

SHORING UP GRANTVILLE

The
Bass
Valley
News



Tim Ealey ponders for a moment at the Grantville foreshore project.

In many areas of the coast, vegetation that grows both underwater and on the coastal fringe is an effective barrier to taming the energy of the sea and the erosion it can cause.

Dense beds of sea grass can shield the sea floor from sediment movement, and in tropical areas extensive mangrove forests shelter the coast.

One mangrove species, *Avicennia marina*, even manages to survive the cold conditions in Victoria. It grows naturally in Western Port, especially along the northern and eastern coast in extensive muddy sediment. Much of this originated after the draining of the old Koo Wee Rup swamp and the erosion of peaty shores near Lang Lang.

As sea waves move through mangroves at high tides and flood the salt marshes each day, their energy dissipates. But in areas naturally protected by mangroves, their loss can result in increased shoreline erosion.

A dramatic retreat of the shoreline at Grantville on the eastern coast of Western Port is a direct result of mangrove removal in the past. The urgency to provide protection in this area was evident after a single storm in April scoured away remaining salt marsh and accelerated erosion along the shore.

The Sea Grass Partnership led by Dr Tim Ealey has been successful in gaining a Federal 'Caring for our Country' grant to implement an erosion protection trial that will assist in the recovery of mangroves and restore a natural ongoing erosion barrier.

A 60-metre geo-textile bag barrier will break the energy of waves near the shore. The geo-textile bags are filled with sand from local quarries, as there is no adequate natural supply of suitable material from the nearby sea bed. The barrier will protect the shore and allow time for hundreds of mangrove seedlings that are being established nearby to mature and provide a permanent living barrier to erosion caused by destructive storms. The project is now well under way and large sand filled bags are being moved into place by a large 20 tonne back-hoe. The operator, whose machine must contend with the soft mud, has found that the work has provided a real challenge as he attempts to place the geo textile bag barrier in the right position without venturing too far out and possibly getting stuck.

**Denis Cox, Coast Action/Coastcare Facilitator for Port Phillip East
Department of Sustainability and Environment**

The Grantville shore is in a mess. All the mangroves were cut down long ago and burnt for ash, which was mixed with mutton fat to make soap. This led to terrible erosion. The seagrass has disappeared. The foreshore vegetation is infested with weeds such as mirror bush, blackberries, etc. It has virtually been neglected until the Western Port Seagrass Partnership became involved. The WPSGP arranged a grant which enabled the Bass Valley Primary school to plant several hundred mangroves which were thriving until an ignorant local vandal pulled them out. Had they remained they would have produced a sandy bottom for that beach area.

The WPSGP now has a Commonwealth Care for Country grant of \$41,000 to build an experimental groyne of four tonne sand bags south of the Grantville boat ramp and plant 6,000 mangroves along the shoreline. This activity is enthusiastically supported by the Shire, DSE and most citizens. Hopefully in time it will control the dreadful erosion of our shore and ultimately increase our fish population.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment arranged a meeting on June 26th with the objective to discuss a foreshore committee which might help with the project and other conservation works. Mick Dortman from the



Tim Ealey, looking more like a character from 'Cocoon' amongst an abundance of extraterrestrial pods form outer space.

Gippsland region and Denis Cox gave presentations about Western Port and the terrible and extensive erosion which had recently occurred all around Western Port. It was clear that the Government simply has not the resources to build protective walls or groynes. Growing mangroves is far cheaper and ultimately more effective as they will adapt to rising sea levels.

Mangroves will have an effect within five years. Mangroves will not be grown near the beach at Deep Creek Street or where property boundaries about the shore if owners specifically request this and mark their boundaries. However this might be their only chance to arrange protection against erosion.

Any interested conservationist should email:

mick.dortman@dse.vic.gov.au or
ealey@bigpond.com

and ask for application forms. Applicants will be interviewed and some selected for a Grantville Foreshore Committee. The committee members do not need to live in Grantville.

Incidentally, readers can access www.seagrass.com.au for extensive information on Western Port and to have a free DVD delivered.

Dr Tim Ealey.



Tim and Sasha inspect one of the excavator's deep tracks which has delayed work on the project.

State Government
Victoria Department of
Sustainability
and Environment

Expressions of Interest

Appointment to the Grantville Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management Inc.

To ensure the best possible management for the Crown land that will be known as the Grantville Foreshore Reserve, the Minister for Environment & Climate Change is seeking persons willing to nominate for a three-year appointment to the Committee.

Expressions are sought from people with specialist skills and/or experience in the following areas:

- Environmental Management / Biodiversity Conservation/ Coastal Processes
- Business Management / Financial Planning
- Knowledge of community interests and needs
- Knowledge of local natural environment
- Facilities / Project Management

Applications will be assessed by a panel appointed by the Department who will recommend appointment to the Minister.

Application forms and further information on the role and responsibilities of the Committee of Management are available from Leanne Khan at the Department of Sustainability and Environment in Leongatha Phone (03) 5662 9925.

Expressions of Interest should be marked EOI – Grantville Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management Inc. and lodged at The Department of Sustainability Leongatha Office at PO Box 703, Leongatha, 3953.

Expressions of Interest close 5:00 pm Friday 21 August 2009.

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