Bennison Point is a regionally significant area of weathered granite shore platform and active granite sand spit development. This area is a good example of a dynamic coast showing evidence of recent and rapid change (Rosengren 1989).

The tidal flats to the south of Bennison Island are a good example of a pool and channel drainage system, and are regionally significant (Rosengren 1989).

In accordance with tradition, many geomorphological features are significant to Traditional Owners.

There are no direct threats to the geological and geomorphological values of the park, largely because of the park's relative remoteness, its location adjacent to other parks, and the relatively few visitors it receives. The protection afforded by the park and adjacent Wilsons Promontory National Park are considered sufficient to protect the geological and geomorphological values.

#### Aims

- Protect geological and geomorphological features of the park from potentially damaging human activities.
- Allow natural geological and geomorphological processes to continue without human interference.
- Provide opportunities for appropriate research on geological and landform features.

#### Management strategies

- *Ensure, through the provision of education, interpretation and information, permit conditions and enforcement, that all permitted activities in the park do not adversely affect geological or geomorphological values within the park.*

- *Identify knowledge gaps and establish research into geological and geomorphological features, including sites of significance.*
- *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

Corner Inlet Marine National Park lies within the Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park sub-catchment (South Gippsland basin) of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) area (WGCMA 2004). Direct discharges into the park include Chinaman Creek and several intermittent creeks. These discharges originate within Wilsons Promontory National Park, a highly protected catchment.

Some major streams (Franklin, Agnes, Albert and Tarra Rivers, Deep and Stockyard Creeks) and numerous smaller streams discharge into the Corner Inlet and Nooramunga area outside the park. About 30 stormwater and informal agricultural drains and three treated wastewater outfalls discharge into Corner Inlet. Water quality within Corner Inlet is influenced by all these sources, and the potential for altered water quality in the park is high. Pollution from a variety of sources, including litter, and oil and chemical spills, can threaten the condition of natural values within the park.

##### Catchment influences

A number of land uses (e.g. land clearance, agricultural operations, timber harvesting, urban development) in the catchment of Corner Inlet have increased the sediment and nutrient loads discharged into the inlet. This is particularly relevant during high rainfall events (GRWMP 2002).

High nutrient inputs from agricultural and other runoff can result in eutrophic conditions conducive to algal blooms. Although planktonic blooms appear not to be a problem in Corner Inlet, nuisance filamentous algal blooms have been reported.

Turbidity in Corner Inlet has the potential to impact on environmental values. Increased

sediment loads during winter, spring and flood events have led to higher levels of turbidity within Corner Inlet. Dredging associated with port operations may also cause localised increases in turbidity in areas outside the park. Increased turbidity can reduce light availability and increase siltation and deposition, potentially affecting hydrodynamic processes (section 4.3) and marine flora and fauna (section 4.4).

Pollutants such as biocides, fertilisers, oils, other chemicals and organic effluent can enter Corner Inlet via waterways and drains. Informal agricultural drains discharging directly into Corner Inlet have the potential to carry increased sediment and nutrient loads via direct runoff (WGCMA 2000). Many of these drains are untreated and are not monitored, so their potential to affect park values is high. The construction of any new drain would generally require a permit from South Gippsland Shire Council.

An increased understanding of the types of pollutants, nutrients and sediment loads entering Corner Inlet via drainage schemes and direct runoff during rainfall events would assist the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and West Gippsland CMA, and benefit park management. Opportunities exist to establish Waterwatch monitoring sites within these drains (section 8.2). West Gippsland CMA are also considering an investigation into flooding and drainage issues, including water quality, in the Black Swamp, Hedley and Shady Creek drainage areas along the coastal fringes of Corner Inlet (WGCMA & EGCMA 2005; WGCMA 2000; 2004).

Best management practice of drains, including fencing to exclude stock, revegetation of drain sides and ongoing maintenance rather than periodic excavation, would contribute to minimising the amount of nutrients and pollutants originating from these agricultural drains (WGCMA 2000).

##### Waste water and storm water outfalls

Treated wastewater outfalls for the towns of Toora, Foster, Welshpool and Port Welshpool discharge into Corner Inlet. These sites are managed by South Gippsland Water in accordance with waste discharge licences issued by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and in accordance with South

Gippsland Water's overall Environmental Improvement Plan. All sites are located several kilometres from Corner Inlet Marine National Park and compared to other sources (e.g. rivers, informal drains), these outfalls contribute relatively little volume of water and sediment to Corner Inlet (GRWMP 2002). Industrial facilities located at Barry Beach also discharge treated wastewater into Corner Inlet. The EPA licenses these facilities.

Raw sewage can also be discharged into Corner Inlet from septic systems in Port Welshpool via stormwater drains during floods, and from boats if they are not equipped with suitable toilets (section 6.3). The need for improved management regimes for existing septic tanks in unsewered coastal areas, and best practice solutions for water and sewerage needs of unserved settlements, have been identified by the *Integrated Coastal Planning for Gippsland Coastal Action Plan* (GCB 2002b).

Vessel operators are prohibited from discharging sewerage, oil, garbage, sediment, litter or other wastes to surface waters in any Victorian State waters (section 6.3). 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.

In accordance with the Victorian Coastal Strategy, Water Authorities, EPA, Catchment Management Authorities, Local Government and Committees of Management are responsible for reducing the impact of effluents in marine and estuarine environments (VCC 2002).

The South Gippsland Shire Council manages stormwater systems which seek to minimise environmental impacts in accordance with the Urban Stormwater Management Plan for the municipality (Sinclair Knight Mertz 2002). This plan identifies stormwater pollution sources and provides a management framework for improving the environmental management of urban stormwater in the municipality. South Gippsland and Bass Coast Shire Councils have established a joint education program to improve stormwater, litter and waste management practices.

### **Litter**

Littering is illegal within and outside the park. Litter is both aesthetically unpleasant and a threat to wildlife through ingestion or entanglement. Stormwater drains, boats and campsites are potential sources of litter entering the park.

### **Marine Pollution**

Spills of oil or other chemicals could have devastating effects on park values, particularly on seabirds, seagrass and intertidal areas. Proposals to develop industrial estates, port facilities and marinas at Barry Beach and Port Welshpool and the associated increase in boating and shipping that these facilities will support, may increase the potential risk of chemical and oil spills occurring within the area.

As the manager of around 70% of Victoria's coastal areas, Parks Victoria plays a significant support role in the response to marine incidents. 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 2002a) outlines broad response arrangements to a potential oil or chemical spill (section 8.3).

Under VICPLAN, the park lies in the Gippsland Region, and Gippsland Ports Committee of Management is the Regional Oil Pollution Coordinator. The *Final Draft Gippsland Region Marine Pollution Contingency Plan* (Gippsland Ports in prep.) guides responses to local pollution incidents. A pollution response plan for the Barry Beach Marine Terminal has been prepared by ESSO. A Safety and Environmental Management Plan for the Port of Corner Inlet has been prepared by Gippsland Ports (section 8.3).

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has developed the *Wildlife Response Plan for Oil Spills* (NRE 1997b). Under the *Wildlife Act 1975* (Vic.), DSE has the responsibility for collecting, assessing, cleaning and rehabilitating wildlife affected by marine pollution.

Parks Victoria works with and supports many other agencies including West Gippsland

CMA, Gippsland Coastal Board, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Marine Safety Victoria and the EPA in catchment and water quality management (section 8.3). Parks Victoria also works with community groups in water quality monitoring including South Gippsland Waterwatch (section 8.2).

The *Integrated Coastal Planning for Gippsland – Coastal Action Plan* (GCB 2002b) emphasises the importance of an integrated approach to the planning and management of the marine and coastal environment. It seeks to achieve integration between municipal planning schemes (SGSC 1999), public land policy and public land management plans in Gippsland, including the park.

The *West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy 2004–2009* (WGCMA 2004) applies to land and water within the region administered by the West Gippsland CMA, including the park. The strategy provides a strategic management framework for the protection of natural values within the catchment, including coastal and marine environments. The Regional Catchment Strategy addresses the impacts of land use and management on the marine and estuarine environment, including the park.

The draft *River Health Strategy West Gippsland Catchment* (WGCMA 2005) identifies the Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park sub-catchment as having moderate environmental and high social values. The draft River Health Strategy aims to find a balance between protection, maintenance and enhancement of the environmental values of a natural river system and the processes required to sustain river health while protecting, maintaining or enhancing additional social and economic values important to the local community.

A ‘Corner Inlet and Catchment Environmental Audit’ is currently being prepared for the Gippsland Coastal Board by CSIRO. The audit will examine existing information describing the environmental condition of Corner Inlet, and recommend priority areas for future action.

The *Draft Water Quality Action Plan* (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.

The Nooramunga and Corner Inlet (NCI) Water Monitoring Project is a community-based project coordinated by South Gippsland Waterwatch and funded by Coast Action / Coastcare (section 8.2). The project was initiated in 1997 by the Franklin River Landcare Group and aims to develop a greater understanding of the impact of land uses on water quality and likely impact on the local marine environment. Monitoring results indicate that water quality is highly variable between waterways and over time, and that phosphorus levels, indicative of nutrient levels, are high for most waterways monitored.

#### **Aims**

- Maintain a high quality of water within the park and surrounding waters to ensure that natural biological and physical processes can occur.
- Minimise the impacts on water quality from activities in the catchment.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Establish an ongoing standardised water quality monitoring project to test phosphorus, oxygen, pH and turbidity levels within the park.*
- *Work collaboratively with South Gippsland Water, the West Gippsland CMA, DPI, South Gippsland Shire Council, EPA, Waterwatch and other agencies and organisations to monitor water quality and minimise the effects on the park of water-borne inputs into Corner Inlet (section 8.3).*
- *Work collaboratively with community and government organisations, including the Gippsland Coastal Board, West Gippsland CMA, Gippsland Ports and South Gippsland Shire Council to ensure that the park’s management objectives are integrated into all future planning and management strategies affecting the park (sections 7.2 and 8.3).*
- *Support actions of the Regional Catchment Strategy 2004–2009, the Integrated Coastal Planning for Gippsland – Coastal Action Plan, the Draft River Health*

*Strategy, the South Gippsland Water Quality Management Plan and Urban Stormwater Management Plan that seek to reduce catchment-derived impacts and implement the park's vision and directions.*

- *Support priority actions identified in the Gippsland Coastal Board's Corner Inlet Environmental Audit, which are relevant to the park (section 8.3).*
- *Work collaboratively with Marine Safety Victoria and Gippsland Ports in the event of a marine oil or chemical spill, in accordance with the Victorian Marine Pollution Contingency Plan and regional contingency plans (section 8.3).*
- *Support interagency investigations into the need and establishment of boat sewage pump out stations located at key ports in Corner Inlet.*

### 4.3 Hydrodynamics

Corner Inlet Marine National Park has a series of large and small channels that are part of the larger tidal drainage system of Corner Inlet. Part of the Bennison Channel is included in the northern section of the park, and smaller channels draining the intertidal flats are found in the southern section.

