

Students Assist in Erosion Control

The mangroves between Pioneer Bay and Grantville were all cut down and burnt many years ago. The ash was mixed with mutton fat to make soap. Analysis of the growth rings in the remaining stumps indicates that these trees were over 60 years old. Since then, massive erosion has occurred.

A substantial rock wall was built to stop this erosion but it was smashed by waves which the mangroves had previously resisted. In contrast, the coast adjacent to the Pioneer Bay township, where mangroves are prolific, is actually extending - not eroding. The cost of another wall to protect this 3km of coastline would be prohibitive, especially currently. It could suffer the same fate as the previous wall. Anyway, it would be useless with rising sea levels, whereas mangroves would adapt.

Financially, there is really no other viable way. Those people who pull up the plants are doing the community a great disservice. In NSW the penalty is \$110,000. Mangroves in Queensland contribute \$8,380 per hectare to commercial fisheries.

The Bass Valley Primary School had all their plants pulled out by a vandal last year but now has a hot-house full of mangroves ready to plant soon in another place. Tertiary students from RMIT and NMIT have come all the way from Melbourne to transplant seedlings from Pioneer Bay.

Newhaven College students planted nearly one hundred seedlings (raised in milk cartons) which they brought from home. Companies, Big M and Visy, donate thousands of milk cartons to the mangrove program.

Students in eight schools as far away as Narre Warren and Pakenham, are geared up to germinate seedlings which are currently ripening and will be nurtured for the next year. The owners of the French View caravan park are already germinating mangrove seeds as is Peter Coffey, a member of the Corinella Probus Club. Jenny Jackson from Phillip Island has been collecting many thousands of seeds.

A permit is NOT required to pick mangrove seeds and I will assist anyone who wishes to grow them to protect their property or simply to assist the project. It is now an essential major erosion control program. There will be two **Coast Action/Coast Care Summer By the Sea** events collecting seeds and growing them at Pioneer Bay on the 5th and 18th of January from 9:30am to 1:00pm.

The Western Port Seagrass Partnership has just been awarded a \$41,131 'Australian Caring for Country' grant for erosion

protection at Grantville. It is already enjoying a \$90,000 EPA 'Diverted Penalties' grant for its erosion control work using mangroves and a \$5,000 annual donation from Parkle Developments. **Dr Tim Ealey.**

(Dr Tim Ealey, who recently was awarded the OAM for his environmental work, represents the Western Port Seagrass Partnership. He organises the efforts of students and volunteers to grow mangroves and plant a protective barrier along the Grantville coastline. Editor.)



Wall at Grantville smashed by waves. Note erosion behind it.



The stump of a 60 year old mangrove cut down to make soap.



Students from Newhaven College planting mangroves. Note erosion in background



Larissa, a teacher from Newhaven College helps a student plant a mangrove seedling. Note the erosion in the background.