

IMPACTS OF MURRAY-DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY BASIN
PLAN ON LAKES & COORONG

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There are many areas in the basin that need attention, but none more than the Lakes and Coorong.

For thousands of years this has been the drought refuge of the Murray Darling basin, now every part of it is under threat.

At this moment the natural fresh water Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, the Coorong and the Murray Mouth are experiencing a wonderful Godsend of environmental water.

It is not only rejuvenating fish, birds, aquatic plants but also the whole food chain, however the species that has benefited most is the people.

It proves to me that we must have a healthy environment to have a healthy community and I wonder how you put a value on that.

I wish to emphasise that Lakes Alexandrina and Albert have always been fresh water and have included a document "The truth about the lakes" in a folder.

Since the Mouth of the Murray closed in April of 1981 30 years ago, with very few exceptions, every year below lock 1 is a drought.

We hear about rain events upstream but they usually come and go without any down stream effect.

We certainly benefit from the large floods, but the very important much more frequent medium flows that flush salt and keep the estuary alive now never reach the lakes and Coorong.

In particular the early arrival of Darling water that assist environment flows from the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges now rarely reach the Lakes.

Long before the recent horrific drought Australia's wilderness estuary was chronically ill, and our community could see it dying before their eyes.

In the Lakes species after species of fish, birds, invertebrates, and macro invertebrates are now extinct to the area.

Cod, silver perch, catfish, blackfish are some of the large bodied fish that are never seen, whilst there are many small bodied species that live part of their life in fresh water and part in salt water are under serious threat if not total extinction.

Tubeworms that live in the Coorong but because of high salinity are moving into the fresh water lakes are growing on everything including turtles causing great pain and death.

Little things like leeches, shellfish, aquatic plants, all major links of the food chain. ALL GONE!

These lakes should be the refrigerator supplying food and fresh water to the Coorong.

Food to feed the whole ecosystem and fresh water to make the estuary by diluting it from 35 parts salt per 1000 to 15-20/1000 and that is the trigger that should make it one of the most productive areas in the world.

More productive than coral reefs or rain forests.

The Coorong extends southeast from the Mouth 127km, but because of over allocation two thirds of the Coorong is dead, now five times saltier than the sea.

No fish to feed the migratory birds or the local birds, no aquatic plants. Just a few years ago this was the main breeding area for everything including flounder, black bream, mullet and a myriad of small-bodied fish. NOW IT IS DEAD!

In the South East at Bald Hill 40 million dollars has been spent on drains to put southeast water back into the Coorong.

This year, which has been better than average rainfall, 20 gigs flowed through Salt Creek from Bald Creek into the Coorong.

This may seem a lot of water but evaporation from the southern lagoon is 80 gigs and this additional water is already 20,000EC units.

More work is planned to divert drain M to receive an overall total of 60 gigs however locals believe it is not practicable as Lake George needs much of this water to keep it flushed or it too will finish up just like the Coorong.

There is only one way to freshen the Coorong and that is with water from the Murray, preferably not in the middle of winter when the Coorong has full tides, but in the autumn or spring when high tides and southwest wind will push it well down the Coorong.

Darling water is important as it usually arrives in the autumn or early winter, which coincides with the spawning of many species particularly the threatened congollis.

The females need to pass from the fresh water to the salt water to meet up with the males.

The Mouth up until the last few weeks has been kept open by dredges, otherwise it would close within months, however with out Murray Darling water to make the estuary the one third of the Coorong that is still alive becomes marine and many different animals impact on the native species i.e. seals, barnacles, black lipped mussels, stingrays, to name a few.

There is no doubt that if the Mouth closes all the Coorong will die.

Flushing the river is the answer, salinity is our major problem, and we need to export the mountain of salt that comes down the river to the sea.

We do not talk in the 100 EC units of salinity we talk of thousands, up to 26,000 EC units in the Goolwa channel at Clayton 2010.

We need to flush toxic blue green algae and to keep acid sulphates covered.

Remember water travelling to the lakes and out the mouth has already performed many environmental tasks on its way down.

Scientists have told you what is needed to make it sustainable.

If politicians put their own figure on it then what a waste of time and money this has been and we will revert to the 1980-1995 when the system was over allocated.

We need a plan with at least 3,000-4,000 gigs otherwise this once in a lifetime opportunity will be lost.

Remember 3,000 gigs will see South Australia's catchment with a poor health rating and we will go on losing industries and communities because the water will be unusable and dangerous for our health, as it has been the last 4 years.

4,000 gig/year would improve health rating to moderate.

We need to put a real value on a healthy environment.

Henry Jones

The truth about the Lakes & Coorong.