Most channels within the park are between 1 and 10 metres deep, but some parts of the Bennison Channel in the northern section are up to 30 metres deep. Channels are generally maintained by the scouring effect of tidal currents, and distinct ebb and flood channels have developed on the shallower banks. Channels are not static and depths and position may change slowly in response to sedimentation patterns or other hydrodynamic processes. Tidal currents are strong, particularly in the northern section of the park, and a complete exchange of water occurs every 24 hours.

Tidal range in the park varies between high and low tides by as much as 2.5 metres. Sequential low tide levels may vary by over a metre. Tidal variations are further complicated by changes in wind speed and direction, high and low pressure systems, wave action and storm surges. Such differences lead to large variations in the width of the intertidal zone.

Much of the southern section of Corner Inlet Marine National Park is intertidal, and consequently has many areas that are very shallow. This shallow water warms rapidly, giving the park some of the highest water temperatures in the region. With a surface water temperature range of 12–20 °C, Corner Inlet is the warmest of Victoria's large bays. Higher temperatures are one of the factors that allow seagrass to survive within the inlet.

As human-induced changes to local hydrodynamic processes could affect the values of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, any proposals for new infrastructure, including artificial reefs will not be permitted in the park. Natural hydrodynamic events such as storm surges and regular sand erosion or deposition are considered to be ongoing natural processes.

Other than several in-water boundary markers (section 7.2), no infrastructure affecting hydrodynamic processes exists in, or is planned for, the park (section 6.3).

#### Aims

- Allow natural hydrodynamic processes to continue without human interference.
- Minimise impacts on park values from human-induced changes to local hydrodynamic processes.

#### Management strategies

- *Provide advice and input to South Gippsland Shire Council into planning applications for developments that could affect park hydrodynamic processes as appropriate (section 8.3).*
- *Investigate the importance of hydrodynamic processes, through the collection of tidal data, current velocities and current patterns, with respect to geomorphological and biological values within the park.*
- *After identifying existing hydrodynamic processes, model future potential changes to hydrodynamic processes caused by sea-level change and identify potential impacts on park values.*

#### 4.4 Habitats and communities

Corner Inlet Marine National Park supports nine marine ecological communities (appendix 2), reflecting the diversity of natural habitats. These habitats provide important substrates, food, shelter, and spawning and nursery areas for a variety of marine flora and fauna.

The park supports four of the five species of seagrass present in Victorian waters, three of which form important seagrass meadows. Corner Inlet supports the most extensive beds of Broad-leaf Seagrass in Victoria, and the park protects a representative area of this species.

The Broad-leaf Seagrass meadows form a key component of the ecological health of Corner Inlet, including the park. The plants provide the largest area of 'hard substrate' within the inlet and are habitat for a variety of encrusting organisms (O'Hara et al. 2002). The plants also help stabilise sediments and trap suspended particles, and are used for food and shelter by many food fish targeted by commercial and recreational fishers outside the park.

A variety of seaweeds (macroalgae) occur within the park. Many are associated with seagrass meadows, where they grow on seagrass, shells or stones.

The faunal diversity of Corner Inlet Marine National Park is high, although diversity and abundance varies between different marine ecological communities. Within the seagrass communities of Corner Inlet almost 400 species of marine invertebrates and over 70 species of fish have been recorded (Morgan 1986; Turner & Norman 1998). Nevertheless, Victoria's marine environment remains largely unexplored and new species are found every year, even in intertidal areas.

Little is known of the ecology of intertidal reef habitats within the park, although faunal diversity sampled by Morgan et al. (1986) in similar habitats nearby was high, and showed affinities with both mangrove epifauna and the nearby rocky shores of Wilsons Promontory.

The unvegetated intertidal areas and saltmarsh and mangrove communities are habitat for waders and other shorebirds, many of which are threatened or listed under international migratory bird agreements. Corner Inlet

Marine National Park forms part of a site of international zoological significance as habitat for migratory wading birds (Mansergh & Norris 1982).

Mangrove and saltmarsh communities within the park are also important because they contribute organic matter to Corner Inlet, are breeding and nursery grounds for many organisms including microcrustacea, bivalves and fish, and act as filters for sediments and other matter (Harty 2003). Their importance is magnified because of the loss of large areas of mangrove and saltmarsh in southern Australia as a result of coastal development. Evidence suggests that loss of these communities is related to catchment activities that cause increased turbidity and nutrient levels. The impacts of altered water quality on these communities within the park need to be monitored (section 4.2).

Corner Inlet Marine National Park protects a number of areas of national environmental significance under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. It is part of the Corner Inlet Ramsar Site listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention). There are large roosting and feeding sites for migratory waders and other birds in the southern section of the park and many roosting sites for shorebirds in the northern section. Six nationally threatened fauna species have been recorded in the park, as well as 13 migratory bird species listed under the Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA) and the China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) (Plummer et al. 2003). Of the 30 species of wading birds and seabirds recorded within the park, 17 are listed as threatened in Victoria and 14 are listed under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (the Bonn Convention).

All species within the park listed as threatened or protected by international agreements or legislation (e.g. JAMBA, CAMBA) are either birds or large 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 more likely to lead to a higher level of success in protecting and enhancing threatened species populations. Whole-of-habitat management may also result in the protection of species not yet identified because their rarity or cryptic nature.

Current research and ongoing monitoring for Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries 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. Where appropriate, research and monitoring compares areas outside park boundaries with those inside the park. This work will assist in identifying indicator species and habitats. The results, available on Parks Victoria's website, will enable an assessment of the ecological condition of the parks to be made.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park is also one of three trial sites for a community monitoring project where basic data on the presence, distribution and abundance of marine flora and fauna will be collected by volunteers using monitoring protocols (section 8.2).

The extensive 'dieback' of Broad-leaf Seagrass beds in Corner Inlet since the 1970s is of particular concern (Poore 1978; Roob et al. 1998). Although little dieback has occurred within the park, the potential for it to occur is a significant threat to the park's natural values.

Dieback is still occurring within Corner Inlet, however the cause or causes are relatively unknown. A greater understanding of the ecology of seagrass communities in Corner Inlet, and of natural influences such as climatic cycles on species such as Broad-leaf Seagrass which has a limited range, is required.

Narrow-leaved seagrass species are highly variable in their distribution, but their abundance seems to have remained stable over time. *Zostera muelleri* is found on intertidal banks in the southern section and *Heterozostera tasmanica* in deeper water throughout the park. Paddle Weed (*Halophila australis*) occurs as scattered plants or clumps.

The park is susceptible to a number of other threatening processes, including pollution (e.g. oil spills) (section 4.2), marine pests (section 4.6), and physical disturbance (e.g. anchoring and propeller scouring) (section 6.3).

Prior to the proclamation of the park, most visitors anchoring in the area were recreational anglers. As fishing is no longer permitted, the potential for anchoring impacts is much lower. Nevertheless, visitor use of the park and associated impacts of anchoring on seagrass communities will need to be monitored over time (section 6.3).

Sensitive seagrass communities within the park are being damaged by vessels (including personal water craft) operating in shallow waters, particularly at low tide (section 6.3). Scouring of the seabed by boat propellers has been observed within the park (Stevenson, J. pers. comm. 2004). Impacts to seagrass communities from the direct physical disturbance of vessels, in particular propeller scour, can be severe and long-term. Broad-leaf Seagrass is particularly susceptible to disturbance as it very slow to re-establish in disturbed areas (O'Hara et. al. 2002).

Wading birds are also particularly susceptible to disturbance from motorised vessels including personal water craft (PWCs) and hovercraft.

To prevent impacts to seagrass communities and significant wading bird feeding areas a Special Protection Area overlay applies to shallow areas of the park, excluding Bennison Channel (table 1, figure 3). Within this area motorised vessels are encouraged to avoid using shallow areas of the park and to follow a 'voluntary code of practice' (section 6.3). The Special Protection Area overlay will be supported by a community awareness program (section 8.1). In addition, the use of hovercraft is prohibited from all exposed intertidal areas of the park (section 6.3, figure 2).

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 Marine National Parks or Marine Sanctuaries.

The *Victorian Cetacean Contingency Plan* (NRE 1999c) details arrangements for responses to incidents such as strandings or entanglements.

Little is commonly known about Indigenous cultural lore relating to the marine plants and animals of the park. This heritage is greatly valued by the Traditional Owners, and has

considerable potential to interest visitors, and to enrich park management.

### Aims

- Protect marine ecological communities and indigenous flora and fauna.
- Increase knowledge of marine ecological communities, flora and fauna, to aid management, protection and appreciation.
- Increase knowledge of key threatening processes for marine ecological communities, flora and fauna.

### Management strategies

- *Map habitats at scales suitable for management purposes in accordance with statewide habitat mapping programs.*
- *Establish a quarterly, community-based, seagrass monitoring program investigating the condition of seagrass, especially Broad-leaf Seagrass (*Posedonia australis*), in the park and adjacent Corner Inlet Marine & Coastal Park, using standardised monitoring practices (sections 4.2 and 8.2).*
- *Establish and implement a specific monitoring program to assess the impact of anchoring and propeller scour on seagrass beds within the park, and implement actions as necessary to reduce impacts (section 6.3).*
- *Develop programs with appropriate research institutions to investigate, where appropriate, the impact of increased nutrients, sediments, pollution and marine pests on park values.*
- *Communicate research findings to relevant agencies, authorities and stakeholders to ensure that all stakeholders with an interest in Corner Inlet have the latest information on which to base plans, strategies and management actions.*
- *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.*
- *Manage visitor activities to minimise impacts to habitats, communities and individuals, particularly in relation to*

*compliance with no-fishing provisions and to minimise propeller scour through the promotion of the 'voluntary code of practice' for the Special Protection Area (sections 6.3 and 8.3).*

- *Ensure that all significant sightings of marine flora and fauna are recorded on Parks Victoria's Environmental Information System.*
- *Undertake regular risk assessments to assess major threats to marine ecological communities and species, including reduced water quality, and implement actions as necessary.*
- *Promote an understanding and awareness of the potential impacts of fish and wildlife feeding through various information, interpretation and education methods.*
- *Encourage the identification of, and research into the Indigenous cultural lore relating to flora and fauna of significance to Traditional Owners and reflect the knowledge gained into management of the park, in cooperation with relevant Indigenous communities (sections 5.1 and 8.2).*
- *Respond to cetacean incidents in accordance with the Victorian Cetacean Contingency Plan (section 8.3).*

### 4.5 Landscape and seascape

Corner Inlet Marine National Park has high scenic values. Notable landscapes and seascape values are:

- a spectacular backdrop of granite coast and peaks within Wilsons Promontory National Park
- extensive mudflats exposed at low tide
- Granite and Bennison Islands
- low marshy shorelines
- sandy beaches set between granite headlands
- a dramatic change in seascape as the tide rises and falls.

