

2014 Regional Snapshot

Is the condition of our estuaries improving?

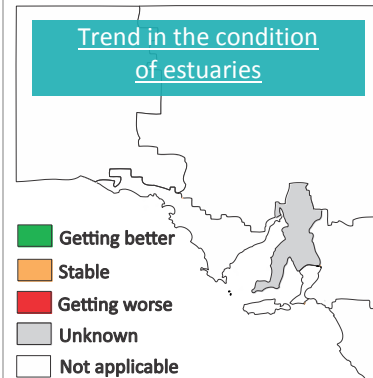
The marine environment provides valuable resources for regional economies, supporting tourism, commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, shipping and mining. Most South Australians live near the coast and many coastal and marine systems are under pressure from human impacts.

An estuary is a partly enclosed coastal body of water formed where freshwater water from on or under the land mixes with seawater. Estuaries range in size from a few to hundreds of hectares, and can form bays, lagoons, harbours, inlets and gulfs.

We value estuaries for their scenic beauty and as places for recreation, tourism, fisheries, aquaculture and transport. Saltmarsh, mangrove and seagrass habitats are common in estuaries, and help to maintain coastal water quality by filtering sediments, nutrients and pollutants. Estuaries also soften the impact of floods and storms and provide food and shelter for marine animals, including commercial fish in their juvenile stages.

The condition of estuaries depends on activities in their catchments. Estuaries in the Northern and Yorke NRM region are affected by declines in water quantity and quality. Stormwater, industrial and sewage discharges, seepage and agricultural runoff can increase the amount of nutrients, pollutants and sediments going into the water. Estuaries are also affected by removal of riverbank vegetation, over-grazing by stock, coastal developments, construction of tidal barriers, soil erosion, water diversion and fishing.

The health of estuaries relies on management of water quality within catchments, coastal developments, grazing and fishing.



State target

Improve condition of coastal and marine ecosystems

Trend

Unknown

Ongoing efforts will be needed to monitor and protect our estuaries

Of the 104 estuaries identified in South Australia, 16 are in the Northern and Yorke NRM region.

Changes in the condition of estuaries in all NRM regions since they were last assessed in 2001 are not known (map above).

Where we are at (2001)

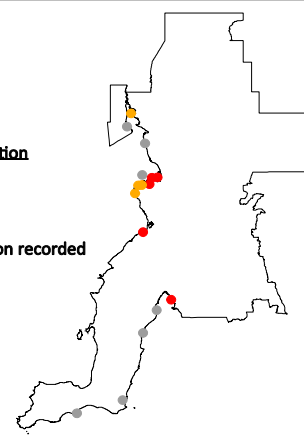
Poor

South Australia has some of the most extensively modified estuaries of all Australian states

Of the 16 estuaries in Northern and Yorke NRM region, 9 estuaries (approximately 65 per cent of the regions estuarine habitat by area) were assessed for the National Land and Water Resources Audit in 2001 (map on right). Based on these assessments, the condition of estuaries in the Northern and Yorke NRM region was rated as 'poor', with a score of 42 out of 100 (where 100 represents undisturbed condition).

Estuary condition

- Very good
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor
- No condition recorded



Reliability of information



Fair

Further information:

[Technical information for this report](#), [Ozcoasts information \(estuary search\)](#)