

2. Coastal Values

Key values protected in GORCC areas are summarised below. Further details and proposed management actions are discussed in section 5 with supporting information in volume 2 and volume 3.

3.1 Natural values

The area between Torquay and Lorne comprises important habitat for many flora and fauna species, and includes coastal areas characterised by sandy beaches, dune systems, shore platforms, pools, offshore reefs, and estuaries; and inland areas including lowland forests.

A total of 14 Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) has been identified within the study area, with all but three being classified as rare, vulnerable, depleted or endangered.

The study area spans the Otway Plain Bioregion in the north-eastern section, and the Otway Ranges Bioregion in the south-western section.

Otway Plain Bioregion

The geology of the Otway Plain Bioregion section of the study area is comprised of nutrient-poor Tertiary sands and sediments as well as calcareous quaternary dune systems, e.g. Point Roadknight. These low nutrient soils combined with a relatively low annual rainfall (800 mm per year) are the predominant factors leading to the species rich, heathy vegetation within this section of the study area.

Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic, Coastal Headland Scrub and Heathy Woodland EVCs occur along the exposed cliffs and dunes that front the ocean in this bioregion.

Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic EVC occurs on the Quaternary dune systems. Perennial tussock grasses such as Marram Grass, Coast Tussock-grass with a scattered overstorey of medium shrubs dominate this community.

Coastal Headland Scrub tends to display a denser structure with medium shrubs being dominant. Medium shrubs include Coast Daisy-bush, Coast Tea-tree, Coast Wattle, Coast Beard-heath.

Heathy Woodland is structurally similar to Coastal Headland Scrub, though scattered overstorey trees are present, including Red Ironbark and Manna Gum.

Coast Tea-tree is considered to be an exotic invader in many of these communities within the study area. Smaller areas of Sand Heathland, Coastal Alkaline Scrub and Coastal Tussock Grassland are also present within the littoral zone in the bioregion. Many of these communities display exceptional species richness as well as high diversity between sites.

There are several sites within this bioregion containing Coastal Moonah Woodland. This is listed as a threatened community under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

There are also several vegetation communities within this bioregion of particular note. The Bellarine Yellow-gum dominated Grassy Woodland of Taylor Park in Torquay is a very rare vegetation type with its endangered regionally endemic Yellow-gum. Also the Sand Heathland between Jan Juc and Torquay is at the eastern limit of this vegetation type, otherwise occurring fairly extensively to the west in the Anglesea – Aireys Inlet area.

While a number of EVCs are contiguous between bioregions (particularly the littoral communities Coastal Dune Scrub/Coastal Dune Grassland Mosaic and Coastal Headland Scrub) there is a distinct change in vegetation south-west of Eastern View.



Largely intact coastal dunes at Whites Beach

Otway Ranges Bioregion

In contrast to the heathy vegetation found in the Otway Plains Bioregion are the grassy woodlands and grassy forests of the Otway Ranges Bioregion. These communities are a reflection of the increased rainfall and higher-nutrient status Cretaceous sandstone/siltstone derived soils that occur in the Otway Ranges. This transition between bioregions is further enforced with a distinct increase in the stature of vegetation between bioregions (e.g. between Aireys Inlet and Lorne). These woodland and forest communities of the Otway Ranges are also greatly influenced by the increasing topographical variation found in this region, with topographical features (foothills, valleys, ridges and distinct aspects) supporting vegetation of different floristic composition and structure.

Several eucalypt species dominate vegetation in the south-west of the study area. Manna Gum and Messmate are dominant at Queens Park, Southern Blue-gum is dominant in several locations around Lorne (including the Erskine River), and the vulnerable Otway Grey-gum occurs along sections of the Lorne Foreshore.

Fauna

The area also supports populations of many threatened fauna species, with over 60 fauna species of National and State significance recorded within the general area (e.g. Nationally significant Common Bent-wing Bat, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Long-nosed Potoroo, and State significant Hooded Plover, Rufous Bristlebird and Chesnut-rumped Heathwren).

Aquatic and marine

There are a number of aquatic EVCs identified in the study area, as well as terrestrial EVCs associated with Quaternary alluvium along streams. Spring Creek in Torquay supports Saline Aquatic Meadow and Seagrass Meadow - instream saline herbfields dominated by Tasman Grass-wrack and Sea Tassel - two vulnerable communities that had not been identified until this study. Another semi-aquatic EVC identified at Spring Creek during the study is Coastal Saltmarsh.

Although not formally surveyed during this study, the marine values within the study area and general environs are exceptional with the siting of several marine reserves between Torquay and Lorne, reflecting the value of this stretch of coast for marine organisms (Point Addis Marine National Park, Eagle Rock and Point Danger Marine Sanctuaries). These offshore and intertidal areas provide important habitat for a wide range of organisms including fish, sponges and invertebrates.