All of the landscape and seascape types are sensitive to human-induced change. The park is adjacent to the Wilsons Promontory National Park Wilderness Zone. This area is

large and essentially undisturbed, and so landscape values are high.

The landscapes and seascapes of the park are an intrinsic element of *Country* of the Traditional Owners. There are places within the park of special significance to the relevant Indigenous communities that relate to their association with the park.

The park is within the Victorian Coastal Council's (VCC) Landscape Setting Types 28 (Corner Inlet) and 29 (Wilson's Promontory) (VCC 1998a). The recommended special considerations for these Landscape Setting Types are as follows:

- The area is of outstanding scenic quality and requires appropriate planning controls to ensure development does not impact on landscape values.
- Development in the area must respond to and be sympathetic to the outstanding environmental and scenic values of the area.
- Development should be avoided, as it will spoil the wilderness quality.
- Areas adjacent to 'The Prom' also require special landscape protection and appropriate planning controls to ensure development does not impact on landscape values.

The Victorian Coastal Strategy (VCC 2002) establishes the framework for long-term ecological sustainable management of the Victorian coast. The strategy uses Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) principles to integrate planning and management across the land / sea interface. This involves the coordination of coastal and marine management activities of the various Commonwealth, State and local government agencies and a commitment to community consultation at all levels of planning.

The *Landscape Setting Types for the Victorian Coast* (VCC 1998a) and *Siting and Design Guidelines for Structures on the Victorian Coast* (VCC 1998b) are designed to assist coastal land managers and the community to implement the Victorian Coastal Strategy. This ensures sympathetic development that complements the surrounding landscape and results in sensitive design and development along the Victorian coast.

Impacts to the landscape and seascape values of the park could arise from developments on nearby freehold land. Specific developments that could affect park values include the expansion of the Barry Beach port and the establishment of further windfarms in the Corner Inlet area. Views from the water already encompass residential developments in neighbouring towns and a windfarm above Toora. Impacts to seascapes could arise from human-induced changes to hydrodynamics (section 4.3) or explorative activities.

Apart from boundary markers to aid boundary identification (section 7.2), there are no facilities within the park.

The *South Gippsland Planning Scheme* (SGSC 1999) provides a statutory framework for managing proposals and developments for land adjacent to the park. South 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.

#### **Aims**

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

#### **Management strategies**

- *Provide input into landscape character assessments undertaken by South Gippsland Shire Council to ensure that the landscape and seascape values of the park are recognised.*
- *Liaise with South Gippsland Shire Council to ensure that future planning applications for developments that could affect the park give due consideration to the landscape and seascape values of the park (section 8.3).*
- *Consider the significance of land and seascape to relevant Indigenous communities in planning and implementing works and interpretive programs (sections 4.1, 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.

Three marine exotic species have been recorded in Corner Inlet Marine National Park: the Green Crab, *Spartina* (Cord Grass) and Broccoli Weed (an alga).

The Green Crab has been present in Victorian waters since the late 19th century and is now widespread. It is a predator of small invertebrates and competes aggressively with native crabs, but its impacts are not well understood.

*Spartina* is a major environmental weed and is a declared noxious aquatic species under the *Fisheries Act 1995* (Vic.). It is widespread in Corner Inlet, but a continuing control program initiated in 1997 has resulted in a major decline of the species there. It has recently been recorded at two locations within the park.

Broccoli Weed probably arrived in Corner Inlet in the late 1980s and has had a noticeable impact on commercial fishing, especially flounder fishing. It has since declined in abundance but is still present throughout the inlet. Live oysters and large gastropods on which Broccoli Weed grows can be carried ashore during storms because of the increased drag created by the alga.

Once established, introduced marine pests are almost impossible to eradicate. Green Crab and Broccoli Weed are unlikely to be eradicated from the park or Corner Inlet using current technologies, although it is possible that control programs will successfully eradicate *Spartina* from the park.

Given vector opportunities, natural dispersal and suitable environmental conditions, a number of Victoria's introduced marine pests have the potential to colonise Corner Inlet Marine National Park. Marine pests could be transported to the park on recreational vessels or commercial vessels (in ballast water or as fouling organisms on hulls or equipment) due to its location within the Port of Corner Inlet and the large volume of vessel movements in close proximity to the park.

Marine pests can have a devastating impact on Marine National Parks and Marine

Sanctuaries. The introduction of exotic organisms into Victorian marine waters is listed as a potentially threatening process in Schedule 3 of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act. Victoria's management priorities are set out in the relevant FFG Action Statement (NRE 1999a).

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 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. For this reason, management priority is to reduce the risk of any new introductions. 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 into control measures.

Victorian marine pest emergency management arrangements (*Interim Victorian Protocol for Managing Exotic Marine Organism Incursions* NRE 1999b) form the basis for responding to new introductions and existing incursions of marine pests. The adoption of 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 to help prevent the spread of marine pests (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 *EPA Victoria's Cleaner Marinas Guidelines* (EPA 1998).

Parks Victoria Rangers, Fisheries Victoria Fisheries Officers, community-based organisations (e.g. dive clubs) and other park visitors play an important role in the monitoring and early detection of marine introduced pests in the park (section 8.2).

### **Aims**

- Minimise the risk of introduction by human activities, and subsequent establishment of, marine pests 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.*
- *Control the two existing infestations of *Spartina* using established and approved control methods.*
- *Survey the park annually for new infestations of *Spartina* and apply control measures if necessary.*
- *Encourage community groups, researchers, licensed tour operators and contractors to integrate the identification of marine pests into their activities and to report any sightings.*
- *Ensure that any new marine infrastructure, such as boundary markers, within the park is treated to remove marine pests.*

- *Avoid translocation or new introductions by promoting boat-cleaning and maintenance protocols for all recreational boats and contractors in accordance with the DSE brochure 'Aquatic pests: treat 'em mean – keep your boat clean' (DSE 2004) (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 within the park.*
- *Manage any marine pest incursions in accordance with the Interim Victorian Protocol (NRE 1999b) (section 8.3).*
- *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.*
- *Ensure that the detection of marine pests is reported in accordance with Victorian pest management arrangements and recorded on Parks Victoria's Environmental Information System and other relevant databases.*
- *Liaise with Gippsland Ports to encourage the adoption of boat-cleaning and maintenance protocols, and to ensure that the protocols are included in contracts, licences or permits as appropriate, for vessels operating in the Port of Corner Inlet (section 8.3).*
- *Liaise with Gippsland Ports and DSE to encourage a marine pest survey for Port Welshpool and Barry Beach Marine Terminal to establish baseline information on existing species in accordance with the Safety and Environment Management Plan for Corner Inlet (Gippsland Ports 2005).*

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## 5 STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL VALUES CONSERVATION

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### 5.1 Indigenous cultural heritage

The landscapes and seascapes of Wilsons Promontory and surrounding waters are culturally and spiritually significant to the relevant Indigenous communities<sup>1</sup>. Indigenous tradition indicates that the park is part of the sacred *Country* of *Yiruk* for the Gunai / Kurnai people and *Wamoom* for the Boonwurrung Indigenous people. At the time of publication there were several Indigenous groups asserting traditional ownership of the park.

Throughout periods of changing sea levels, Indigenous people have maintained a strong and continuing association with the park for thousands of years. This association is present today.

At the time of European settlement, Indigenous people had a strong association with the area. European settlement, and use of the land and waters of the park, substantially altered this historical association, with a subsequent loss of traditional culture.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park and surrounding areas provided important areas for shelter, food collection, story telling, toolmaking, teaching and learning. Children were taught important techniques for the hunting, collection and preparation of seasonally abundant food and other resources, including fruit, yams, eggs, shellfish and other animals. 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.

Detailed knowledge of Indigenous culture has been retained through the oral history of descendants, archaeological and anthropological research and historical documents. However there is still more to learn about Indigenous landscapes, stories, timelines, travel routes and the traditional uses of natural resources and of the land and water / sea management practices.

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

The park contains evidence of a range of places and objects of particular significance to the Traditional Owners, most of which are at or near the high water mark. It is also likely that many cultural objects have been preserved beneath the waters of the park.

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 these cultural places and objects. Protection of many of the areas within the intertidal area is addressed in a site protection strategy for the Wilsons Promontory National Park (Parks Victoria 2002a).

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 Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act. It is an offence to damage, interfere or endanger an Aboriginal site, place or object without obtaining prior written consent from the scheduled Aboriginal Community.

As the Central Gippsland Aboriginal Health and Housing Co-operative is currently not in operation, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has cultural heritage responsibilities in relation to the park in accordance with 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).

The Traditional Owners, members of local Indigenous communities with an interest in the park, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and the Gippsland Cultural Heritage Unit are active in survey and protection works.

Parks Victoria respects Indigenous people's cultural lore, interests and rights in the land, and aspirations for *Country* and seeks to reflect these in planning and management (Parks Victoria 2004a).

Parks Victoria welcomes opportunities to cooperate with the relevant Indigenous communities in managing the park, and to consult with other Indigenous communities that have an association with the park (section 8.2).

### 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).*
- *Incorporate new information about Indigenous cultural heritage into the Wilsons Promontory Site Protection Strategy (Parks Victoria 2002a) and manage research, surveys, protection and conservation actions, interpretation and promotion in accordance with the strategy.*
- *Assess annual park programs to minimise the potential impact of park management activities on Indigenous cultural heritage, Traditional Owners, and the scheduled Aboriginal community.*
- *Ensure that all management activities 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 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, 4.3, 4.4, 6.1 and 8.2).*

- *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 8.3).*
- *Assess and identify Indigenous cultural heritage suitable for promotion and interpretation in collaboration with Traditional Owners and in liaison with AAV and the Gippsland Cultural Heritage Unit (sections 6.1 and 8.2).*
- *Maintain confidentiality in respect of Indigenous cultural lore, places, objects, and aspirations, in accordance with the wishes of the Traditional Owners (sections 6.1 and 8.2).*

## 5.2 Maritime and other cultural heritage

The first recorded European sighting of Corner Inlet was by George Bass in 1798, who gave the inlet its name because it forms a 'corner' of the coastline between Wilsons Promontory and eastern Victoria (Meagher 1998).

Post-settlement cultural heritage of the park relates to fishing, grazing and tin mining activities within or adjacent to the park.

Chinese fisherman fished these and surrounding areas in the 1860s, and established camps to smoke fish for sale on the Victorian goldfields. Soon afterwards, Port Albert and Port Welshpool developed as major fishing ports, and many small fishing craft worked throughout Corner Inlet (Loney 1982). Commercial fishing flourished in the park, and still occurs today in the adjoining Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park.

