

FACTSHEET



SYDNEY'S SALTY COMMUNITIES – LITERATURE, DATA AND PRACTICE REVIEW

This fact sheet presents the key 'gaps' in how local Councils in the Sydney region deal with biodiversity, based on a literature, data and practice review. It also summarises the gaps in biodiversity management at the State and Federal government level, and provides recommendations for the future of salty community biodiversity.

SYDNEY REGION GAPS IN BIODIVERSITY

Review of Local Government Findings:

- Information on biodiversity management varies considerably across Councils in the study area with regard to detail, from general overarching statements to precise locations identified with targets and actions.
- While terrestrial biodiversity is substantially covered, coastal intertidal biodiversity is severely lacking. Although sea grasses have been mapped, there is no assessment of their condition.
- Information does not address Climate Change adaptation
- In the past five years there has been a move to transfer environmental policy, planning information and data from individual policies to DCPs and LEPs
- Coastal Management Plans focus on risk management and do not directly address salty community biodiversity management.
- Biodiversity management information is generally contained in Biodiversity Plans, Bushland Plans and Reserves Plans of Management. Level of detail varies between Councils from detailed actions and key performance indicators to only high level objectives.

Review of Scientific Findings:

- Research provides detailed information on marine communities such as soft-bottom sediments, sea-grass, rocky-shores, seaweeds, saltmarsh and mangroves and fauna such as intertidal invertebrates and fish.
- Scientific examination provides the expert enquiry process that can be used to determine change in salty community biodiversity.
- Opportunities exist for creating partnerships between scientists and local government to provide monitoring and improve understanding of projects in salty communities such as saltmarsh recreation projects.
- Salty communities of mangrove, saltmarsh and seagrass are key carbon sequestration vegetation types.

FACTS AND FIGURES FOR 17 COUNCILS

- Coastal intertidal zone is missing from 80% of Council Biodiversity Plans or equivalent documents
- 44% of Councils had biodiversity strategies, however a further 36% had other documents with similar information to a biodiversity strategy
- 33% of Councils had new flora and fauna data, surveys of fauna in all habitat types and replications of their fauna surveys to check accuracy
- All Councils covered vegetation management, however none looked at studies specifically for intertidal and submerged vegetation, and only 40% provided recommended actions for this community
- 55% of Councils provided recommended actions for fauna
- 10% of Councils carried out fauna surveys for fish and invertebrates



Review of Community and NGO Findings:

- Councils are the principle facilitators of community engagement and volunteering in biodiversity.
- Community members and groups such as Birds Australia, Wildlife Rescue Centres and EcoDivers collect and collate data on coastal biodiversity in the Sydney region.
- Opportunities exist for Councils to increase their engagement with community and NGOs, thereby increasing participation and appreciation of environmental works as well as creating opportunities for combining resources and data to answer specific biodiversity questions.

STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GAPS IN BIODIVERSITY

- Most Federal and State planning documents do not have a section on coastal biodiversity management. While vision documents refer to marine environments, there is a greater focus on managing terrestrial biodiversity in the west of Sydney.
- While Federal and State legislation has measures to protect biodiversity, these are isolated from overall strategic catchment and planning focused documents and in general they do not apply to Sydney.
- Federal level involvement in biodiversity rarely occurs due to the relatively small size of any area, or low number of affected species, despite these communities and species being threatened, often due to incremental loss.
- Mention of coastal biodiversity in the Sydney region, other than in the broadest terms, is missing from State and Federal Government plans.
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services have drafted a Landcare strategic plan; however they are yet to create Local Plans with input from Council and the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MANAGE SALTY COMMUNITIES BIODIVERSITY IN THE FUTURE

- The condition of marine communities (seagrass and soft-bottom benthos) and some intertidal communities (saltmarsh and mangrove) to be assessed using the appropriate scientific methods for each community. Followed by on-going monitoring.
- Councils to develop template conditions of consent and requirements for consultants advising on mitigation of works in areas of coastal biodiversity. Mitigation works to be maintained and areas to be on a mapping system for on-going protection.
- Increase partnerships between Aboriginal People, scientists, community and Government for sharing biodiversity knowledge and implementing programs of caring for biodiversity. Increased engagement and education about salty community biodiversity and how to conserve and expand it.
- Increase availability of relevant scientific information for use by Local Government on the carrying capacity of Salty Communities and potential indicator species for monitoring these systems.
- Training around maximising biodiversity outcomes to be provided for planning and compliance personnel.
- Locally accurate science about potential changes to physical conditions in the coastal zone (e.g. sand dynamics: some beaches may accrete while others erode) to be obtained to assist in implementing adaptation strategies.
- Funding mechanisms to be developed for Councils, as co-ordinators of the Estuary Management Process, to roll out joint agency estuary projects and consider this mechanism for works through Coastal Management Plans as well.
- Clarity of responsibility over matters in the marine and intertidal zone to be provided to Councils by the State Government.
- Data collection, and use, on coastal biodiversity across the Sydney region to be co-ordinated such that it can be used to answer questions. This includes data obtained from community groups and other non-government organisations.