

Delta Coal
Mannering & CVC Collieries

Lake Macquarie Benthos Survey
Results No. 20



By Dr Emma Laxton

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Table of Contents

1	Summary of survey findings	4
2	Introduction	8
3	Location of Sampling Stations	9
4	Selection and Evaluation of the Sampling Method	12
5	Sampling Procedure	14
6	Factors Affecting the Depth of water in Lake Macquarie	15
7	Water Quality of Lake Macquarie (April 1983 – March 1997)	17
8	Light attenuation in Lake Macquarie (1983 – 1997)	18
9	Results	19
10	Benthos of Study Area – February 2012 to September 2021	19
11	Molluscs found as dead shells	26
12	Benthic organisms of the Study Area – September 2021	33
13	Analysis of data	45
14	Relationship between benthic organisms and station	46
15	Sediment Analysis	48
16	Water Quality Profiles – September 2021	51
17	Conclusions	53
18	References and Acknowledgements	55

List of Tables

1	Co-ordinates of Benthos Sampling Stations prepared by the LDO team	11
2	Water Quality of the body of Lake Macquarie (1983-1997)	17
3	Organisms found at sampling Stations on 9 th - 11 th September 2021	34
4	Number of species found at each station from February 2012 to September 2021	42
5	Mean number of marine benthic organisms for Control, Reference and Impact Stations (September 2021)	44
6	Description of sediments from each Sampling Station collected in September 2021	49
7	Percent mud in sediment from each station - February 2012 to September 2021	50
8	Physical characteristics of the bottom water – 9 th to 11 th September 2021	52

List of Figures

1	Location of Benthos Sampling Stations (September 2021)	10
2	Extent of mining from July 2020 to June 2021	12

3	Water level changes in a coastal lagoon with an entrance open to coastal waters	16
4	Mean percentage changes in PAR with depth at station 1 – Wyee Point over 12 months	18
5	Actual percentage change in PAR at Station 1 – Wyee Point on the morning of 21-4-83	19
6	Relationship between marine benthic organisms and stations	47

List of Plates

1a	Annelid species found in benthos of Lake Macquarie (February 2012 – September 2021)	21
1b	Gastropod species found in benthos of Lake Macquarie (February 2012 – September 2021)	22
1c	Bivalve species found in benthos of Lake Macquarie (February 2012 – September 2021)	23
1d	Brittle stars are found amongst the mussel beds of Lake Macquarie, NSW	26
1e	Sand dollar sea urchin found in Lake Macquarie, NSW	26
1f	Crab species found in Lake Macquarie, NSW	
2a	Large shell removed from samples during sorting process – February 2012 survey	27
2b	Small shell removed from samples during sorting process – February 2012 survey	27
2c	Large shells removed from samples – September 2012 survey	28
2d	Small shells removed from samples – September 2012 survey	28
2e	Large shells removed from samples during sorting in March 2013	29
2f	Small shells removed from samples during sorting in March 2013	29
3a	Mollusc species found as dead shells in the benthos of Lake Macquarie, NSW	31
3b	Gastropod species found as dead shells in the benthos of Lake Macquarie, NSW	33

Summary of survey findings

In September 2021, 22 benthic stations were sampled. The following is a history of benthos sampling from 2014 to 2021:

- By March 2014, mining beneath Lake Macquarie had proceeded so that two Reference stations (R) had been re-designated Impact Stations (IM), namely:

R3 became IM5

R4 became IM6.

- By September 2014, Station R5 had become the impact station IM7.
- In March 2016 two more stations were added to the sampling schedule. They were:

C5 GR 367701 6334310

R7 GR 366232 6333856.

- In September 2016, difficult geology beneath Bardens Bay and along parts of Summerland Point led Lake Coal to begin mining beneath Chain Valley Bay. To accommodate this change in mining direction, three additional benthos sampling stations were added. They were C6, R8 and R9.

C6 GR 363988 6332492

R8 GR 364523 6332010

R9 GR 365258 6331210

- The total number of Stations sampled in September 2017 was 19.
- In March 2018, three new stations were added to the sampling programme. They were:

C7 GR 366276 6334947

R10 GR 365172 6334706

R11 GR 367072 6333639

- The mud basin off Summerland Point, in Chain Valley Bay and Bardens Bay, was found to be inhabited by 27 species of organisms greater than 1mm in size. This list was derived from the 20 samplings undertaken between February 2012 and September 2021. Polychaete worms and bivalve molluscs were the most frequently encountered animals.
- Bottom sediment in the study area was composed of fine black mud with varying proportions of black sand and shell fragments.

