

Developing a new collaborative Water Quality Monitoring Program

FACT SHEET – November 2024

Water quality refers to the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of water. It is a key indicator of waterway health and determines the suitability of water for a particular purpose, such as irrigation, human consumption or for the environment.

Monitoring water quality is of interest to all water managers in Tasmania, with many organisations already undertaking this type of work.

Key points

- Freshwater monitoring provides information that helps water managers understand the health of Tasmanian waterways to better focus actions and decision making.
- Water quality monitoring for diffuse pollution (effects from runoff in catchments) is currently poorly coordinated and is widely recognised as a gap in existing monitoring networks.
- NRE Tas is working with other water managers to establish a new collaborative monitoring program which aims to improve the efficiency in monitoring effort and resource use, improve data sharing and knowledge and public reporting.

Why do we need additional water quality monitoring?

Several organisations in Tasmania undertake water quality monitoring, which is typically done for a specific purpose and in limited locations. A key gap in existing water quality monitoring is related to diffuse pollutants (pollution from general runoff in catchments).

To enhance the existing monitoring undertaken by water managers, a new collaborative water quality monitoring program is being established by NRE Tas to provide a better understanding of diffuse pollutants. Monitoring will measure a range of parameters including water temperature, dissolved oxygen, suspended sediment, and nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus).

Partnership

The design of the new water quality monitoring network is being developed in partnership with the key water managers in Tasmania:

- NRE Tas
- EPA Tasmania
- Hydro Tasmania
- TasWater
- Tasmanian Irrigation
- Inland Fisheries Service

The new Water Quality Monitoring Program will incorporate existing monitoring sites and enhance this with new sites or parameters to detect diffuse pollutants from catchment runoff.

What are the benefits?

Benefits of this new monitoring program include:

- Enhanced ability to assess water quality in waterways across Tasmania.
- Improved collaboration between water managers and more efficient use of resources for water quality monitoring in Tasmania.
- More robust water quality information to inform strategies to manage the health of our waterways.
- Greater understanding and awareness of issues relating to water quality across key organisations, stakeholders and the public.

Indicative Timeline

2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishment of Water Managers and Data Custodians Working Group
2023-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of existing water quality monitoring, including identifying gaps and overlaps in sites and types of data collected• Development of new WQMP network design
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formalising the partnership and resourcing model
2026-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commencement of new collaborative WQMP

This project is being delivered under Tasmania's Rural Water Use Strategy.

More information

Learn more about this project – www.nre.tas.gov.au/water/water-legislation-policies-and-strategies/rural-water-use-strategy/activities-underway/new-statewide-water-quality-monitoring-program

Read more about the Rural Water Use Strategy – www.nre.tas.gov.au/rural-water



Photograph by Scott Hardie, NRE Tas.

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