



Lake Monitoring Results A Timely Reminder On World Environment Day

Autumn's 'big wet' has highlighted the problems associated with stormwater run-off in Lake Macquarie.

Lake Macquarie & Catchment Coordinator, Jeff Jansson, says recent monitoring results of a biological water quality indicator are a timely reminder of the nutrient and sedimentation issues facing the Lake

"We have known that stormwater run-off is the biggest issue for Lake water quality for a long time. And everyone knows we have had some exceptionally wet weather recently which has contributed to higher than expected results."

"In the fortnight to the test period in April 2000 69.9mm rain fell in the region, compared to 132.4mm for a similar period this year."

Jeff Jansson's comments came after monitoring results revealed higher than average levels of macroalgae at test sites in Lake Macquarie. The results also show that the biomass of macroalgae is generally higher in urbanised areas and low in undeveloped areas.

Macroalgae is naturally occurring in the Lake. It is considered a key indicator for water quality in the Lake as it is highly responsive to changing environmental conditions.

Monitoring of macroalgae in Lake Macquarie is carried out by Australian Museum Business Services on behalf of the Lake Macquarie & Catchment Coordinator. The testing procedures, which are carried out quarterly, involve measuring the weight of macroalgae present in a one metre square sample of soil taken from the Lake bed. The diversity of algae species present in the samples is also recorded.

Jeff Jansson says while recent rainfall figures have contributed to higher readings, the results show the serious potential risks associated with poor stormwater management.

"What the results do is remind us how important effective stormwater management is within the catchment. We need to strengthen the filtration of stormwater by natural systems. Increasing community awareness of the idea of a treatment chain concept is a major step in the process to clean-up our waterways."

The treatment chain argues that the excessive use of household detergents and garden fertilisers, hosing of driveways and the disposal of pet faeces and refuse has a profound effect on the Lake environment.

From road side drains and household driveways, materials flow into drainage lines to be collected in stormwater and run into wetland areas, before they eventually end up in the Lake. With less and less vegetated areas left to filter sediments and nutrients, more of these materials enter Lake Macquarie directly at greater speeds.

Jeff Jansson explains that the strengthening of the treatment chain is important to stormwater management.

"To strengthen the treatment chain needs a multi-faceted approach. Limiting the use of household detergents and fertilisers in the home, disposing of pet faeces and taking measures to prevent the loss of soils from land during rain periods are the first steps.

If we can do this effectively, we can then see the benefits of reintroducing natural vegetation into drainage lines, replacing the concrete structures that we have employed in the past. We can also assist the filtration of stormwater by installing stormwater quality improvement devices, like constructed wetlands and sediment traps."

Evidence of such devices can now be seen at Blackalls Park, where two new constructed wetlands have been built to assist with stormwater management in the area

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