

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Purpose of Wallis Lake Estuary Management Plan**

The role of the Wallis Lake Estuary Management Plan (WLEMP) is to coordinate management efforts of local government, state government agencies, landholders and community members to address issues regarding the social, cultural, environmental, recreational and commercial amenity of the Lake. The ultimate goal of the plan is to produce a schedule of workable management strategies that have been developed with and are endorsed by all stakeholders in the Lake. .

The WLEMP has been developed in accordance with the State Government's Estuary Management Program. It will operate in concert with a number of other policies including Ecologically Sustainable Development, the NSW Coastal Policy, the NSW Estuary Policy and any relevant local government policies (eg DCPs).

The suite of local estuarine management and remedial plans that are already in existence will not be replaced by the WLEMP (see Appendix 1). Instead the WLEMP will enhance management goals by providing a more strategic framework in which they can operate.

The WLEMP will be a stand-alone document addressing management issues of the Wallis Lake water body and its tributaries up to the tidal limits, the foreshore and other lands adjacent to the estuary including wetlands and drainage reserves that are functionally related to the estuary.

## **1.2 Objectives**

The WLEMP aims to provide a strategic framework within which management measures can operate effectively to:

1. conserve, protect and enhance areas of significant cultural, ecological and aesthetic value\*
2. restore or remediate degraded areas
3. balance the recreational, commercial, social and cultural needs of the estuary
4. increase the economic value of the estuary in an ecologically sustainable manner, and
5. increase community awareness of estuarine processes and management issues.

## **1.3 The Estuary Management Process**

The Estuary Management Process (Figure 1.1) is outlined in the Estuary Management Manual (1992). This manual was developed to assist communities to implement the New South Wales Government's Estuary Management Policy of 1987. The goal of this policy was for Estuary Management Plans to be developed and implemented for all estuaries in New South Wales.

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\* Aesthetic value is defined here as a combination of both water quality and scenic attributes.

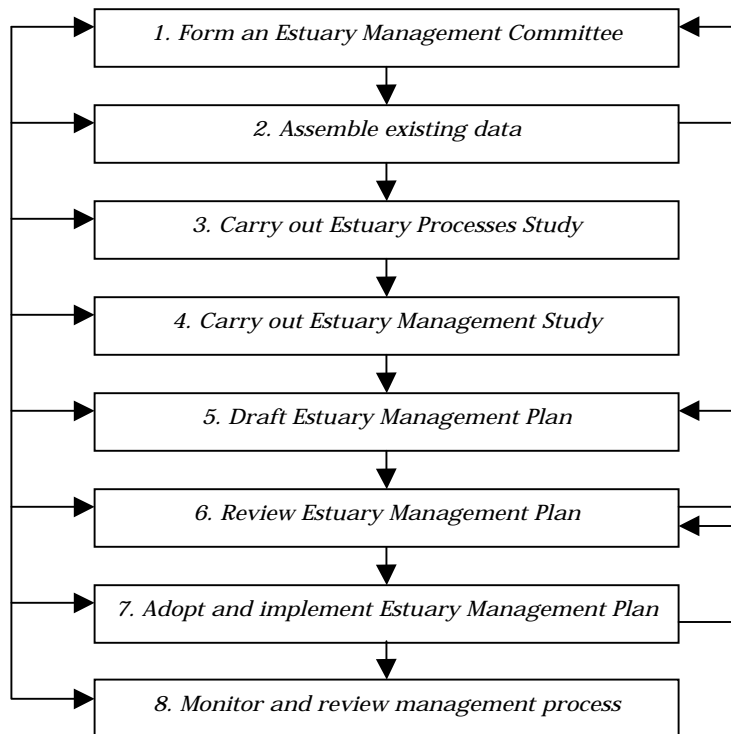


Figure 1.1: Steps of the Estuary Management Process (reproduced from the New South Wales Estuary Management Policy, 1987).

For Wallis Lake this process began in 1995 with the formation of the Wallis Lake Estuary Management Committee. This committee is representative of the major stakeholders in the Lake (Appendix 2) and is responsible for identifying major recreational, commercial and environmental issues in the estuary.

In 1996 step 2 was accomplished with the completion of the Wallis Lake Data Compilation Study (Willing & Partners). Data available at this time included detailed vertical aerial photography since the late 1930s, hydrographic surveys and hydrodynamic data, endangered flora and fauna species, extensive rainfall and run-off data, limited water quality data, and details on boat ramps and stormwater outlets. Based on this available data, major issues facing Wallis Lake were identified and ranked in terms of their significance and magnitude. Water quality issues and maintenance of the environment were given highest priority as a result of this review.

