



Lake algae harvesting begins

– IAN ESPLIN

At the end of November the Council restarted the algae harvesting program that was initially unsuccessfully trialled the previous year. At that time the machine used was found to be unsuited to the lake conditions and risked causing a high level of turbidity in the water that would have been hazardous to the fish populations and other wildlife.

This time a new amphibious machine which has more similarity to an aquatic bulldozer than a dredge was used successfully to “harvest” a substantial quantity of algae from the lake. This was then stockpiled and allowed to dry out on the cleared area adjacent to the bridge before being taken to the Council’s green waste facility at Springfield for reprocessing.

Particular care was taken to avoid excessive disturbance of the lake bed including placing a boom across the water under the bridge to limit any potential sediment plumes spreading beyond the South arm into the central section.

The algae which has grown in the lake is a response to the high levels of nutrients that have accumulated over the years from a combination of the previous agricultural use of the land as well as from urban run-off particularly from the septic tank systems that were a feature of housing developments around the lake until the introduction of a reticulated sewerage system in the 1980’s. The growth that is currently occurring will continue for many years despite any measures to reduce it due to the high levels and the time lag effect.

Dr. Peter Freewater from Gosford Council has said that the harvesting program is a possible way of reducing the overall nutrient level in the lake. This is because the algae contains high levels of nutrients within its structure and by removing the plant material those nutrients are not recycled back into the ecosystem. He stressed however that this was really dealing with the symptoms of the problem and didn’t represent a total cure and that the harvesting program would have to continue for 10 – 20 years for there to be a major benefit. *Continued on p. 6*





president's message

IAN ESPLIN

The holiday season is here once again and we can expect the usual influx of people to the area who along with the locals will be crowding the beaches, parks, shops and restaurants. We are lucky to live in such a beautiful place and it is not surprising that people want to come here to relax and enjoy the natural environment.

In this issue we feature two articles on the lake rehabilitation and another on Liz Parkinson who whilst not strictly speaking being a local (she lives in North Avoca) has had a passionate interest in the natural environment of this area where she has lived all her life. She has combined this interest with her other talents as an artist, writer and local historian.

In her writings she has been critical of many of the ways that the land has been used (and abused) in this area that was once pristine coastal bushland. That is still retains its attraction is more due to this inherent quality than anything man has done.

Generally I think we will look back at this year as the time that environmental issues became mainstream mainly due to the impact of the new studies on climate change or more accurately global warming. Suddenly it is no longer possible to see the environment as separate from ourselves now that it is generally accepted that man's actions are changing the planet in such a fundamental way. It is also now clear that ignoring the issue will more cost money than doing something about it which is probably the most potent fact.

I recently saw Al Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth" and was struck by one statistic which is that in each single year we burn fossil fuels that the Earth has taken one million years to create. With a current world population of 6 billion set to increase to 9 billion over the next few decades such a rate of exploitation of fossil fuels is obviously not sustainable.

Such problems tend to dwarf our day to day concerns however the interesting point is that the solution to many of these problems may actually be at the local level. Another interesting but often unreported fact is that of the energy value of the raw fossil fuel dug out of the ground only around 15% actually reaches your home after it has gone through the extensive production and distribution system. The other 85% is wasted one way or another – however it still produces greenhouse gases in the process.

Gosford Council did a greenhouse gas emission assessment some time ago and discovered that the largest uses of energy are the pumps that reticulate water and sewerage throughout the area. This is something that is almost never thought about when considering energy issues.

So the message is if you can reduce your need for reticulated energy and water systems and "harvest" as much as you can from your own home environment you will contribute in a very significant way to this major problem of our time. It's said that once you really become aware of these issues – you never look at things in the same way. The old saying "think globally – act locally" is taking on added significance.

I think it would be a great achievement if Avoca Beach started to take on more of this consciousness and perhaps it is already happening with the public school receiving its grant for the installation of water tanks for use on the school grounds. It's an important lesson that the next generation are learning – the only hope is that enough can happen in the time available to avert really serious problems in the future.

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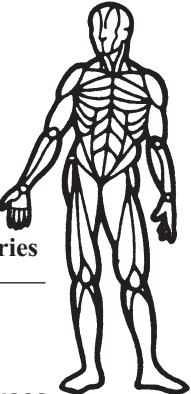
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CEN Lagoon Workshop report

MICHELLE FOATE

Things have been busy with the Gosford Lagoon Project over the last couple of months and I have been able to meet with a lot of residents who are concerned about Avoca Lagoon!

