

Pollutant Load Reduction Targets

Pollutant load reduction targets for Lake Wellington, Port Phillip Bay, Westernport and Corner Inlet will drive management interventions and investment to reduce pollution from diffuse sources.



Background

Victoria's largest marine bays, Port Phillip Bay, Westernport and Corner Inlet, and the large estuarine lake, Lake Wellington, are the receiving environments for large amounts of nutrient and sediment pollution from surrounding catchments and coasts. Recent, comprehensive scientific reviews have identified current nutrient and sediment loads as a significant threat to their health and values. Excessive nutrients and sediments are associated with significant impacts to the marine and estuarine ecosystems of these waterbodies, including the large-scale die-off of aquatic plants (e.g., seagrasses) and increases in harmful algal blooms. This, in turn, impacts a wider range of beneficial uses, including water based recreation, aquaculture and fisheries.

To tackle the problems caused by excessive nutrient and sediment loads from catchment and coastal sources, the draft State Environment Protection Policy (Waters) (SEPP (Waters)) sets quantitative pollutant load reduction targets for key pollutants in Port Phillip Bay, Westernport, Corner Inlet and Lake Wellington. To support accountability and delivery of management interventions to reduce loads, the draft SEPP (Waters) sets out the planning and management frameworks that will drive and co-ordinate actions to achieve each of the load targets, and the agencies responsible for their implementation.

The Draft SEPP (Waters)

The load targets describe for each area a quantity, in annual tonnes per year, that pollutant loads should be reduced to and a target date from an established baseline that they should be achieved.

Schedule 4 of the draft SEPP (Waters) sets out specific protection agencies to develop and implement plans for the load reductions. This includes the periodic review and refinement of management actions identified in the plans, baseline loads and reduction targets to reflect advances in scientific understanding during the life of this Policy.

Processes to support load reduction targets

Successfully reducing nutrient and sediment loads entering marine bays and lakes requires a range of management actions to reduce inflows of diffuse pollution from both catchments and coastal sources. The types of actions needed to achieve load targets will be co-ordinated and delivered through existing management frameworks. Actions to achieve load targets for Port Phillip Bay, Corner Inlet, Lake Wellington and Westernport will be evaluated and publicly reported on (Table 1). Further description of these actions is in the draft SEPP (Waters) Implementation Plan.

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Measuring the success of load reduction targets

Evaluation of actions to reduce pollutant loads supports learning to inform continuous improvement of these actions towards achieving targets. Key evaluation questions support evaluation activities and the collection of monitoring data that will be evaluated every 3-5 years:

- How has the coordinating plan for Westernport facilitated implementation of sediment load reduction activities?
- To what extent have loads to been reduced and targets met for: Corner Inlet, Lake Wellington, Port Phillip Bay and Westernport?
- What were the key factors influencing the achievement (or non-attainment) of critical load targets?
- Are management interventions targeting the major sources of loads?
- How could the management interventions implemented to reduce loads be improved?
- Are load targets adequate to protect beneficial uses?

Table 1: Implementation action for Load Reduction Targets

Action to implement pollutant load reduction targets	Responsible Agency	Partnership organisations
Action 2.1 Develop a plan to co-ordinate and implement actions across the catchment, coast and bay to achieve the sediment load reduction target for Westernport	DELWP	Melbourne Water PPWP CMA EPA Victoria
Action 2.2 Implement the actions to achieve the load target for Port Phillip Bay that are described in the PPB EMP.	DELWP	Melbourne Water EPA Victoria
Action 2.3 Implement the actions to achieve the load target for Corner Inlet described in the Corner Inlet Water Quality Improvement Plan (2013)	West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA)	
Action 2.4 Jointly develop and implement the Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan to reduce nutrients and sediments loads entering Lake Wellington from irrigated land in the surrounding catchment.	WGCMA / Southern Rural Water	
Action 2.5 Develop and implement actions to achieve the phosphorous load reduction target from dryland agriculture and other sources for Lake Wellington through the Gippsland Lakes RAMSAR Strategic Plan	WGCMA	
Action 2.6 Review the share of total phosphorous discharge reductions from irrigation sources and other catchment source every five years and vary as part of these reviews to minimise overall implementation costs.	WGCMA / Southern Rural Water	

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