

Media release

24 November 2016

Shellfish reef restoration experts gather at Bribie Island

Today, Bribie Island plays host to the National Shellfish Reef Restoration Network where Traditional Custodians, scientists, and researchers from across Australia and New Zealand meet for their biannual conference.

Healthy Waterways and Catchments is supporting The Nature Conservancy and James Cook University to host the event at the Bribie Island Volunteer Marine Rescue, as part of its support and facilitation of the Pumicestone Shellfish Habitat Restoration Project.

Bivalve shellfish such as oysters and mussels are natural filters of our waterways and are a key component of the food chain, providing a source of food for a number of different fish species. These vital shellfish provide structured habitat that reduces shoreline erosion by dampening wave action and stabilising sediments.

Healthy Waterways and Catchments CEO, Ms Julie McLellan said, "We understand the economic value that restoring shellfish reefs can bring. They can increase fish stocks and can improve water quality through their filtering capacity, plus they have the potential to protect shorelines."

The Pumicestone Shellfish Habitat Restoration Project was initially proposed by Traditional Owners, community members and the Pumicestone Passage Fish Restocking Association who were all concerned about declining water quality and fish and shellfish stocks in the Pumicestone Passage. Other key contributors now include Moreton Bay Regional Council, Unitywater, the Queensland Government, the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme, Ozfish Unlimited, Sunfish and Digsfish Pty Ltd.

State member for Pumicestone, Rick Williams, is particularly passionate about the opportunity that this new science and practice presents.

"This is breaking new ground for our state agencies in Queensland, so we have to ensure all aspects are well considered," Mr Williams said.

Moreton Bay Regional Council Mayor Allan Sutherland said "We all have a responsibility to do what we can to protect and improve our waterways for future generations."

"Shellfish are vitally important to their marine ecosystems and I am very much in support of any efforts to restore the shellfish population in this area, which can only serve to compliment the important work we have already been doing to improve water quality in the Pumicestone Passage," Mayor Sutherland said.

Chris Gillies, from The Nature Conservancy, who will be opening the biannual networking meeting said "The Pumicestone Passage is one of seven locations in Australia where local efforts are being directed, and we're pleased to be here to support this quest. It's important we meet regularly to build our collective capacity in this evolving restoration work."

The National Shellfish Reef Restoration Network will wrap up on Friday 25th November, concluding three days of restoration and protection discussions for the Pumicestone Passage.

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