It was great to see so many people attend the residents workshop held on 25th of October at the Avoca Beach Bowling and Recreation Club. There was lots of discussion from local residents' concerns about Avoca Lagoon, and hopefully CEN was able to provide some further information for people. The main issues raised included:

Council's opening of Avoca Lagoon

- Many residents were not aware of the Council's Policy for Opening the Lagoon entrance.
- Why is the Lagoon opened at all?

The Gosford City Council Coastal Lagoons Plan of Management

- When will the new PoM be completed? How will the community be involved in this process?
- Will it consider a schedule for opening times?
- Concern that the current Plan of Management has not been completely implemented.
- Availability of scientific and other literature about Avoca Lagoon held by GCC.
- Need to enforce erosion and sediment control legislation around the Lagoons.

Wildlife habitat/vegetation

- Concern about the Green and Golden Bell Frog habitat and the impact of weeds and water quality in these areas.
- Community would like advice and educational material on Lagoon friendly gardening and chemicals, etc.
- The mowing of vegetation down to the edge of the Lagoon on Council managed and private lands should be stopped. Also concerned that these actions stop the natural regeneration of native vegetation around the Lagoon and increase erosion of the foreshore.

If you would like the entire Minutes, please contact me on the details below.

The Gosford Lagoons Project has also distributed over 3000 Community Surveys to residents in the Avoca Lagoon Catchment, including residents at Avoca Beach, North Avoca and Picketts Valley. We received a good response with over 250 surveys returned and hope to have the Results of the survey on the CEN website and distributed to those interested by early next year. A huge thank you must go out to all the volunteers who helped distribute the surveys, as well as the three local businesses which provided drop-off points for the survey collection – Avoca Pharmacy, Avoca Beach Newsagency, and North Avoca General Store.

Unfortunately, I am unable to get out in the field and start work on data collection for the Rehabilitation Plan in Avoca catchment this year but I will be contacting people in the New Year. Hopefully I'll be able to get a guided tour of the issues in YOUR backyard!

If you would like to know more about the Gosford Lagoons Project, or become involved as a volunteer, please do not hesitate to contact me!

Have a great Christmas and New Year enjoying your Avoca Lagoon!

Cheers
Michelle

Michelle Foate
Gosford Lagoons Project Officer
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This project is assisted by funding through the New South Wales Environmental Trust

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Liz Parkinson -

Artist, Environmentalist, Historian

NICOLE ESPLIN

Liz Parkinson's life has revolved around the Central Coast since she was a small child, spending summers with her parents and grandparents, through to the present day. Her life has encompassed art, education, environmentalism, local history research, craft, travel and media work. She now lives and works from her North Avoca home.

She is internationally recognized for her artistic achievements in the field called "outsider art" and is currently represented in many public and private collections including the Collection de l'Art Brut, in Lausanne, Switzerland. She has just returned from Paris, where she is in a group show at a gallery in Montmatre, but despite this, she is not very well known here.

Liz has developed a passionate interest in the environment of the local area and played an active part in campaigns to

preserve important areas. She and her husband went against the prevailing trend of land speculation and subdivision for profit, and rezoned their own land from a residential to a conservation zoning. This 4-1/2 acre parcel has a creek, with many rainforest species, which they have tried to prevent from being destroyed by development. Unfortunately this has not prevented the activities of some tree poisoners and rubbish dumpers!

Perhaps her most noteworthy achievement is the writing and publication of her book "Terrigal - A History of the Area" which despite the title, includes extensive coverage of the history and development of North Avoca and Avoca Beach. The book is very detailed and thoroughly researched and took a period of approximately 13 years to complete.

It is probably the most thorough and complete record of the early days of the area that is available. The book is however in no way a dry scholastic document especially since it is amply illustrated with rare historic photographs as well as her own intricate pen and ink artwork which gives an easy, informal charm to the book.

Interestingly, she notes that early Avoca wasn't regarded as very desirable

place due to its mediocre agricultural potential, and poor suitability for cattle. The only practical occupation of any significance was timber cutting, and early photos show that the whole area surrounding the beachfront was extensively logged, leaving bare hillsides. Tourism however took off at an early stage, and has remained as a fundamental activity in the area.