Land in South Gippsland was gradually cleared in the early 1800s and cattle runs were established around Corner Inlet, including most of the current Wilsons Promontory National Park. Seasonal grazing continued in sections of Wilsons Promontory National Park until 1992.

The park provided access for tin mining in the adjacent Mount Hunter area for a brief time in the 1920s (McKellar 1993). A small settlement was established at Tin Mine Cove, and

scattered relics of the township and mining infrastructure still exist within Wilsons Promontory National Park, including two concrete engine beds located on the shore, which represent the last remains of a wharf and pump house. Although there are no relics known to occur within the park, it is highly likely that subtidal surveys may identify relics associated with the tin mining operations (Anderson, R. pers. comm. 2004).

There are no recorded shipwrecks within the park.

Parks Victoria has established a Memorandum of Understanding with Heritage Victoria, which identifies respective roles and responsibilities with regard to protection, compliance and interpretation of shipwrecks, shipwreck artefacts and other archaeological sites within the boundaries of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries.

**Aim**

- Provide opportunities for people to learn about and understand the historic heritage of the park.

**Management strategies**

- *In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between Parks Victoria and Heritage Victoria for the management of cultural heritage in Marine National Parks, cooperate with and support Heritage Victoria's maritime heritage research programs, including surveys to identify relics associated with tin mining operations.*
- *Record, conserve and where appropriate interpret any cultural heritage places discovered within the park in accordance with Parks Victoria operational policies.*

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## 6 STRATEGIES FOR VISITORS

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### 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, build understanding of 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 patrols, Marine Notes, signage, tourism brochures and other publications, displays, and licensed tour operators. These services may be developed and provided in collaboration with other agencies.

Having a representative system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries in Victoria presents a unique opportunity to educate visitors and the broader community about the features and benefits of a statewide system of marine 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.

Corner Inlet Marine National Park offers opportunities to develop themes related to:

- the park's significant migratory bird habitat
- diversity of marine ecological communities
- the role of Ramsar sites in promoting the wise and sustainable use of wetlands
- key threatening processes such as propeller scour, anchoring, reduced water quality, pollution and introduced marine pests
- the voluntary 'code of practice' for motorised vessel operators.

Signs showing the park boundaries and other visitor information are located at Port Albert, Port Welshpool, Yanakie and Toora Beach (section 7.2). A Marine Note on Corner Inlet Marine National Park and a range of park and visitor information which includes boundary information is available on Parks Victoria's

website and from visitor centres and local outlets.

The location of the park means that on-site Ranger-guided activities are not practical, but off-site interpretation and education opportunities exist within the adjacent Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Parks. Relevant Indigenous communities and licensed tour operators can provide interpretation and education through guided activities and adventure activities such as diving and snorkelling.

Park Victoria has developed minimal impact guidelines (Parks Victoria 2003c) (available at [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)) in partnership with education providers to help minimise the potential impact of education and interpretation programs on park values.

Collaborative education projects will be especially important in focusing on the principle of integrated catchment management, a key concept in the management of the park. The park is within Tourism Victoria's Gippsland marketing and promotion region. Prom Country Tourism is the Regional Tourism Authority, and Prom Coast Tourism is the Local Tourism Association.

The *Gippsland Regional Tourism Development Plan 2004–2007* (Tourism Victoria 2004) sets the tourism framework for Gippsland. Parks Victoria supports the provision of marketing information that highlights the natural and cultural values of the park, fosters an awareness of Indigenous culture and heritage and promotes appropriate behaviours that are compatible with conservation of natural and cultural values.

#### Aims

- Promote and encourage visitors' discovery, enjoyment and appreciation of the park's natural and cultural values in a safe and appropriate manner through information, education and interpretation.
- Encourage public support for parks and park management practices.
- Promote an awareness of Indigenous and non-Indigenous culture.

## Management strategies

- *Provide pre-visit information about the park via Marine Notes, Education Notes, Parks Victoria's website, the Parks Victoria Information Centre, accredited visitor centres and appropriate local outlets.*
- *Maintain visitor signage and interpretive and education material appropriate for the park in liaison with the relevant shire councils (section 7.2).*
- *Provide and support high-quality opportunities for a range of user groups to discover, experience and understand the park's natural and cultural values. In particular:*
  - *work collaboratively with Coast Action to provide a coordinated 'Summer by the Sea' holiday program for Corner Inlet, that has a strong focus on park values (section 8.2)*
  - *promote the park using high quality Marine National Park displays at local community festivals such as Port Welshpool 'Sea Days' and the Port Albert Regatta.*
  - *provide high quality Marine National Park displays and talks to a range of clubs, schools and community groups.*
- *Educate visitors and the general public about the diversity of the marine environment within the park, to improve awareness of the park and promote visitor behaviour that will result in improved conservation outcomes. In particular address the significance of the seagrass and saltmarsh communities and information about the voluntary 'code of practice' for motorised vessel operators, minimising impacts from pollution, water quality, marine pests and visitor activities such as propeller scour (sections 4.2, 4.6, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7 and 8.1).*
- *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 accordance with the wishes of the Traditional Owners (sections 5.1 and 8.2).*
- *Provide appropriate opportunities and encourage and support the relevant Indigenous communities to participate in developing and delivering information, interpretation and education services (sections 5.1 and 8.2).*
- *Promote greater public understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage in the park, particularly with respect to early fishing, maritime and tin mining history (section 5.2).*
- *To aid public understanding of the variety of marine and terrestrial protected areas and their associated regulations, integrate information, education and interpretation programs for the park with those for Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Parks and Wilsons Promontory National Park.*
- *Assist licensed tour operators in identifying opportunities for providing appropriate interpretive and educational experiences (section 6.7).*
- *Work in partnership with State, regional and local tourism outlets to provide information on the park's values and recreational opportunities within the neighbouring townships (section 8.3).*

## 6.2 Access

Parks Victoria aims to provide visitor access to a range of natural environments for recreation.

Access to Corner Inlet Marine National Park is by boat, or by foot from Wilsons Promontory National Park. Most boats arrive in the park from ramps and launching sites around Corner Inlet. The majority of boat-based visitors are from Melbourne, Latrobe Valley or the local area. A small proportion of boat-based visitors access the park via Bass Strait from other locations within Victoria (section 6.3).

Visitors accessing the park from Wilsons Promontory National Park will generally do so as part of an overnight hike within the Wilsons Promontory Wilderness Zone, which requires an overnight camping permit issued by Parks Victoria.

For the protection of important sea-bird habitat on Bennison and Granite Islands (Parks Victoria 2002c), access to Bennison Island is restricted to the small beach on the island, and

public access to Granite Island is not permitted.

### Aims

- Provide and maintain appropriate access to the park for visitor use and management purposes.
- Minimise the impact of access on the park's natural and cultural values.

### Management strategies

- *For the protection of sea-bird habitat, continue to prohibit access to the areas of Granite and Bennison Islands that occur within the park, except for the beach area on Bennison Island.*
- *Allow access by boat or foot to all other areas of the park.*
- *Monitor access in the park, through regular patrols, particularly intertidal access in the southern section (section 4.4), and implement appropriate management actions to minimise access impacts if necessary.*

## 6.3 Recreational boating and surface water sports

Boating is the most popular recreational activity within the park. Other common activities include scuba diving and snorkelling (section 6.4), sightseeing, and picnicking. The most popular destination within the park is Tin Mine Cove. Other popular locations include Freshwater Cove, and Bennison Island. Parts of these destinations are within Wilsons Promontory National Park.

An incremental increase in boating within the park can be expected with the increasing population within coastal settlements and an increasing awareness of the park's values. As anchoring has the potential to adversely affect sensitive seagrass communities, a regular monitoring program will be established to assess impacts and actions taken as necessary to reduce these impacts (section 4.4).

A voluntary 'code of practice' for motorised vessel operators (including personal water craft and hovercraft) will be introduced to help protect sensitive shallow seagrass meadows and bird habitats (section 4.4). The code will strongly encourage vessel operators not to

navigate across shallow banks during low tide and two hours either side of low tide, and to understand tide times and the location of channels and banks in Corner Inlet. The code will apply to the Special Protection Area which covers all shallow areas in both the northern and southern sections of the park, excluding Bennison Channel (table 1, figure 3, sections 3.2 and 4.4). The voluntary code will be supported by existing park regulations prohibiting the damage of vegetation within the park and a community-based education and awareness program (sections 6.1 and 8.1).

Boat-based camping is permitted on-shore at Tin Mine Cove within Wilsons Promontory National Park in accordance with the *Wilsons Promontory National Park Management Plan* (Parks Victoria 2002c). Boat-based camping (on-water) is permitted in the Corner Inlet Marine National Park. Waters of the park adjacent to the western shores of Wilsons Promontory also provide shelter in unfavourable weather conditions.

State Environment Protection Policies prohibit vessel operators from discharging sewerage, oil, garbage, sediment, litter or other wastes to surface waters in any Victorian State waters (section 4.2).

As in all Victorian coastal waters, a speed limit of 5 knots applies within 50 metres of another vessel, 200 metres of the water's edge, within 100 m of a vessel or buoy with a diver below signal and 50 m of a swimmer (MSV 2002b). This restriction is considered sufficient to minimise or avoid impacts on natural values (primarily roosting and wading birds) and conflicts with other users. Parks Victoria works collaboratively with Marine Safety Victoria to ensure compliance with these regulations (section 8.3).

Waterskiing occurs around Tin Mine Cove, but is restricted to deeper water at least 200 metres from the shore in accordance with speed restrictions under the *Marine Act 1988* (Vic). The frequency of waterskiing within the park is unknown, but is considered to be very low.

Conflicts have arisen in the past between hikers utilising the Tin Mine Cove campsite, and boat-based users accessing the site for waterskiing and use of personal water craft (PWC). The noise associated with waterskiing and PWC usage close to the shore has the

potential to reduce the remote recreational experience offered by the Tin Mine Cove campsite within the Wilderness Zone of Wilsons Promontory National Park. Vessel noise close to the shore also has the potential to cause conflict for visitors accessing other locations. However, compliance with the 5 knot speed restriction within 200 metres from the shore is considered sufficient to minimise future conflicts in these areas.

Recreational use of hovercraft is currently not known to occur in the park. Hovercraft use may increase in the future and their use poses a serious threat of disturbance to shore birds, especially if travelling over exposed intertidal flats. Hovercraft are classed as a vessel while on water and must abide by all boating regulations including speed limits described above. On land they are classed as vehicles and are therefore prohibited from travelling off-road. Accordingly hovercraft will continue to be prohibited from travelling over exposed intertidal flats in the park.

