Subtidal reefs

Reef condition

South Australia's
Environmental trend and condition report card 2018

STATEWIDE

Trend Unknown

Condition Unknown

Reliability Good

Trend

Trends in the condition of subtidal reefs in most natural resources management (NRM) regions are unknown.

Subtidal reefs in the waters off the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR) NRM Region have been assessed using a benchmark of condition. Surveys between 2005 and 2013 in this region indicated some improvement in condition.

The condition of reefs in the Northern and Yorke (NY) NRM Region were assessed with the same benchmark in 2005 and 2006, but have not been assessed since and have not been allocated a trend.

The condition benchmark used in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges and Northern and Yorke NRM regions is being reviewed. Reefs have been surveyed in the Alinytjara Wilurara (AW), Eyre Peninsula (EP), Kangaroo Island (KI), South Australian Murray–Darling Basin (SAMDB) and South East (SE) NRM regions but will not be assessed for condition until a new set of statewide condition benchmarks have been agreed. Trends in these regions are therefore unknown (top figure).

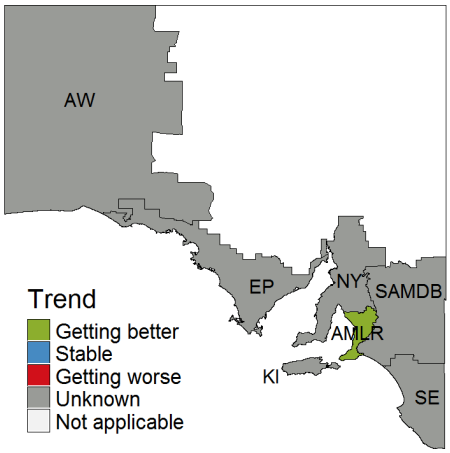
Condition

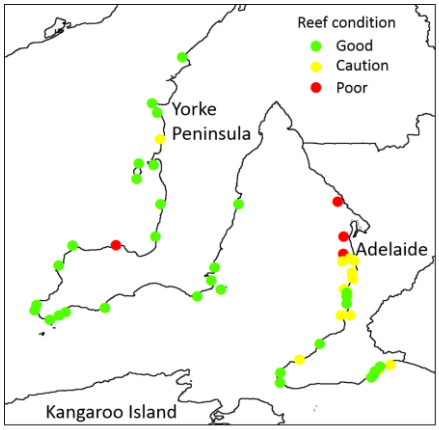
The condition of subtidal reefs in most NRM regions is unknown because there are no agreed condition benchmarks for statewide reporting.

In the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Region, subtidal reefs are generally in good condition; however, reefs near metropolitan Adelaide show a north–south condition gradient of poorer condition due to urban development and increased pollution levels (bottom figure).

Subtidal reefs in the Northern and Yorke NRM Region were in good condition when assessed in 2006 but have not been assessed since (bottom figure).

The condition of reefs in South Australia is largely unknown but is recorded as good in some areas





Why are subtidal reefs important?

Subtidal reefs provide important structural habitats that support diverse plant and algal communities and productive food webs. Reefs also provide shelter and protection from predators. Maintaining reef condition is important because reefs support regional economies through tourism, and commercial and recreational fishing.

What are the pressures?

Reefs are threatened by declining water quality due to nutrient inputs, pollutants, sediment loads and turbidity from stormwater, treated sewage, seepage, agricultural run-off, industrial discharges and aquaculture.

Physical disturbance (i.e. anchor damage), dredging, introduced marine pests, illegal harvesting and fishing are also threats.

What is being done?

Implementation of the Adelaide Water Quality Improvement Plan is improving water quality for reefs by reducing nutrient and sediment inputs.

Approximately 1700 square kilometres of reef is protected by the marine parks network.

Benchmarks for reef condition are being redefined to better meet statewide reporting requirements. Future report cards will assess reef condition for all regions when the new benchmarks are implemented.

For further information see: technical information