

National Estuaries Network: Crossing Boundaries in Estuary Management

What is the NEN

The National Estuaries Network (NEN) is a key forum for linking estuary managers across state and territory boundaries, and also for linking these managers with estuarine scientists.



Aim

The overarching aim of the NEN is to help improve the management and environmental conservation of estuaries throughout Australia.

Membership

The NEN comprises estuary managers from each Australian state and territory as well as invited estuary researchers. The group is made up of (but not restricted to) people who have direct influence over the management of estuaries in each state/territory. In particular, the group comprises those managers who are responsible for translating scientific knowledge into management decisions. The members tend not to be high-level policy makers or on-ground researchers but the key people in between.



Meetings

The NEN meets twice yearly, with meetings hosted on a rotational basis by each state/territory. The meetings are held over three days with the first day providing an opportunity for members to update each other regarding their own jurisdiction and to discuss emerging and pressing estuary issues. The format of the second and third days varies depending on the aims of the NEN members and the host state, but often involves a field trip and an open public forum, centring on a specific estuary-related theme with specialists invited to present. Geoscience Australia currently coordinates NEN meetings (see contact information).

Benefits

The NEN was established in 2000 to provide advice on the estuarine component of the National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA), and subsequently a number of Coastal CRC projects. The NEN is highly valued by its members, who find the information gained at meetings helpful in tackling their everyday challenges as an estuary manager. Due to this strong membership support, the NEN has outlived both the initial phase of the NLWRA, which finished in 2002, and the Coastal CRC, which concluded in 2006.

The NEN continues to share information and collaborate across state/territory boundaries.



Examples

Many issues relating to estuary management are common throughout Australia. The information sharing and collaboration that occurs between NEN members can reduce reinvention of the wheel, thus saving time and resources, and also helping to develop the best possible standard approach on particular issues. For example, NEN members from NSW, Queensland, and Victoria collaborated in the development of a decision support tool and associated estuary assessment software called VPSIRR (Vulnerability, Pressure, State, Impact, Risk and Response).

The NEN allows members to appreciate estuary management issues from a broader national perspective, beyond the political pressures of their own particular state/territory. For example, it became apparent to the NEN, that there was a lack of information available on Australia's near-pristine estuaries, and recommended that the Coastal CRC have a project to increase our knowledge of these important systems. This resulted in a published literature review of all available information on Australia's near pristine estuaries, and a large mapping campaign that mapped the geomorphic habitats of a significant proportion of these systems.

The NEN can also provide guidance and input into national-level initiatives to ensure their usefulness to those working at a more local level. The OzEstuaries (now OzCoasts: www.ozcoasts.org.au) website is an example.

The Future

The NEN is a valuable forum for facilitating cross-boundary communication and cooperation, and certainly has a role to play in improving the future management of estuaries across Australia.

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or visit the NEN website:

www.ozcoasts.org.au/nen.jsp