Marine mammal viewing occurs occasionally in the park, usually by independent boat operators taking advantage of chance encounters with whales or dolphins. Under the Wildlife Act and the Wildlife (Whale) Regulations 1998, recreational vessels and PWCs must not approach within 100 metres of any whale or dolphin, while a minimum distance of 30 metres applies to swimmers and 50 metres to people on surfboards. Other conditions apply to commercial vessels and licensed tour operators (section 6.6).

Other surface water sports in the park include surfskiing, canoeing, sea-kayaking and windsurfing. Sea-kayaking is an increasingly popular activity in the park, with kayakers leaving from Port Welshpool, Port Albert and Yanakie (Duck Point).

In-shore moorings are not appropriate or practical in the park (section 4.3).

### Aims

- Provide for a range of recreational boating activities and surface water sports that are compatible with the protection of natural, cultural and other recreational values.
- Promote safe boating and water safety within the parks.

### Management strategies

- *Develop and introduce a voluntary 'code of practice' to encourage motorised vessel operators (including personal water craft and hovercraft) to avoid using motorised vessels in the Special Protection Area during and two hours either side of low tide (table 1 and figure 3).*
- *Permit a range of boating activities in the park in accordance with the 5 knot speed restriction within 200 m of the shore, 100 m of a vessel or buoy with a diver below signal and 50 m of a swimmer, and tables 1 and 2.*
- *Continue to permit boat-based camping and anchoring in the park.*
- *Prohibit recreational use of hovercraft from exposed intertidal areas within the park (figure 2).*
- *Monitor the impacts of anchoring within the park, and implement actions as necessary to reduce impacts (section 4.4).*
- *Publicise and promote compliance with established vessel speed restrictions under the Marine Act to help minimise disturbance to flora, fauna and visitors.*
- *Liaise with Victoria Police and Gippsland Ports to establish a common understanding of the need to manage existing vessel speed provisions under the Marine Act in order to protect park values.*
- *Record the level and type of use within the park by recreational boats or other surface water sports, monitor potential impacts to natural and cultural values and implement appropriate management actions as necessary.*
- *Prohibit the establishment of permanent in-water moorings and other facilities other than those required for boundary identification or environmental protection (section 4.3).*
- *Ensure that boat operators, swimmers and surfers comply with the Wildlife Act and Wildlife (Whale) Regulations 1998 when observing marine mammals.*
- *In conjunction with Gippsland Ports and other relevant agencies, contribute to a*

*'Safe Boating Guide' for Corner Inlet, including the park (sections 6.1 and 6.7).*

## 6.4 Diving and snorkelling

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

Divers prefer the more popular and recognised dive sites around the southern part of Wilson Promontory, but under favourable conditions the park offers opportunities to see marine communities not present elsewhere in the region. However, the strong currents caused by the proximity of the entrance to Corner Inlet means that diving in the park is often suitable only for experienced divers.

The park's shallow waters offer a unique snorkelling experience, viewing the marine flora and fauna of the seagrass meadows. Conditions are best at low tide when the meadows are more exposed.

Most diving and snorkelling areas within the park can be accessed only by boat. Current levels of diving and snorkelling are relatively low, but there is a possibility that this could increase as awareness of the diversity of the park's marine environment increases.

Potential impacts associated with snorkelling and diving include anchor damage (section 4.4), physical disturbance to seabed and flora (section 4.4), the introduction of marine pests (section 4.6), and the illegal taking of flora and fauna.

Educating divers and snorkellers about minimal impact practices, particularly those new to these activities, will help minimise impacts and assist with park and sanctuary 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*

2004 Diving Adventure Activity Standard (www.orc.org.au).

Collaboration with the dive industry and education of users will help to minimise impacts from diving, and to increase understanding of the value of the park. Divers and snorkellers can also assist greatly in the early detection of marine pests in the park (sections 4.6 and 8.2), and the detection of unrecorded cultural places and objects.

### Aim

- Provide opportunities for diving and snorkelling in the park that are consistent with the protection of natural and cultural values.

### Management strategies

- *Continue to allow visitors to explore the park by diving and snorkelling, accordance with tables 1 and 2.*
- *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 education programs (section 6.1).*
- *Encourage the use of clean diving equipment to prevent the translocation of marine pests (section 4.6).*
- *Support dive clubs and industry representatives to develop codes of practice that promote environmentally responsible diving practices.*
- *Liaise with dive clubs to ensure information that is disseminated about suitable dive sites and marine life in the park is appropriate and accurate.*
- *Encourage divers and snorkellers to participate in Reef Watch or other community-based marine monitoring programs (sections 4.6 and 8.2).*

## 6.5 Swimming and shore-based activities

The shoreline of Corner Inlet Marine National Park is remote and largely inaccessible. Access to the shoreline is restricted to a few small beaches, including Freshwater Cove, Tin Mine

Cove and Chinaman Long Beach. Current activities in the park include beach rambling and picnicking, based around day visits by boat or overnight camping at Tin Mine Cove.

Potential shore-based activities in the park include nature study, rock and beach rambling, picnicking, swimming, and other low-impact activities. Fishing of any sort is not permitted within the park. The management of shore-based activities needs to be consistent with the management of such activities in the adjacent area of Wilsons Promontory National Park (Parks Victoria 2002c).

Nature study in the park is infrequent and generally done by experienced visitors who understand and practise minimal-impact observation techniques. Future increases in these types of nature-based visits are expected, but are unlikely to be a significant management concern.

Limited swimming opportunities exist in the park, and are generally restricted to the sheltered coves in the northern section.

Shore-based activities are unlikely to increase significantly within the park because of its remoteness. Areas outside the park and elsewhere in the region suitable for a wider range of shore-based activities include Port Welshpool, Toora and Yanakie (Duck Point).

The lighting of fires within Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, including on any beaches or islands, is not permitted, although this regulation does not apply to the lighting of fires (i.e. stoves) on or in a vessel.

Dogs can adversely affect bird colonies, other wildlife and visitors through trampling, predation, disturbance and faecal pollution.

Dogs are permitted aboard vessels within the park, provided they are confined to a vessel and under control at all times.

The shoreline of the park abuts Wilsons Promontory National Park (including islands), where dogs are prohibited.

#### **Aim**

- Provide for appropriate shore-based activities that are consistent with the protection of park values and the adjacent Wilderness Zone within Wilsons Promontory National Park.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Permit shore-based activities in accordance with table 2.*
- *Allow dogs in the park only if confined to a vessel and under control.*
- *Prohibit the lighting of fires within the park, except those on or in a vessel.*

### **6.6 Tourism services**

Licensed tour operators facilitate access for visitors who may not otherwise have the opportunity to visit the park. They also help to promote park values and appropriate use, and encourage appropriate tourism and recreation.

A number of licensed tour operators, offering boating and sea-kayaking tours, are permitted to use Corner Inlet Marine National Park. Most of these operators are not locally based, and their clients and tours come from the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Licensed tour operator permits include conditions that detail access, permitted activities, site-specific restrictions and the need to be familiar with local port regulations. Licensed tour operators must also adhere to industry standards for safety (section 6.7).

Tourism Alliance Victoria is a membership-based industry association with a representative and professional development role for tourism businesses. Parks Victoria works collaboratively with Tourism Alliance Victoria in administering the Tour Operator Licensing system across Victoria's public land estate, including the park.

There are opportunities for relevant Indigenous communities to add to the tourism experience in the parks by developing and delivering interpretive and educational tours on Indigenous cultural heritage and values.

#### **Aim**

- Encourage the provision of appropriate tourism services to enhance the quality and range of recreational experiences in the park and minimise impacts on park values.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Ensure that all tour operators using the park are licensed and that permits are endorsed with all necessary conditions.*

- *Work collaboratively with licensed tour operators and Tourism Alliance Victoria to ensure:*
  - *the provision of a high quality service*
  - *that activities adhere to minimal-impact practices as specified in the licence conditions.*
- *Develop and distribute an information, interpretation and education pack to licensed tour operators to help ensure that information conveyed to visitors is consistent with the objectives for the park.*
- *Work with licensed tour operators, and the relevant Indigenous communities to develop and deliver guided tours that enhance the park experience of visitors and are compatible with the protection of park values (section 6.1).*
- *Monitor activities and use of licensed tour operations to ensure that the values of the park are protected, and amend permit conditions if necessary.*

## 6.7 Public safety

Visitors are exposed to a number of natural hazards when visiting the park. Most of these hazards are not unique to the park. Public information and education are one of the most effective ways to promote safety (section 6.1). Safety messages are presented to visitors through signs, Marine Notes and Ranger patrols.

Although the waters of the park are relatively sheltered and shallow, there are inherent dangers and risks to visitors associated with water-based activities and remote locations. Sudden changes in weather can occur, and the water depth can be very shallow during part of the tidal cycle.

There have been numerous safety-related incidents in the park, some involving search and rescue operations.

All powered recreational vessel operators operating in State waters are required to have a current licence. Recreational boating accidents are highest in Victoria during January, and most fatalities are associated with aluminium dinghies (MSV 2002b). Marine Safety Victoria conducts safety and awareness programs for recreational boat users, and the Victorian

Recreational Boating Safety Handbook contains necessary safety information and outlines the requirements for operating a recreational vessel in Victoria (MSV 2002b) (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 Response Plan. Parks Victoria's response to emergency incidents during normal operating activities within the park will be guided by an Emergency Management Plan.

A Safety and Environment Management Plan for the Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert has been prepared by Gippsland Ports (Gippsland Ports 2005). The plan is a management tool to assist Gippsland Ports in systematically examining the full scope of activities in the port to ensure that all significant risks are identified and controlled (sections 4.2 and 8.3).

To assist in achieving safe practice, Adventure Activity Standards (ORC 2004) are being developed by the outdoor recreation industry for all adventure activities, including diving and snorkelling (section 6.4). The Outdoor Recreation Centre will facilitate the development and continual update of these standards.

Visitors are encouraged to ensure that they comply with these standards, or other standards relevant to their activity, and undertake the required training and accreditation prior entering the park. A volunteer coastal patrol based at Port Welshpool and Port Albert provides important assistance with the location and rescue of boats in emergency situations within the park.

### Aims

- Promote visitor safety and awareness of safety issues and risks within the park associated with access and use.

- Promote and observe safe practices, and cooperate with emergency services.