More information on natural values is provided in section 5.1.

3.2 Indigenous cultural values

The coastal zone is a place of traditional importance to Indigenous communities as a source of resources, and as an important part of the stories of the creation of the landscape. The areas managed by GORCC remain important to Indigenous people, represented today by the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative and Framlingham Aboriginal Trust.

As a consequence of traditional use of the coast, a relatively high concentration of Aboriginal archaeological sites occurs in the GORCC managed landscapes. The coast is rich in sites ranging from numerous shell middens to fish traps, artefact scatters and other sites. Middens are still visible at numerous sites along the coast, particularly at Point Impossible.

The convict William Buckley was assisted by and lived with the Wathaurong people following his escape from the Collins Settlement in Sorrento in 1802 until 1835. While the story of William Buckley's survival is well known, the story of the Wathaurong's involvement remains largely untold.

More information on indigenous cultural values is provided in section 5.2.



Midden exposed by erosion, Anglesea

3.3 Non-indigenous cultural values

The coast from Torquay to Lorne and Cumberland River has had strong associations with holidaymaking and beach culture for over 50 years. Significant historic (non-indigenous) heritage places managed by GORCC are largely associated with this theme, but also with periods of significant development along the coast (e.g. construction of the Great Ocean Road) as well as pioneering industries of the area (e.g. timber getting), or locally significant events or people.

'Natural' areas along the coast are also culturally important where they have been protected or conserved by the local community, through the works or advocacy of volunteer groups such as ANGAIR. The area's natural values also form a large part of its scenic qualities, which are strongly linked to, if not the primary factor underpinning, the tourism and beach culture themes.

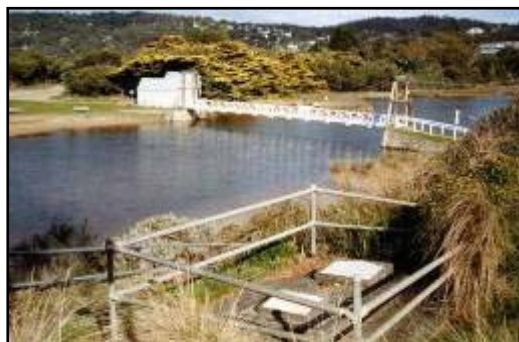
Holiday and recreation locations which have long-term associations with local people and visitors include caravan parks at Torquay, Anglesea, Queens Park in Lorne, and Cumberland River – some of which retain early structures – and recreation locations such as surfing locations, coastal reserves, and town foreshores.

There are fewer remains of historic industry in the area managed by GORCC. Some examples include fishermen's winches on Fishermen's Beach, Torquay, the Lorne Fisheries Building and Pier, and the former sawmill tramway route in Queens Park, Lorne.

Introduced vegetation (primarily exotics but also including native plantings), can have heritage significance where it is highly valued by communities for aesthetic reasons or where associated with significant development periods of the coast, and early civic improvement schemes.

Presently, three heritage places within or adjacent to GORCC-managed areas are listed on the Surf Coast Planning Scheme for local significance, all of which are in Lorne. These are the Swing Bridge (HO67), Splitter's Children's Graves (HO68), and Mountjoy Parade (HO77). Other items of local or state significance include the Lorne Pier and shipwrecks (some of which may fall into the GORCC's management area).

Heritage structures within GORCC's management area are found in Lorne and date from the 1920s and '30s. There are also a number of memorials along the Torquay foreshore and other sites of interest.



Lorne

Immediately adjacent to the study area, (and not directly managed by GORCC), the Great Ocean Road itself is of state and potentially national significance while the Great Ocean Road Memorial Arch at Eastern View is likely to be of at least local or regional significance.

More information on non-indigenous cultural values is provided in section 5.2.

3.4 Landscape and geomorphology values

The coastal areas managed by GORCC exhibit a landscape character that is valued by communities for a range of reasons:

- the setting to the journey along the Great Ocean Road;
- containing landforms, features, views or locations of exceptional aesthetic qualities (e.g. rock formations, cliffs, vegetation);
- for 'wild' and natural landscape characteristics;
- the setting to local recreation locations and views from townships

Landscapes and features range from natural dunes and heathlands to high cliffs, rockstacks, rugged headlands, expansive sandy beaches and estuaries. Areas away from settlements, e.g. from Point Impossible to Whites Beach have a relatively remote, natural feel.

The Great Ocean Road provides striking coastal views and walking tracks and other access points provide numerous opportunities to enjoy a wide range of coastal landscapes. Panoramic viewing points include Rocky Point and Point Danger at Torquay, Bird Rock, Point Roadknight overlook, Aireys Inlet Lighthouse area, and Queens Park at Lorne.

