

Paddlers pick up knowledge

Learning more about estuaries along the coast was the theme for a recent paddling trip on Lake Tyers organised by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

The 31 paddlers left the boat ramp at Lake Tyers Beach under the guidance of staff from Gippsland Kayak Tours and paddled to the Glass House.

After lunch, they paddled to the estuary entrance where Ken Judd (manager water programs) explained the reasons that estuaries close, how they open naturally and the factors that have to be considered when an artificial opening of the estuary entrance is being considered.

"There are many factors which have to be taken into account," Mr Judd said.

"These include the water level in the estuary, the predicted level of the tide, the forecast weather conditions and the width of the sand between the beach and the estuary. These factors determine if there is a suitable gradient across the sand so that the entrance, once opened, will scour sufficiently to stay open."

Mr Judd explained that preventing a fish death is another important consideration.

He said that this can occur if the oxygenated upper layer of water sheds to the sea during an opening forcing fish into the lower layers of water with lower levels of oxygen.

"This is why oxygen levels in the lake are monitored during a closure and any consideration of an artificial opening takes this information into account," Mr Judd said.

The closure of estuary entrances along the East Gippsland coast is a frequent occurrence. Most open naturally after heavy rainfall in the catchment and an artificial opening is a rare occurrence.



Paddlers leave from the estuary entrance at Lake Tyers for a day on the water as part of an East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority organised tour. (PS)



EGCMA water manager, Ken Judd, explains the Lake Tyers estuary and the opening and closing of the entrance. (PS)