For over 7, 000 years (probably much longer) the Lakes Alexandrina and Albert have been fresh for 97% of the time.

Tides used to push in only as far as Point Sturt (approximately 10km north of Goolwa and then run back out to sea. The rest of the lakes were fresh. We know this from the diatoms in the sediments.

There is no evidence of salt water entering the river until early 1900s when white settlers were already taking out water and we were experiencing the Federation Drought.

Sure before the barrages many marine fish used to swim into the fresh water.

That is what they do to rid themselves of parasites, to have a feeding frenzy on bony bream and to induce breeding. Similar events happen all over the world.

CSIRO core tests prove the lakes to be fresh water lakes and scientists went further testing the Coorong, indicating it to be the only estuary in the Murray Darling basin.

Aboriginal fresh water mussel mittens around the lakes, 170 years of commercial fishing, the life histories of native fish (congolli), grapes grown on the northern side of Point Sturt in 1840's, lime stone houses built on the edge of the lakes in the 1800's with fruit trees and hand water pumps, wells dug by hand near the lakes, sealers from Kangaroo Island collecting fresh water from the lakes as far back as 1820.

All confirm the existence- of fresh water lakes.

Quotes from local paper (Strathalbyn Argus) and State Parliament from 1800's until the barrages were built in 1930's; all talk of fresh water lakes.

This is just a small part of the evidence we have that the lakes have always been fresh.

What does it take to convince these people? What are the motives of these people?

Common sense will tell these people that you can't have an estuary without freshwater mixing with seawater. If you take the barrages out, without strong river flows and build a weir at Wellington to protect the supply of water to Adelaide, you will destroy what is left of the Ramsar listed Lakes and Coorong.

The lakes will be saltier than the sea very quickly. No healthy estuary will form because more seawater will get in on the tides than will come out and there will be no fresh water to dilute it. It will be dead like the South Lagoon is now. We will have 140,000ha of dead wetlands. Useless and a danger to our health.

Common sense should also tell the people that many animals need fresh water to survive, including humans.

Just park yourself near the barrages and watch the birds flying from the Coorong to the lakes to drink and camp.

Locals know that there is no way the Murray Mouth with only a tidal influence could keep the Lakes and Coorong less salty than the sea. How can it be without fresh water?

The example has already been set in the Coorong where two thirds is dead and hyper saline.

Artificially induced seawater lakes would see the western side of Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert quickly go hyper saline.

You would create a salt factory.

Building a weir at Wellington would stop the very valuable wind tides that distribute food and genetics, cause major flooding in low lying areas above Wellington in minor foods, but worst of all it would cause a new saline trouble spot between Wellington and Blanchetown, especially in low flow years.

The two million tonnes of salt sent down the river from the cleared and farmed basin each year would finish up in the deep holes in the reach that supplies Adelaide and SA towns with water. Until now this area has not had a saline problem.

The weir would just shift the problem further up stream. A river needs to flow to be healthy. We need to flush it out not block it up.

The lakes are the refrigerator for the Coorong and provide it with the majority of its water and food (bony bream).

The Coorong and the Lakes are of equal importance to each other.

Neither will survive if we don't get the environmental flows right. We have an International obligation to protect these wetlands and a moral obligation to hand them onto our grandkids in better condition than they are now.

In regards to evaporation water evaporates wherever it is stored, in fact the further north you go the faster it evaporates. Also it is not lost, it comes back to us as rain.

