

# Mallacoota Inlet Estuary Opening Fact Sheet



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## Background

Mallacoota Inlet, located in far eastern Victoria, extends from Gipsy Point, in the northwest, to the township of Mallacoota in the south. Mallacoota Inlet has a surface water area of approximately 25 km<sup>2</sup> and is primarily fed by the Genoa and Wallagaraugh Rivers, whose catchments total 1846 km<sup>2</sup> and extend into New South Wales. The Inlet has two lagoons, Top Lake and Bottom Lake, which are linked by a deep channel locally known as 'The Narrows'. A large barrier-beach and dune-ridge system semi-encloses Bottom Lake. The entrance to the ocean occasionally closes following prolonged drought periods.

The Inlet is a highly dynamic environment. It regularly experiences fluctuations in sediment transport and deposition resulting from varying hydrodynamic processes from the open coast and catchment flows. There is a large flood-tidal delta of deposited sand located directly behind the Inlet mouth. Through time, three vegetated Islands have developed within the inlet; Goat Island, Rabbit Island and Horse Island, which support a variety of bird species. In addition to marine sedimentation, the Inlet also experiences high sediment loads from upstream as a result of stream-side vegetation clearing, forestry and land management activities across the catchment.

An assessment of Mallacoota Inlet Estuary's opening and closure trends has shown the estuary is open 85% of the time, which equates to 310 days a year on average (See data below). Mallacoota Inlet's closures typically last for months, if not years, during low tributary inflows. Water level in the estuary remains relatively static during these long periods of closure.

As mentioned within the **East Gippsland Estuary Opening Fact Sheet**, the EGCMA prefers natural openings, as they most often result in better entrance scour and a longer-lasting open entrance. However sometimes artificial openings need to occur. In addition to considering environmental, social, economic and cultural factors, the indicator water level that should be reached at Mallacoota Inlet, before attempting an artificial opening, is 1.5m AHD.

Note that the EGCMA may decide to open the estuary at Mallacoota at a different estuary water level height after balancing the risks to the community and the environment.

## Estuary Opening and Closure Data

Estuary Data period	Time open during data period	Average days of the year open	Mean open duration	Number of closures across data period	Mean duration of closure
29/05/1987 ▼ 10/11/2023	85 Percent	310 Days	1122 Days	9 Closures	224 Days



## Map of historical artificial estuary openings in Mallacoota Inlet estuary.

This map shows the extent of the estuary and contains information on where artificial openings have taken place over time.

