WHY IS STOKES INLET SO IMPORTANT?

Located 80 kilometres west of Esperance on the southern coast of Western Australia is the Stokes Inlet. It is the largest sheltered body of water in the area covering 14 square kilometres. Its natural beauty is rich in unique flora and abundant wildlife and birdlife and it is easily accessible ensuring it remains popular with visitors and locals alike.

The scenic beauty of this unique system and the plants and animals that use it are widely appreciated by the community.

Stokes Inlet is of environmental significance and cultural value. With many heritage sites and artefacts existing around the inlet, it is an important place to the traditional custodians who call it Benwenerup.

As recently as 2008, a species of the perennial herb known as Velleia exigua was discovered. This species was once thought to have occurred only in the Albany area.

Fishing for Black Bream in the Stokes, the recreational fisherman's prize catch, is fishing at its very best.

STOKES INLET
MANAGEMENT GROUP

SOUTHCOAST
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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STOKES INLET

THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS AT RISK FROM SEDIMENTATION

THREATS TO THE STOKES INLET

The health of the inlet relies on the health of the rivers that flow into it and because of this catchment impacts are considered to be the most critical threat to the inlet. As a result of agricultural development in the catchment, there has been an increase in sedimentation, salinity and nutrient runoff. Salinity and sedimentation are recognised as potentially threatening to the plants and animals living there. Water erosion provides a source for the sediments and associated nutrients entering the inlet that are likely to contribute to environmental degradation.

THE LARGEST SHELTERED BODY OF WATER IN THE AREA

WHAT IS SEDIMENTATION?

Sedimentation is soil that is eroded from farmland and streams due to the changes in vegetation cover and hydrology in the catchment, which is then deposited downstream in the river pools and inlet basin. When deposited, the soil eventually leads to shallowing and sometimes filling of the inlet basin and river pools. Vegetation when present along waterways stabilises the river banks and reduces the speed of the water. When not protected, the soil is more easily eroded and with the increased stream swiftness can dramatically increase the power of water eroding the channel and carrying higher sediment loads. Sedimentation is a concern because with the inlet basin and river pools shallowing or even filling, important habitat for plants and animals is lost and vegetation smothered.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT?

Sedimentation will permanently alter the natural environment of the estuary and destroy habitats for local plants and animals. Rising salinity is likely to threaten fish stocks while algal blooms caused by water containing high nutrient levels are harmful to plants and animals.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR US AND HOW WE ENJOY THE AREA?

Our aim as a community is to ensure that there is no decrease in Black Bream stocks, that the condition of the estuarine foreshore vegetation is maintained or improved and that we continue to have locals and visitors enjoying this very special part of the world.

As a community we appreciate the importance of the Stokes Inlet's ecosystem, environmental significance and natural beauty. We enjoy the inlet as a place to relax, bird watch or fish and it's where we go boating and camping.

HOW IS THE STOKES INLET ENVIRONMENT BEING PROTECTED?

A management plan was developed for the Stokes Inlet and its catchment in 2008 by the Department of Water and other agencies, South Coast NRM and Esperance Regional Forum. The plan is overseen by the Stokes Inlet Management Group and government agencies. The management plan contains strategies designed to enhance the values of the inlet and manage threats.

Improved farming practices, revegetation and increased riverbank livestock fencing are identified as the keys to ensuring the Stokes Inlet is healthy by improving the inlet water quality, managing fish stocks and enhancing plant and animal values.