Henry Jones
Clayton Vic

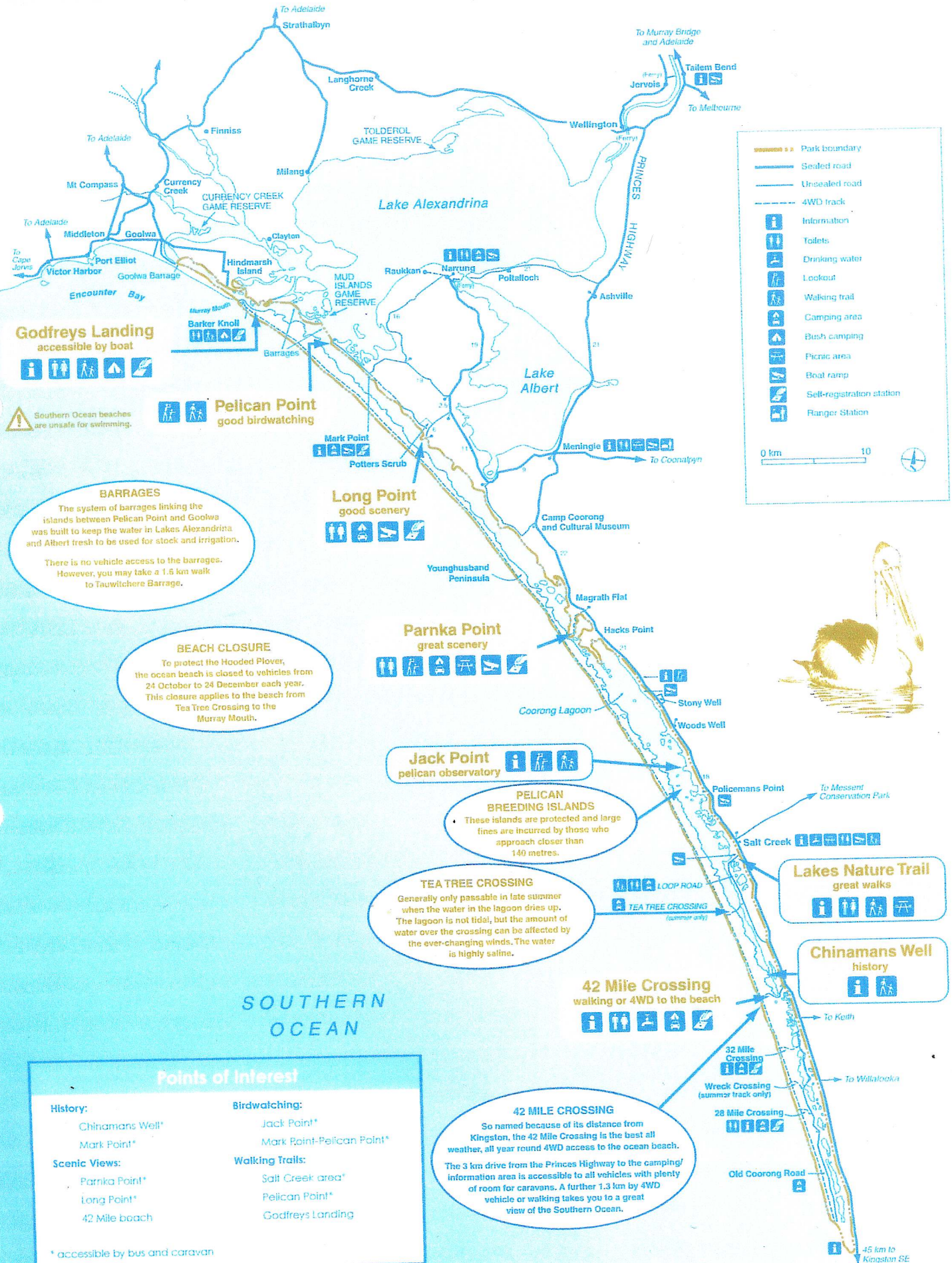
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Lakes and Coorong

A Wetland of International Importance



Godfreys Landing
accessible by boat

Southern Ocean beaches are unsafe for swimming.

Pelican Point
good birdwatching

Long Point
good scenery

Parnka Point
great scenery

Jack Point
pelican observatory

PELICAN BREEDING ISLANDS
These islands are protected and large fines are incurred by those who approach closer than 140 metres.

TEA TREE CROSSING
Generally only passable in late summer when the water in the lagoon dries up. The lagoon is not tidal, but the amount of water over the crossing can be affected by the ever-changing winds. The water is highly saline.

Lakes Nature Trail
great walks

Chinamans Well
history

42 Mile Crossing
walking or 4WD to the beach

42 MILE CROSSING
So named because of its distance from Kingston, the 42 Mile Crossing is the best all weather, all year round 4WD access to the ocean beach. The 3 km drive from the Princes Highway to the camping/information area is accessible to all vehicles with plenty of room for caravans. A further 1.3 km by 4WD vehicle or walking takes you to a great view of the Southern Ocean.

BARRAGES
The system of barrages linking the islands between Pelican Point and Goolwa was built to keep the water in Lakes Alexandrina and Albert fresh to be used for stock and irrigation. There is no vehicle access to the barrages. However, you may take a 1.5 km walk to Tauwichee Barrage.

BEACH CLOSURE
To protect the Hooded Plover, the ocean beach is closed to vehicles from 24 October to 24 December each year. This closure applies to the beach from Tea Tree Crossing to the Murray Mouth.

Points of Interest	
History:	Birdwatching:
Chinamans Well*	Jack Point*
Mark Point*	Mark Point-Pelican Point*
Scenic Views:	Walking Trails:
Parnka Point*	Salt Creek area*
Long Point*	Pelican Point*
42 Mile beach	Godfreys Landing

* accessible by bus and caravan