



Live-bearing sea star threat mitigation – call for volunteers

Dr Beth Strain of the University of Tasmania Institute (UTas) for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) recently conducted a study of the Live-bearing sea star population in Pipeclay Lagoon. The study concluded that the presence of feral oysters on the shore of Pipeclay Lagoon reduced the potential sea star population. There is also competition for resources from the invasive porcelain crab.

Dr Beth Strain of the University of Tasmania (UTas) Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) recently conducted a study of the Tasmanian endemic live-bearing sea star in Pipeclay Lagoon, finding that populations at Lumeah Point are significantly declining. Her honours student found that invasive species, namely feral Pacific oysters and New Zealand porcelain crabs, are likely contributing to the sea star's decline by competing for resources and changing the habitat.

IMAS has been given a grant and applied for permits to conduct removal programs for the feral oyster and porcelain crab infestations on the Pipeclay Lagoon rocky shorelines, mainly on the perimeter of Lumeah Point. Wildcare, through Friends of Lumeah Point, will be registering the project and its volunteers as a Wildcare activity for the purpose of governance and liability cover.

Elizabeth (Libby) Castle at UTas is coordinating the project. An information sheet is included with this newsletter. Libby would be pleased to provide further information and take expressions of interest from potential volunteers. Libby's contact details are: email (elizabeth.castle@utas.edu.au) or by phone (0466 044 743).

While previously we have physically removed feral oysters, this program proposes to smash them in situ. The program will involve further interventions, and we are discussing options to clean up the oyster shell detritus at later working bees.

Pipeclay Lagoon oyster farming status

You may have seen news of the problems being faced by the industry in Pipeclay Lagoon and certainly have noticed the lack of activity on the oyster leases.

In brief, the nutrient levels in the lagoon have crashed over the last few years, to the point where oysters cannot grow to commercial size. There are many opinions as to what is causing this, and I won't canvas them here. Marine Solutions have been commissioned to investigate the changes that have occurred by reviewing all the available information. Their initial findings and recommendations are due in March 2025.

When available I will share Marine Solutions' findings through these newsletters. The future of oyster farming in Pipeclay Lagoon will depend on whether the causes can be identified and ameliorated.

Sorell causeway Live-bearing sea star relocation

The Sorell causeway environs are host to a critical population of the live-bearing sea stars. The strategy to protect and retain this population will require Federal and State environment ministerial approvals. The plan is to relocate as many as possible of the sea stars during construction. Pipeclay Lagoon is mooted as one of the key locations for the temporary relocations. This will involve establishing extra rocky shoreline using dumped rock. For more information go to the project website <https://engage.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/tasman-highway-duplication-midway-point-causeway>.