**Management strategies**

- *Provide relevant visitor safety information to visitors on the dynamic nature of currents and tides and the inherent dangers associated with the park (section 6.1), and encourage visitors to adopt safe operating guidelines appropriate to their activity.*
- *Cooperate with and support responsible agencies in emergency response and ensure that Parks Victoria staff have adequate levels of training in emergency procedures.*
- *Liaise with South Gippsland Shire Council to ensure that Municipal Emergency Response Plans make adequate provision for likely incidents in the park.*
- *Liaise with Gippsland Ports to provide input into the planning and implementation of marine safety initiatives within the park and adjacent waters, including the implementation of the Safety and Environment Management Plan for the Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert (Gippsland Ports 2005).*
- *Develop an integrated Emergency Management Plan for the park and adjacent marine protected areas, consistent with the Safety and Environment Management Plan for the Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert, and ensure that staff and licensed tour operators are aware of the plan.*

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## 7 STRATEGIES FOR AUTHORISED AND ADJACENT USES

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### 7.1 Authorised uses

A number of uses and activities 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 an 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 exploration permit over this park.

Construction of pipelines or seafloor cables may be permitted with the consent of the Minister in some circumstances.

Adventure training and field navigation exercises by Defence Force units may be undertaken subject to a permit outlining conditions to ensure minimal impacts on the park.

All research and monitoring planned for a Marine National Park or Marine Sanctuary, whether by external organisations or individuals, requires a research permit under the National Parks Act. Permits are issued by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, available at [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au).

Parks Victoria recognises the significant role that the filming and photography industry plays in the social and economic well-being 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.

Tour operators may be licensed to operate within the park, subject to conditions set out in the permit issued by Parks Victoria (section 6.7).

### Aim

- Manage authorised uses and permitted activities consistent with legislation, 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.*
- *Monitor authorised activities to ensure conditions are met and users have minimal impact on park values.*
- *Permit Defence Force adventure training or field navigation exercises in the park in accordance with Parks Victoria's operational policy and relevant permit conditions.*

### 7.2 Boundaries and adjacent uses

The Wilderness Zone of Wilsons Promontory National Park adjoins Corner Inlet Marine National Park at the high water mark. Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park, Wilsons Promontory Marine Park and State waters adjoin the park offshore.

Management aims for the Wilderness Zone within Wilsons Promontory National Park are to protect or enhance the essentially unmodified natural condition of the area and, subject to that protection and minimal interference to natural processes, provide opportunities for solitude, inspiration and appropriate self-reliant recreation (Parks Victoria 2002c). Management of Corner Inlet Marine National Park, in particular shore-based activities, will be managed in accordance with the *Wilsons Promontory National Park Management Plan* (Parks Victoria 2002c).

A draft management plan for Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park and Marine Park is being finalised (Parks Victoria 2004b). A draft management plan is also being prepared for Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Parks (Parks Victoria in prep.). Management of Corner Inlet Marine National Park will be integrated with management objectives for these areas.

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

Information, interpretation and education programs in particular must seek to communicate information and regulations across the entire marine and terrestrial protected areas of South Gippsland, without allowing varying land and water tenures to confuse messages (section 6.1).

As fishing is prohibited in the park but permitted in adjacent waters, clear boundary identification is essential.

On-shore and in-water boundary markers and easily identified landforms are used to communicate boundaries to visitors. The boundaries of the park are indicated by on-shore (yellow triangles at high water mark) and in-water markers (section 1.1 and figure 2), and communicated to visitors through Marine Notes, signs at boat launching ramps and other sites managed by South Gippsland Shire Council and Wellington Shire Council, and information, interpretation and education programs (section 6.1).

Dredging is not permitted in Corner Inlet Marine National Park, but may occur in shipping channels in the inlet for channel maintenance, channel deepening and port development, such as at Barry Beach and Port Welshpool (Lewis Channel), subject to appropriate permissions from the Environment Protection Agency (section 8.3). These activities have the potential to affect the park by increasing turbidity, changing sedimentation patterns and releasing previously inactive nutrients and pollutants (section 4.2).

#### **Aims**

- Ensure that boundaries are clearly identifiable from land and sea.
- Minimise impacts from adjacent uses on park values.

#### **Management strategies**

- *Maintain the existing system of boundary markers and signs, and information about boundaries (section 6.1).*
- *Ensure that the boundaries of the park are clearly identified in relevant signage and park information (section 6.1).*
- *Liaise with the EPA to provide input into dredging applications for activities in adjacent waters so as to minimise the impacts of dredging on park values (section 8.3).*

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## 8 STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

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### 8.1 Community awareness

Raising the community's awareness of the park's values is an essential step in developing its sense of custodianship for the park and engagement in the area's management. The community is more likely to develop a sense of custodianship for the park if its 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 assists in broader public education, raising awareness and reaching others in the community.

Increasing awareness among the community of threatening processes, particularly water pollution, changes in seagrass condition and distribution, and the introduction of marine pests, can help to minimise the potential for further impacts (sections 4.2, 4.4 and 4.6). Information, interpretation and education programs play an integral role in raising community awareness of these issues (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.

Opportunities exist through information, interpretation and education programs to build broader community awareness of the significance of the park to Indigenous communities. This will aid in the development of greater respect and recognition of Indigenous culture among the broader community.

The Coast Action / Coastcare program works with a variety of volunteer groups and community organisations to build broader community awareness and understanding of marine and coastal issues (section 8.2).

Coast Action / Coastcare, the Corner Inlet Fisheries and Habitat Association and Parks Victoria are working collaboratively on an awareness program to minimise the impacts of propeller scour in the Corner Inlet and Nooramunga area (sections 4.4 and 6.1). This program will incorporate information relating

to the 'voluntary code of practice' for boat operators in Corner Inlet Marine National Park.

#### 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

- *Review all information, interpretation and education programs for the park (section 6.1) annually to ensure that current information is used to promote awareness of park values and management.*
- *Work collaboratively with Coast Action / Coastcare and the Corner Inlet Fisheries and Habitat Association to develop an awareness program about propeller scour in the Corner Inlet and Nooramunga area, including the park and to raise the profile of the 'voluntary code of practice' for motorised vessel operators (section 4.4, 6.3).*
- *Seek opportunities to publicise the work of volunteers and community groups in the park to build broader community awareness of park programs and volunteer opportunities (sections 6.1 and 8.2).*
- *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 the Indigenous communities (section 5.1).*
- *Promote the benefits of assisting park programs to community groups in line with 'Healthy Parks Healthy People' objectives.*

## 8.2 Community participation

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

Volunteers and community groups 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 the park's managers. Volunteers also bring great enthusiasm and add valuable resources to assist with the care of the park.

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

Reef Watch is a non-profit project developed by the Australian Marine Conservation Society and funded by the Federal and State Government through Coast Action / Coastcare. The project seeks the voluntary assistance of divers to help 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.

South Gippsland Waterwatch coordinates the Nooramunga and Corner Inlet (NCI) project; a community-based water quality monitoring program. Monitoring occurs at many locations within the catchment of the park as part of the NCI water monitoring project (Harris & Halliwell 2002). This project provides valuable ongoing data that enables Parks Victoria to better understand the impacts of water quality on the park (section 4.2).

There is no current Friends Group for Corner Inlet Marine National Park, but the Friends of the Prom have been active in conservation programs within the adjacent Wilsons Promontory National Park. The Friends of the Prom are interested in extending their activities to marine protected areas surrounding Wilsons Promontory, which may include Corner Inlet Marine National Park.

Although not a popular dive site, many recreational divers have visited the park over the years. A wealth of information in the form of knowledge, marine natural history and

underwater photography has been gathered by members of local dive clubs and other interested divers. The Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria (SDFV) represents many local dive clubs throughout Victoria.

The Victorian Wader Study Group monitors migratory and resident wading birds in Corner Inlet Marine National Park. Data collected within the park and adjacent areas has contributed significantly to an understanding of the importance of Corner Inlet as a Ramsar site and as part of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway.

A volunteer coastal patrol based at Port Welshpool assists with the location and rescue of boats in emergency situations within the park (section 6.7).

The South Gippsland Conservation Society is active in preserving natural resources from environmentally damaging development through on-ground activities and education. The Foster Branch of the Society pursues local issues and activities relevant to the park.

Other volunteer organisations, including South Gippsland Environmental Education and Interpretation Committee, Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, Birds Australia, Conservation Volunteers of Australia, and tertiary and work experience students may also assist in various projects to benefit the park.

Relevant Indigenous communities and other Indigenous communities have considerable interest in and aspirations for the park. The communities are also an important potential source of traditional knowledge about the area that has yet to be documented. A strong working relationship with the communities will be essential to the reflection and integration of their cultural lore in the park's planning and management and reconciliation of their interests and aspirations with other members of the community.

The northern section of the park provides ideal opportunities for community-based monitoring projects, particularly with regard to seagrass health, propeller scour and marine pests.

Parks Victoria's research partnerships will be expanded to incorporate priorities for the park, including collection of baseline habitat data and mapping, and a greater understanding of the causes of Broad-leaf Seagrass decline

(Parks Victoria 2003a). Through the research partnership, Deakin University will develop and trial community monitoring protocols for Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. Corner Inlet Marine National Park has been selected as one of three trial sites, where basic data on the presence, distribution and abundance of marine flora and fauna will be collected by volunteers (section 4.4).

Opportunities to develop networks and associations between interest groups, community organisations and volunteers will be encouraged. A number of options are available, including Friends of the Prom forming an association with members of SDFV.

### **Aims**

- Support and encourage the active participation of Friends groups and volunteers in protection, conservation and monitoring projects to enhance management of the park.
- Provide opportunities for, and encourage tertiary students to undertake volunteer work experience and research that is consistent with aims for the park.
- Inform, enrich and strengthen the park's management with the community's tradition, especially relevant Indigenous cultural lore.

### **Management strategies**

- *Seek to establish, maintain and strengthen relationships with Friends, volunteers and other community groups that use or have a particular interest in the park.*
- *Continue to encourage and support the involvement of volunteers and community groups such as Reef Watch in the park, to work with each other and Parks Victoria to achieve shared goals for the park (section 4.6).*
- *Provide strong support for South Gippsland Waterwatch's NCI project through provision of staff expertise, resources and collection of water samples.*
- *Develop a long-term seagrass monitoring program based on community participation, which uses monitoring*

*protocols for community-based monitoring in Corner Inlet Marine National Park.*

- *Develop a long-term volunteer strategy that incorporates the skills and interests of volunteers in park research and management activities.*
- *Encourage and support Coast Action / Coastcare Programs within the park, particularly focusing on community interpretation and education.*
- *Continue to build and strengthen relationships with the relevant Indigenous communities. In particular, seek to further develop a close inclusive working partnership with the Traditional Owners and cooperation with the scheduled Aboriginal community.*
- *Liaise and cooperate as appropriate with Indigenous communities in dealing with Indigenous cultural issues that relate to the park.*

### **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, management, or regulation 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.

DSE establishes parks, and provides strategic direction and policy advice for the management of the park, including marine flora and fauna values and threatening processes. Parks Victoria is a support agency, operating at the direction of DSE for both oiled wildlife and cetacean stranding or entanglement response.

