Welcome to the inaugural condition of the Gippsland Lakes Report Card 2011

On behalf of the Gippsland Lakes & Catchment Taskforce, I am pleased to present this first Report Card on the environmental condition of the Gippsland Lakes.

The Gippsland Lakes is a complex system. Many components make up the Lakes ecosystem, most of these being dependent on each other. Additionally, the Lakes are significantly affected by what happens in the catchment. The Report Card has been produced to show a more detailed picture of the ecological health of the various components that make up the Gippsland Lakes system.

The Report Card uses 6 key indicators to represent this complex ecosystem. These indicators include: Water Quality, Algal Blooms, Wetlands, Birds, Seagrass and Fish. We have used the same methods as the GNRF report card, but have provided a more detailed focus on the natural assets in the Lakes system. The information used in preparing this first Report Card will form the basis for future condition reporting of the Gippsland Lakes.

Overall the condition of the Lakes has been rated as Moderate. The condition of Wetlands and Water Quality was highest rating - Good. Birds, Algal Blooms and Seagrass were rated - Moderate. Fish were rated - Poor.

The Report Card is a very useful communication tool for presenting the general community with the issues that face the Lakes. It provides an overview of the good and bad aspects and the Lakes to ensure the Lakes health is maintained.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere thanks to all who contributed data and information for this report, and also to Moroka Pty Ltd for their excellent work in producing the final Gippsland Lakes Report Card.

Professor Barry Hart
Independent Chair
Gippsland Lakes & Catchment Taskforce

Water Quality
Update the guidelines values for water quality parameters and provide separate assessments for the major lakes. Provide water quality data on the internet.

Algal Blooms
Continue building on the exiting research to increase understanding about algal blooms and when these events will occur.

Wetlands
Expand the application of the Index of Wetland Condition to additional key wetlands in the Gippsland Lakes system.

Birds
Improve bird monitoring to specifically assess the lake's Ramsar values, and incorporate data from existing programs on Sea Eagles and Little Terns.

Seagrass
Establish a reference condition for density and extent of seagrass to improve reliability of ratings. Quantify the areal extent and physical structure of seagrass to facilitate direct comparison of seagrass condition now with that recorded in 1997, when extensive quantitative mapping was last conducted.

Fish
Improve fish assessment through multiple lines of evidence including - fishery independent surveys, recreational catches, other indirect measures to complement commercial catch data.

Information available:
The card and a full report is available on the Gippsland Lakes & Catchment Taskforce website: www.gippslandlakestaskforce.com.au OR Hardcopies from the DSE Bairnsdale Office on 51520400.

For further information please contact
Julianne Sargant on Ph: 51 520 400 Gippsland Lakes & Catchment Taskforce
www.gippslandlakestaskforce.vic.gov.au

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Health of the Gippsland Lakes

Condition Ratings for the indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water Quality</td>
<td>B Good</td>
<td>60-80% of water quality parameters meet guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>B Good</td>
<td>Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>C Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>D Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Water Quality**

B Good

60-80% of water quality parameters meet guidelines.

**Wetlands**

B Good

Entrance to Wetlands is unaltered. Significant biodiversity values and the presence of wetland plants and animals are important areas. These wetlands provide significant ecosystem services such as nutrient filtering, improved water quality, land stability and fish nursery.

**Algal Blooms**

C Moderate

Moderate bloom, minor economic impact.

**Birds**

C Moderate

Ramsar listing criteria met. Some decrease in abundance and richness.

**Seagrass**

C Moderate

No change in density or extent of seagrass cover.

**Fish**

D Poor

Fish are commercially and ecologically important and provide recreational enjoyment for many. There has been a general decline in the commercial fish catch since the early 1990s and evidence that recreational fishing has declined. Therefore this indicator has been rated as poor.

*For more detailed information on indicators located in the technical report.*

www.gippslandlakes.gov.au