Water levels in Lake Macquarie can vary by as much as 1.3m over the course of a year due to combinations of the following phenomena:

- Diurnal tidal changes (around 0.05m)
- Changes in atmospheric pressure (up to 0.4m)
- Wave set up at the entrance to Lake Macquarie
- Inflow of water from the catchment during major rainfall events.

Light attenuation through the water column of Lake Macquarie, measured off Wyee Point, between 1983 and 1985, showed that only 14% of the photosynthetically active radiation (PAR) reached the lakebed at 2m depth (the growth limit of seagrasses and macroscopic algae in the Delta Coal study area). At 6m depth, between 2% and 4% of the surface PAR reached the lakebed, not enough light to support the growth of seagrasses or benthic algae.

The 20 samplings of the benthos undertaken at six monthly intervals between February 2012 and September 2021 revealed the following:

- The same suite of organisms dominated each of the 22 sample stations. These were polychaete worms and bivalves.
- Stations were distinguished by the relative abundance of the dominant species.
- Water depth was not in any way important in determining the species composition at a station.
- Physical variables such as salinity, conductivity and turbidity of the bottom water had little influence on the species composition of the benthos. Dissolved oxygen concentration, however, can have a major effect on abundance. Major extinction events have occurred in the mud basin of Lake Macquarie. The evidence for this lies in the presence of large numbers of intact but dead bivalve shells entombed in the mud. The cause of extinction events appears to be prolonged dissolved oxygen depletion of bottom water. Prolonged dissolved oxygen depletion of the bottom water was measured during the water quality study conducted by Laxton and Laxton (1983 to 1997). Low concentrations of dissolved oxygen in the bottom water were also recorded during the March 2020 sampling period. Stations with low abundance of organisms correlated with low concentrations in the bottom waters.
- Water depth was not in any way important in determining the species composition at a station.
- In the September 2021 survey species diversity or composition was consistent with previous years. A total of 2096 organisms greater than 1mm in size were found, comprising 13 species. This compares with the results from September 2018, September 2019 and September 2020 where

1576, 815 and 1367 organisms respectively were recorded representing approximately twelve species.

- As in previous years, polychaete worms and bivalve molluscs were the most frequently encountered animals in the September 2021 survey. Stations were distinguished by the relative abundance of the dominant species.

These results appear to support the notion that increasing the water depth by the predicted 0.8m subsidence has, to date, had little to no discernible effect on the composition and abundance of organisms making up the benthos of the mud basin.

Annual rainfall in the Cooranbong (Lake Macquarie AWS) region was 839.8 mm in 2017; 859.8 mm in 2018; 763.4 mm in 2019; and 1496.4 mm in 2020 (BOM Station Number 061412). A lack of rainfall in the Lake Macquarie catchment has the effect of raising the concentration of salinity in the water column of Lake Macquarie. In March 2019, for instance, salinity was over 39 parts per thousand and almost uniform from surface to bottom. The Lake Macquarie region received relatively heavy rainfall in August (111.2 mm) and September (64.8 mm) 2019; and January (79.6 mm), February (335.4 mm), March (173.0 mm), July (184.0 mm), October (150.8 mm) and December (220.6 mm) 2020. The catchment also received rainfall in January (104.8 mm) and February (155.8 mm) of this year (BOM Station Number 061412). This rainfall lowered the salinity of water in the lake to around 36 parts per thousand in 2019, 33 parts per thousand in March 2020, and 32 parts per thousand in August 2020. Rainfall for July, August and September 2021 was 29.2 mm, 64.8 mm and 19.2 mm respectively. During the September 2021 survey, mean salinity was 35.44 parts per thousand.

Lack of rainfall also influences water clarity. The water of the lake became very clear for long periods. This high water clarity led to some interesting effects on the benthos of the study area. First, the small seagrass, *Halophila sp.* became established as a dense bed in 6m of water at Station R10 (Brightwaters Bay) in September 2018. *Halophila sp.* was not recorded at Station R10 in March 2019 but in September 2019 a healthy plant of *Zostera capricorni* was found at this station. Second, red and brown algae were found on mussels at depths between 4.5 and 6 m of water in September 2018 at stations C4 and IM2, and on mussels at stations R3 and IM2 in March 2021.