Of particular visual importance throughout the coastal character type is the land-sea contrast, its openness and its consequent vulnerability to negative visual impacts, e.g. coastal areas managed by GORCC have been rated as of State significance in the recent Great Ocean Road Region Landscape Assessment Study (2003), with Lorne (to Marengo) being rated as of national



Striking landscape at Bird Rock

significance.

Significant geomorphological and geological features along the coast include cliff formations at Torquay, Jan Juc, Anglesea and Point Roadknight. Coastal dunes occur discontinuously. At some locations they form a thin barrier at the back of the beach, e.g. Eastern View, while near Point Impossible they are more complex and extensive, and include calcarenite behind the sensitive foredunes of Aeolian sand and shell grit (Robinson 2003).

More information on landscape values is provided in section 5.3.

3.5 Recreation, social and economic values

The coast is the key driver of tourism in Surf Coast Shire, and of recent residential development, most notably at Torquay. Foreshore areas also provide the major informal open space used by residents in most coastal settlements, with GORCC managing most of the heavily used open space in the Shire.

Between Torquay and Lorne there are several significant developments located on coastal crown land which are managed by GORCC. Most notable are caravan parks in Torquay, Anglesea, Lorne and Cumberland River. Several Surf Life Saving Clubs and community facilities (e.g. club facilities, boat ramps, car parks, walking tracks, public toilets and playgrounds) are also located on the coastal reserves. In Lorne, there is also a swimming pool, two restaurants and a fishing cooperative.

The overall economic contribution of foreshore areas to the region is substantial. More than 5 million people visit the Great Ocean Road and Otway region each year.

Social values are also significant, including opportunities for social contact, informal coastal lifestyles and a sense of place.

More information on recreation values is provided in section 5.3.

3.6 Community values

Shire findings

Surveys and consultation indicate that the Surf Coast community places a high value on sound management of the coast. A summary of information gathered on environmental management for the Draft Surf Coast Environmental Strategy (2006) found that most frequently raised issues were (in order) biodiversity, waterways, landscape amenity, land management, weeds and pests and coast management.

Extensive consultation undertaken for the 2003-2004 Surf Coast Community Plan found that:

- The natural environment was clearly the most valued factor – particularly the beach/foreshore, walking/bike tracks, parks and gardens and bush areas.
- Priorities for the future include limiting/improving development near the coast, protecting the environment, and providing or improving footpaths, sport and recreation facilities, walking and bicycle tracks, beach facilities, parks and reserves and revegetation (source Surf Coast Open Space Strategy, 2004, p 12).

Taken collectively, these findings indicate strong community support for protection of coastal values.

Community workshop findings

Four two-hour workshops were held in late May to provide an opportunity for local communities to contribute to this plan. A total of 62 people – largely local residents – participated in the workshops which were held at Lorne, Aireys Inlet, Anglesea and Torquay. At each workshop, an overview of the project was provided and values and issues outlined. Aspects of the project were then discussed in small groups.

The participants may not necessarily be representative of the whole community, but did provide a wide range of comments for consideration in the planning process. Key findings are summarised below. See appendix 3 for full details.



Community Workshop in Lorne

Values and favourite places

These included a range of beaches, coastal views, cliff areas, coastal walking tracks, beach walks, flora and fauna, heathland and streams. Popular sites included Lorne beach and Queens Park, Aireys Inlet coastal walks and beaches, Anglesea beaches, views and walks, and Torquay and Jan Juc-Bells views, walks and beaches. Nearly all favourable comments related to natural and semi-natural values and places.

Plan to achieve

Participants wanted the plan to have clear priorities and be achievable, and to protect coastal values. Also important were finding a balance between people's needs and environmental protection, limiting development, providing directions for weed management, dealing with erosion, providing sustainable management and ensuring good working relationships between coastal managers.

Suggested actions

Actions related to environmental and heritage issues included effective weed control (key issue), use of indigenous species, protecting dunes, pest animal control, coordinated management programs and use of fire. Replacement of old cypresses was supported with differing views about suitable species.

Actions related to recreation and development included improved management of facilities and sites, increased walking and cycling opportunities, rationalised tracks, rationalised signs, reduced visual impacts of development, restrictions on building on foreshores and formalising access through dunes. Other suggestions included planting for shade and screening, improved vegetation management in caravan parks, improved stormwater management, more disposal bins, education and enforcement related to dogs, dealing with pollution of the Erskine River and protection and interpretation of heritage and Aboriginal sites.

Management actions included increased coastal management skills, close cooperation between GORCC and the Shire and increased contributions by the Shire for coastal management.

Community involvement/education

Suggestions included: support/coordinate volunteer group work, increase schools involvement, continue with newsletter and website, provide press articles, run information programs in caravan parks, run annual activities, work with Shire and agencies, develop and publicise demonstration projects, continue to provide/upgrade interpretive signs and information shelters, and provide information for new residents (with Shire).