Information 'gaps' identified in step 2 were addressed in additional studies leading up to the preparation of the Wallis Lake Estuary Processes Study in 1999 (Webb, McKeown and Associates), representing step 3 of the Estuary Management Process. The Estuary Processes Study comprehensively assesses the Wallis Lake system in terms of its hydrodynamics, sediment dynamics, water quality, flora and fauna, and waterway usage. Major and minor issues identified in step 2 were reassessed and presented alongside additional issues identified in this study under the processes listed above. It was recommended that these issues be addressed within the WLEMP.

Step 4 of the Estuary Management Process was tailored to meet the specific management needs of the Wallis Lake system. Instead of conducting a broad Estuary Management Study defining management objectives, options and impacts for the entire system and its uses, a series of specific and targeted investigations (Appendix 1) were conducted based on the advice of CSIRO scientist Graham Harris. These studies were designed to produce management objectives addressing the major concerns of unsustainable nutrient and sediment loads entering the Lake.

The process outlined thus far provides the foundations to draft the Wallis Lake Estuary Management Plan (step 5). This plan defines both short and long-term management objectives and identifies actions to address these that may be ongoing or one-off in nature. These management actions take into account the views of all parties represented in the Wallis Lake Estuary Management Committee and the wider community.

## **1.4 The Stakeholder and Community Consultation Process**

The first stage of community consultation for the plan was achieved through the Wallis Lake Estuary Management Committee with various waterway user groups, government authorities and environmental groups represented.

Great care was then taken to identify stakeholder groups not represented on the WLEMC for consultation about the plan (Appendix 3). Stakeholders were directly consulted during which time they were briefed on the objectives and scope of the WLEMP and given the opportunity to discuss management issues and measures.

In addition to this, a notification letter outlining the WLEMP and inviting the opportunity for direct consultation or written submissions for consideration in the plan was sent to all landholders whose property bordered Wallis Lake or its associated tributaries (Appendix 4).

A public meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003 provided the opportunity for any stakeholders that may have been initially overlooked to take part in the planning process. This meeting was widely publicised through the *Great Lakes Advocate*, the *Extra* and through an interview with Councillor John Weate on ABC radio on 4 December 2003.

The main issues raised at the public meeting include:

- community education on natural resource management
- presentations
- local media and using community groups
- schools
- education opportunities to be made available within council
- facilitation of more community groups eg. Dads Army
- employ a permanent estuary officer to implement WLEMP
- natural resources council contacts to be clearly identified in phone book etc.
- signage at specific foreshore sites outlining best practice waterway usage, and
- increase communication between government authorities.



[Plate 1.1: Public meeting participants, 4 Dec 2003]

Information on the WLEMP was also communicated via the local prime news telecast on Friday 5 Dec 2003.

A meeting with local Aboriginal members and Aboriginal elders of the community on matters relevant to the WLEMP was held on Wednesday 14 Jan 2004 at the Forster Local Aboriginal Lands Council. The main concerns raised during this meeting include:

- degradation of the tool site near the bridge at Forster from tourist interference and nearby construction works (in particular, trucks have been parking and driving over the site)
- tourists leaving considerable amounts of rubbish on the islands
- concern over any possible impacts on water quality in the estuary of the proposed Minimbah tip
- concern over the sustainability of the aquifer on Aboriginal Land near the Wallamba River if it is mined
- concern that the grey clay that has appeared at the Little Street bath in Forster in late Dec 2003 is causing skin rashes on children who regularly swim in the area, and that the weed growing inside the bath may be a safety risk to children swimming
- concern that the Aboriginal Land at the end of Point Road, Tuncurry, handed over to GLC as a reserve may succumb to development pressure in the future
- the desire for access from the Wallamba River waterway to the nursery run by the Forster Local Aboriginal Lands Council through the construction of a jetty
- conflict between swimmers and jet skis in the island/entrance area of Wallis Lake
- lack of compliance with 4 knot zones in Breckenridge Channel increasing risk of injury to swimmers
- cruise boats creating large wash and causing conflict with swimmers in Breckenridge Channel
- lack of a formalised area in Breckenridge Channel in which boats can tie to
- need for a regional supplement to the Indigenous Fishing Strategy, and
- the opportunity for staff at the Forster Local Aboriginal Lands Council to secure employment implementing the on-ground works for the WLEMP and WLCMP.