

Media Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Little green dune carers

Torquay College students are working with the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) to protect fragile sand dunes at White's Beach as part of a month long program to help stabilise and revegetate dunes across the region.

The 2011 Sand Dune Rehabilitation program is organised and coordinated by the Fisheries Victoria's Marine Discovery Centre and will see more than 837 students from 15 schools provide a helping hand to dunes along the Surf Coast and the Bellarine Peninsula.

Since its beginning in 1986, the program has seen thousands of students and many community, government and industry groups working hard to rehabilitate large areas of degraded coastline.

"Not only is it a great day out of the classroom, but students are taking positive steps to help rehabilitate a small area while learning about the sand dune habitat.

"At the end of a day's hard work all participants can all measure their efforts because they can see the difference they have made," said Fisheries Victoria's Marine Discovery Centre Education Officer Anne McLaughlin.

The grade 3/4 students are working with GORCC and Marine Education Officers to lay down brush matting and sow indigenous plants.

GORCC Coastal Project Manager Mike Bodsworth said the work by the students would be assist greatly to repair degraded dunes at Whites Beach site.

"The work of the students reduces the impact of wind erosion and trampling through stabilisation and revegetation," he said.

Mr Bodsworth said that the community could assist the students' efforts by staying off the dunes.

"Our vulnerable sand dunes are increasingly being damaged by people traffic, and fenced and unfenced sand dunes along the Great Ocean Road Coast are prohibited areas under Surf Coast Shire local laws," he said.

David Pace, an Environmental Educator from the Torquay College, said the school had been involved in the program for more than 8 years.

"This is a great opportunity to immerse the kids in a local coastal environment and work to improve it and it's wonderful to see the progression of the sites and the students.

Caring for the coast and community

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“The program links perfectly with the students’ current unit of work which is based around our role in the community and has a strong environmental focus,” he said.

A Cultural Education Officer from the Wathaurong co- operative will also speak to the participants about past indigenous use of the area.

The project is supported by Coastcare Victoria Community Grants. These grants are a joint program delivered by the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country and the Department of Sustainability and Environment’s Coast Action/Coastcare program.

Coast Action / Coastcare facilitator Joanne Ludbrook said sand dunes were one of the most sensitive habitats in the region.

“The coastal land managers in partnership with state government agencies and are constantly working to provide dedicated access paths for pedestrians through the dunes and students who have participated in this program help to promote good behaviour in sensitive ecosystems. “

Other sites targeted by the program in 2011 can be found in Queenscliff, Point Lonsdale, Ocean Grove, and Barwon Heads, Torquay, Breamlea.

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