As part of agreed service delivery arrangements, Fisheries Victoria – Department of Primary Industries has primary responsibility for enforcement to ensure compliance with the fishing prohibitions under the National Parks Act, with support from

Parks Victoria. Parks Victoria will continue to collaborate with Fisheries Victoria in activities such as cooperative Ranger and Fisheries officer patrols and support arrangements in accordance with the Statewide Compliance Strategy (Parks Victoria 2002d) and the *East Region Marine Compliance Plan* (Parks Victoria 2005).

The Gippsland Coastal Board provides direction and policy advice to facilitate sustainable development of the east coast of Victoria through the implementation of the *Victorian Coastal Strategy* (VCC 2002) and the Coastal Action Plan (GCB 2002b) (section 4.2).

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) manages the protection and sustainable development of land, vegetation and water resources within the region, including the preparation of a regional catchment strategy that specifically addresses the impacts of land use and management on the marine and estuarine environment (section 4.2).

The Victorian Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has the primary responsibility for environment protection of 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, such as dairy effluent and treated waste water (section 4.2). EPA also develops State Environment Protection Policies (SEPP) for state waters. The EPA is also a referral agency with respect to dredging proposals seeking consent under the Coastal Management Act (section 4.2).

South Gippsland Water is responsible for providing and managing a quality wastewater system in an ecologically sustainable manner, including the wastewater outfalls for the towns of Toora, Foster, Welshpool and Port Welshpool.

South Gippsland Shire Council is responsible for the preparation and implementation of an urban stormwater management plan to improve the environmental management of urban stormwater and protect environmental values of receiving environments, including Corner Inlet.

Through Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV), the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) has responsibility for administering the Victorian Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act and the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act (sections 2.5 and 5.1). These acts provide blanket protection for all Aboriginal cultural heritage values including places and objects. AAV and the Gippsland Cultural Heritage Unit provide advice to Parks Victoria on Indigenous issues, the promotion of knowledge, and understanding relating to Indigenous people of the area and the wider community (section 5.1).

Parks Victoria is a support agency for Marine Safety Victoria at a statewide and regional level for marine pollution incidents, contributing in a technical advisory and on-site management capacity.

Gippsland Ports is the local port manager of the Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert under the *Port Services Act 1995* (Vic.) and is the local authority responsible for administering the Marine Act. Under this legislation, Gippsland Ports is responsible for the planning and implementation of marine pollution response and marine safety initiatives, and the preparation and implementation of Port Safety and Environment Management Plans for the Port of Corner Inlet (sections 4.2 and 6.7). Parks Victoria works collaboratively with Gippsland Ports to ensure boating safety within the park (section 6.7).

South Gippsland Shire Council administers the planning scheme for land adjacent to Corner Inlet, including assessment of developments with the potential to impact on park values. Parks Victoria provides input into planning applications to ensure the protection of park values.

Tourism Victoria is the state government authority responsible for developing and marketing Victoria to Australian and international travellers.

Victorian agencies work cooperatively with the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage on 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 relate to the park.

### **Management strategies**

- *Work collaboratively with all agencies to implement the plan vision and directions. In particular, work with:*
  - *DSE regarding relevant advice for 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*
  - *West Gippsland CMA to reduce the impacts of land use and management of the catchment on the park, particularly in relation to the decline of Broad-leaf Seagrass, and the implementation of appropriate actions in the Regional Catchment Strategy 2004–2009 (WGCMA 2004) and Draft River Health Strategy (WGCMA 2005)*
  - *EPA to ensure impacts associated with adjacent dredging and discharge of waste into the environment are minimised, including those from dairies, treated wastewater and agricultural runoff*
  - *South Gippsland Water and EPA to ensure that treated wastewater standards are regularly reviewed and if necessary, updated so that discharges continue to have negligible impacts on park values*
- *South Gippsland Shire Council to minimise impacts from storm water discharges in the catchment on park values (section 4.2)*
- *Gippsland Cultural Heritage Unit and AAV on issues regarding Indigenous affairs*
- *Marine Safety Victoria to help maximise visitor safety and compliance with boating zone and other regulations (section 6.3)*
- *Gippsland Ports on input into the planning and implementation of marine safety initiatives within the park and adjacent waters, including the implementation of the Safety and Environment Management Plan for the Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert*
- *South Gippsland Shire Council regarding the administration of the planning scheme to minimise impacts from future development in the adjacent coastal and catchment areas*
- *South Gippsland Shire Council and DSE to ensure applications for aquaculture development adjacent to the park give due consideration for the potential spread of marine pests*
- *State and regional tourism authorities to promote the park appropriately in regional visitor information centres and in regional tourism strategies*
- *Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage on the management of regional ecosystem conservation issues.*
- *Provide updated information for contingency plans for marine pollution incidents, such as oil and chemical spills, and cetacean / wildlife incidents as required in consultation with DSE and MSV, and communicate arrangements to staff, relevant agencies and interested parties.*

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## 9 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

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### 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 strategies to be proposed for inclusion in annual regional programs. The selection of strategies for regional programs varies from year to year depending on available resources and government priorities. Once regional programs are approved strategies and where necessary detailed actions will be included in works programs for the park.

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

During implementation of the plan, Parks Victoria will consult 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 Park open days, and 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](http://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 the Parks Victoria's website [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au), 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

- Timely management intervention to minimise 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 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 has partnered 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

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**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.

**Dreaming** – in Indigenous usage has meanings that differ between people, but generally encompasses and explains Aboriginal creation and defines and explains the rules governing relationships between the people in accordance with their tradition.

**Ecologically sustainable development (ESD)** – development that improves the total quality of life both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

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

**Effluent** – a liquid, partially or completely treated or in its natural state, flowing from a water or sewage treatment plant.

**Exotic marine organism / species** – refer to Pest.

**Flotsam** – In maritime law, applies to wreckage or cargo left floating on the sea after a shipwreck. The common phrase *flotsam and jetsam* is now used loosely to describe any objects found floating or washed (respectively) ashore. See also *Jetsam*.

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

**Freehold land** – land in private ownership.

**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 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** – cultural lore, customs, places and objects of significance to Indigenous people in accordance with their 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** – relating to 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).

**Jetsam** – In maritime law, applies to cargo or equipment thrown overboard from a ship in distress and either sunk or washed ashore. The common phrase *flotsam and jetsam* is now used loosely to describe any objects found floating or washed (respectively) ashore. See also *Flotsam*

**Marine National Park** – in Victoria, highly protected areas reserved and managed under Schedule 7 of the National Parks Act that represent the range of marine environments in Victoria, and

in which no fishing, extractive or damaging activities are allowed.

**Marine protected area** – a marine area that has some form of protection and is managed for conservation objectives.

**Marine Sanctuary** – in Victoria, a small, highly protected area reserved and managed under Schedule 8 of the National Parks Act to protect special values, and 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, squid, octopus, cuttlefish and mussels.

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

**Pest** – exotic organisms (plants, animals or pathogens) that, if introduced outside their natural or previous distribution, cause significant changes to habitats, food chains, ecosystems or human health by feeding on or competing with native species. Can refer to either terrestrial or marine species.

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

**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/s scheduled under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (Cwlth) relating to the park.

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

**Sewage** – household and commercial wastewater that contains human or trade wastes.

**Sewerage** – the system that facilitates the collection, transport, treatment and discharge of sewage.

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

**Stakeholders** – public users, an individual or group that have a vested interest in, or may be affected by, a project or process.

**Stormwater** – runoff from land during and following rain. Stormwater removes accumulated material including litter, soil, nutrients, pathogens, chemicals, pesticides, oils and grease.

**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.

**Translocation** – the transfer of pests from one area to a new area.

**Wetland** – land where saturation by water is the dominant factor for soil type and plant and animal communities (e.g. tidal areas, saltmarshes and mangrove).

## Abbreviations

**AAV** – Aboriginal Affairs Victoria

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

**CAMBA** – China- Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

**COAG** – Council of Australian Governments

**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

**DPI** – Department of Primary Industries

**ECC** – Environment Conservation Council

**EPA** – Environment Protection Authority

**EPBC** – Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (Cwlth)

**FFG** – Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act

**GCB** – Gippsland Coastal Board

**GRWMP** – Gippsland Regional Water Monitoring Partnership

**ICZM** – Integrated Coastal Zone Management

**IMCRA** – Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia

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

**JAMBA** – Japan- Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

**LCC** – Land Conservation Council

**MSV** – Marine Safety Victoria

**NCI** – Nooramunga and Corner Inlet.

**NOO** – National Oceans Office

**NRE** – (former Department of) Natural Resources and Environment (preceded DSE)

**NRSMPA** – National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas

**ORC** – Outdoor Recreation Centre

**PWC** – personal water craft

**SDFV** – The Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria

**VCC** – Victorian Coastal Council

**WGCMA** – West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

## APPENDIX 1 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR MARINE NATIONAL PARKS

Management objectives for marine national parks included on Schedule 7 or 8 are in Sections 4 and 17D of the National Parks Act are listed below.

For an up-to-date copy of the National Parks Act, refer to Victorian Acts on Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website [www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au](http://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.

### Section 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 an 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 MARINE ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

MARINE ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY	DESCRIPTION
Seagrass meadow	Seagrass meadows occur in the more sheltered and lower wave energy areas. Salinity, tidal submergence and substrate type influence the distribution of seagrass meadows.
Subtidal reef	Small areas of reef occur mostly in shallow waters (< 5 m), but at least one area occurs in the deeper waters of Bennison Channel. Diverse marine life is present in these habitats, and the areas in Corner Inlet Marine National Park remain largely unexplored.
Unvegetated subtidal substrate	This community is found on predominantly deeper channel areas that drain shallow banks and intertidal areas. Strong tidal flows produce scouring effects that maintain a bare substrate.
Open water	Microscopic organisms such as diatoms and other phytoplankton are a major food source for filter-feeding fauna, including bivalve molluscs, worms, and ascidians, which are in turn a major food source for wader birds and fish.  Open water areas also provide habitat for a range of pelagic marine mammals, including Bottlenose and Common Dolphins, Australian Fur Seals and Leopard Seals.
Intertidal reef	Small areas of intertidal reef occur in the northern section of the park and around Bennison Island. Faunal diversity is high and dominated by gastropods.
Unvegetated intertidal substrate	Significant areas of bare mud and sand occur predominantly in the southern section of the park. These areas are often interspersed with patches of seagrass.
Mangrove	Small areas of White Mangrove occur in the southern section of the park around the Chinaman Creek delta.
Saltmarsh	Isolated areas of saltmarsh occur in the southern section of the park, particularly behind fringing mangroves in the Chinaman Creek delta. These areas are dominated by Beaded Glasswort, Shrubby Glasswort and Sea Rush.
Sandy beach	Sandy beaches exist at Chinaman Long Beach in the southern section of the park, and at small isolated beaches between headlands in the northern section.