Liz feels that she is well-qualified to write about Avoca Beach and North Avoca, as a relative of hers had once owned both suburbs for much of the early part of the 1900's. This was Henry Ferdinand Halloran, who bought the Avoca Estate, of 640 square acres, in 1908 for two thousand pounds.

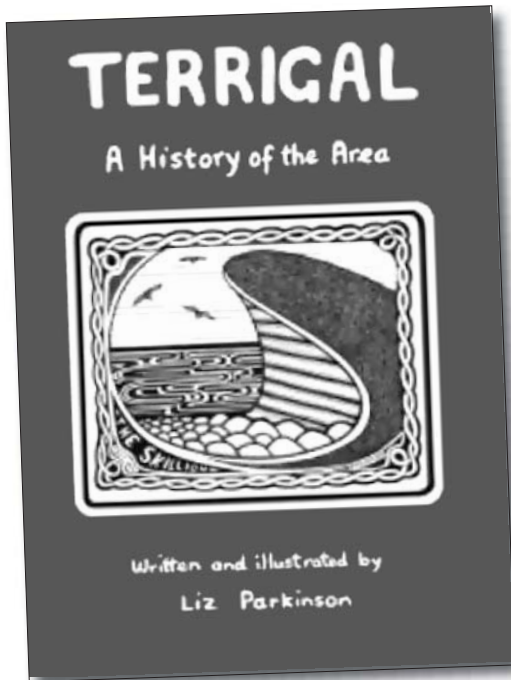
She is planning to do a revised edition of the book soon, with updated material, and it is available directly from her directly by writing to her at:

The Lazy Lizard

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www.lazylizard.com.au which features her art, publications, and interesting links.



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Avoca lagoon - New Plan of Management

IAN ESPLIN *continued from page 1*

Alternative methods of removal were being considered in conjunction with on-going efforts to limit new nutrients entering the system. The main element of this is a new plan of management for the lake which will include a more scientific and strategic opening regime.

The current plan is based primarily on flooding control and aims to avoid inundation of low lying private properties as well as the sewerage pumping station at North Avoca. The policy has been simply to open the lake (unless illegally opened) when the water reached a certain level indicated by the mark on the fishing platform next to the bridge. Openings have been timed to coincide with a rising ocean tide so that the eroding effect of the lake water rushing out is minimised.

This policy does not take into consideration seasonal rainfall patterns and unfortunately openings have occurred in the past in late spring followed by a dry summer where the lake did not fill to any extent. This raises temperatures in the lake and exacerbates the algae growth problem which is unsightly and also inconvenient for the people who wish to use the lake over the summer holiday period.

The new plan is considering a more systematic winter opening regime so that the lake has the potential to fill for the summer. Another possibility being investigated is opening on a falling tide to take advantage of the increased erosion power to act as a form of natural dredging to flush out some of the nutrient rich sediment.

There was an occurrence of this some time ago where an illegal opening that occurred on a falling tide resulted in substantial scouring of the lake bed and the release of unusually strong odours from the exposed bed. At the time this was seen as a negative however it is now been considered that if used appropriately such an event could be a form of long-term therapy for the overall long term lake health.

If the community understood that such an opening was to occur at the optimum time (probably during winter) to minimise adverse environmental and social impacts then there would probably be more acceptance of the disruption and odour that that would inevitably accompany it.

One issue that has often been raised as a concern is the effect of openings on the wildlife. Dr. Freewater says that studies by the University of NSW and Sydney have shown no evidence of adverse

effects on fish or invertebrates. He points out that the lake would open naturally if left untouched when it reached the height of the beach sand berm and so wildlife have adapted to this pattern.

He notes however that the changes to the environment since the interference of man in this natural cycle relate more to the vegetation such as the melaleucas and swamp mahogany trees around the lake which would have originally gone through a periodic cycle of flooding that has now been prevented from happening. This indirectly affects the wildlife through loss of habitat since it can be expected that the animals such as the owls, bats and sugar gliders will decline in numbers as this vegetation gradually is lost.

Dr. Freewater said that the environmental role of the Council was not always appreciated by the community due to the apparent conflict of interest that existed from it being the body that was responsible for approving developments that have contributed to the problem over the years. This is an on-going issue and he stressed the importance of involvement by groups such as CEN (see article – this issue) and the community generally in public education and raising awareness and political sensitivity of environmental issues.



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ABCA meets at 7.30pm on the first Monday of every second month.

The Association's newsletter The Avoca Beach Review is published every three months and hand delivered to all households.

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