Source: Plummer et al. 2003.

### APPENDIX 3 SUBMISSIONS ON DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

A total of 17 submissions were received on the draft plan (November 2004 – February 2005) from the following organisations and individuals.

Note: Eight submissions are included which related to all Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, and no submissions were marked confidential.

ORGANISATIONS	SUBMISSION No.
<b>Submissions from groups</b>	<b>Total: 15</b>
Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Gippsland #	3
Bird Observers Club of Australia	15
Corner Inlet Fisheries Habitat Association	10
Department of Defence (Commonwealth) #	14
Department of Primary Industries #	13
Department of Sustainability and Environment (Gippsland) #	7
Environment Protection Authority #	17
Gippsland Coastal Board	16
Gippsland Ports	5
Heritage Victoria	1
Scuba Diving Federation of Victoria #	11
South Gippsland Conservation Society	9
South Gippsland Water	4
Tourism Victoria #	12
West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	8

INDIVIDUALS	SUBMISSION No.
<b>Submissions from individuals</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>
Matt Edmunds #	6
Mike Conway	2

# Denotes submissions relating to all Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries.

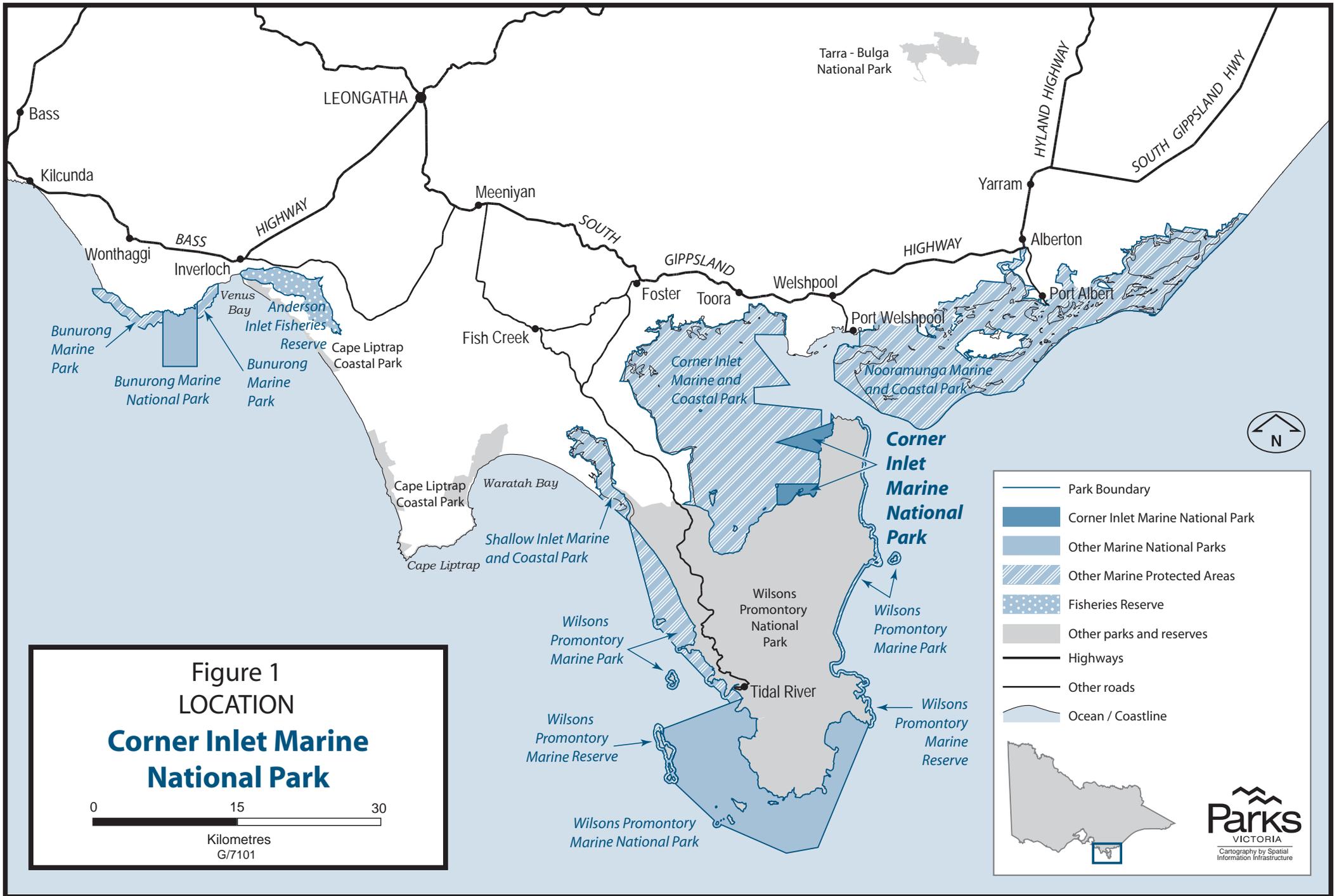
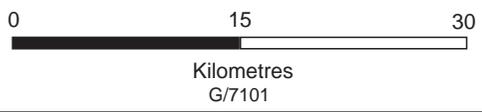


Figure 1  
LOCATION  
**Corner Inlet Marine National Park**



Legend:

- Park Boundary
- Corner Inlet Marine National Park
- Other Marine National Parks
- Other Marine Protected Areas
- Fisheries Reserve
- Other parks and reserves
- Highways
- Other roads
- Ocean / Coastline

Victoria Parks  
VICTORIA  
Cartography by Spatial Information Infrastructure

Figure 2

# Corner Inlet Marine National Park



Kilometres  
G/7101.1

## LAND STATUS & USE

- Corner Inlet Marine National Park
- Other Marine Protected Areas
- Wilsons Promontory National Park
- Reference Areas
- Wilsons Promontory Wilderness Area

Navigational Light  
(colour indicated by letter)

Shore boundary marker  
(colour indicated by letter)

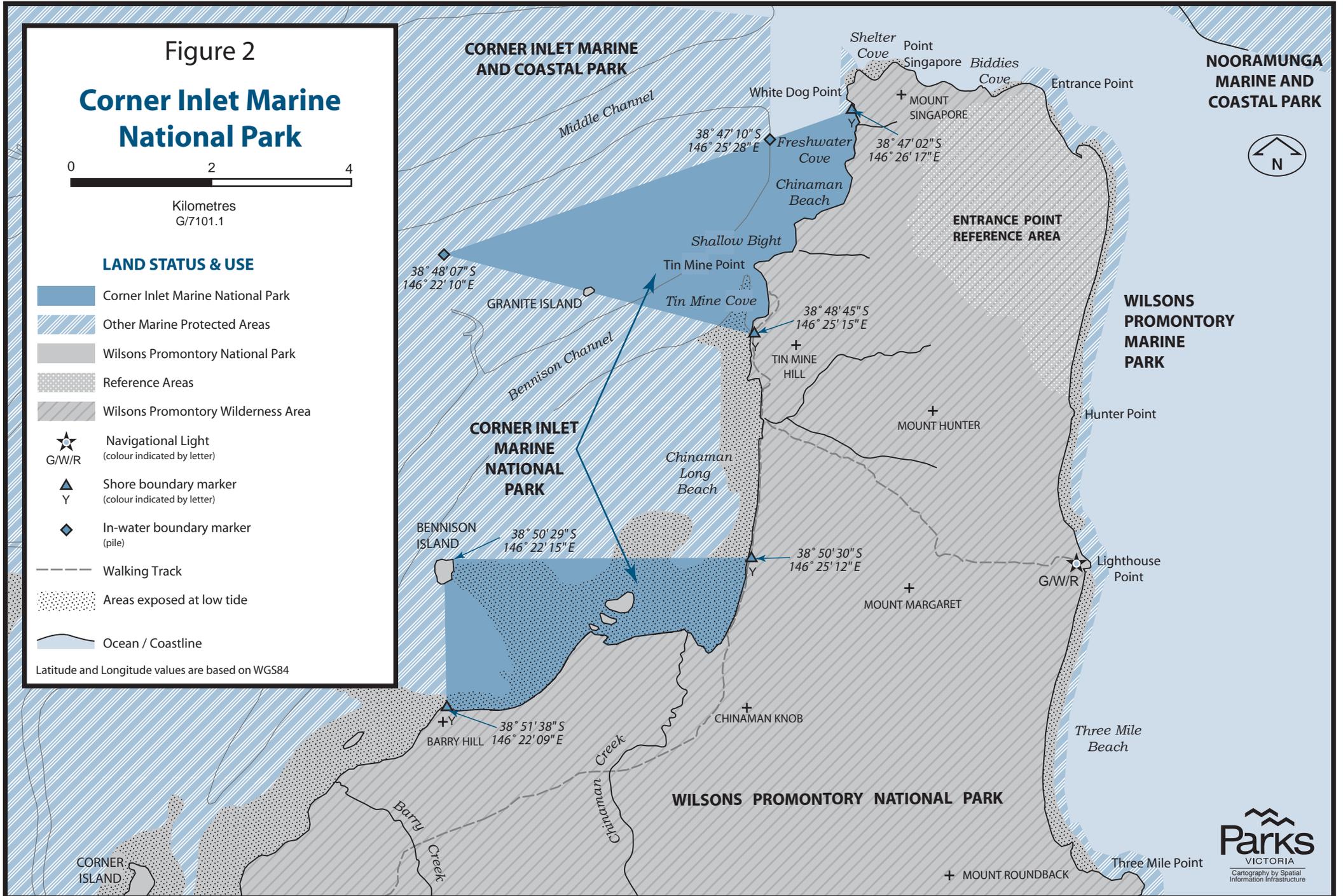
In-water boundary marker  
(pile)

Walking Track

Areas exposed at low tide

Ocean / Coastline

Latitude and Longitude values are based on WGS84



NOORAMUNGA  
MARINE AND  
COASTAL PARK



WILSONS  
PROMONTORY  
MARINE  
PARK

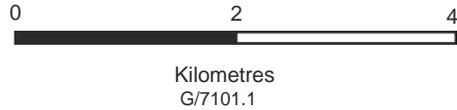
WILSONS PROMONTORY NATIONAL PARK



+ MOUNT ROUNDBACK

Figure 3 MANAGEMENT OVERLAY

## Special Protection Area - Natural Values



-  Corner Inlet Marine National Park
-  Special Protection Area (significant habitat for seagrass and wading birds).
-  Other Marine Protected Areas
-  Shore boundary marker (colour indicated by letter).
-  In-water boundary marker (pile)
-  Ocean / Coastline

- A voluntary 'code of practice' will be introduced for vessel operators, to minimise boat operations in the Special Protection Area, and to increase awareness of the importance of shallow soft sediment areas, especially seagrass, for marine life and wading birds.

Latitude and Longitude values are based on WGS84