Water temperature, salinity, conductivity, dissolved oxygen and pH were found to be uniform from surface to bottom. During the March 2021 sampling period, water temperature throughout the water column ranged from 24.18°C to 27.04°C; conductivity ranged from 51.68 ms/cm to 52.04 ms/cm; salinity ranged from 33.96 parts per thousand to 34.23 parts per thousand; turbidity ranged from 1.40 NTU to 23.40 NTU; pH ranged from 7.90 to 8.06; and dissolved oxygen concentrations ranged from 73.80% to 103.40% saturation.

In September 2019 some changes to the composition of the upper 100mm of the bottom sediments were detected. At Stations C1-C4 and C6-C7 no sand was present, just fine black silt. This indicated that these

sediments had been reworked since March 2019. Sediments at Stations R5, R6 R8 and R9 also appeared to have been reworked. In March 2020, changes were again detected. Sediments at stations C5 and C7 comprised mostly of course black sand. In August 2020, sediment was mostly fine grey/black silt. The sediment collected during the March 2021 and September 2021 surveys was largely fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments.

Note: AWS - Automatic Weather Station

Introduction

In 2012 Lake Coal P/L was seeking a variation to its mining agreement because of proposed changes to its mining methods. They were planning on increasing miniwall panel widths to 85m wide, 97m total extraction, which will result in some additional subsidence above that currently approved. As such, a modification and supporting EA was prepared. The predicted subsidence agreed to by the NSW Government was around 0.406m. The method now proposed will increase subsidence to around 0.468m.

NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure raised concerns that this increase in depth of water over the existing benthic community of the mud basin of Lake Macquarie may alter the species composition and relative abundances of organisms within that community.

To address these concerns, Lake Coal decided to conduct a benthic survey of the mud basin community to attempt to answer the following questions.

- What is the structure of the benthic community of the mud basin off Summerland Point and in Chain Valley Bay?
- What changes to the benthic community, if any, have taken place in areas of the lake mud basin that have been subjected to subsidence from previous mining activity?
- What changes to the benthic community, if any, may be expected in the mud basin community from the proposed variation to the mining method?

This study had a seasonal component and the benthos could change from year to year without the influence of any subsidence due to mining.

Ms Jemma Sargent of JSA Environmental prepared a formal document entitled:

Benthic Communities Management Plan. Chain Valley Colliery Domains 1 & 2 Continuation. Project (10_0161). 25 June 2012.

The extraction plan required under Condition 6 of Schedule 3 within Project approval (10_0161) requires that a Benthic Communities Management Plan (BCMP) be developed. This BCMP was prepared to provide for the management of the potential impacts and/or environmental consequences of the proposed second workings on benthic communities and includes:

- surveys of the lakebed to enable contours to be produced and changes in depth following subsidence to be accurately measured
- benthic species surveys within the area subject to second workings, as well as control sites outside the area subject to second workings (at similar depths) to establish baseline data on species

numbers and composition within the communities

- a program of ongoing seasonal monitoring of benthic species in both control and impact sites
- development of a model to predict the likely impact of increased depth and associated subsidence impacts and effects, including but not limited to light reduction and sediment disturbance, on benthic species number and benthic communities composition, incorporating the survey data collected.

Three types of station were sampled. They were:

- Control stations – C, areas of lakebed sufficiently remote from previous or proposed mining.
- Reference stations – R, areas of lakebed above subsidence areas of previous mining.
- Impact stations – IM, areas of lakebed where subsidence is expected from future mining.

Two depth zones within the mud basin were sampled, -4.5m AHD and -5.5 to -6.0m AHD. The locations of the sampling stations were specified by Mr Chris Ellis and Mr Wade Covey, using the results of a bathymetric survey of the lake and the known locations of past and proposed mining.

In November 2014, project consent 10_0161 was surrendered. It was replaced by consent SSD-5465 as modified. The remodeled subsidence values were 0.62m for the single seam extraction area (everywhere that is currently being mined) and up to 0.886m for areas where multiseam mining will occur (near Site R2).

This report (September 2021) presents the results of the just completed 20th sampling of the now 22 (previously 19, 16, 14 and 12) stations off Summerland Point, in Chain Valley Bay, Bardens Bay and Sugar Bay. These results will be compared with those obtained from the previous nineteen surveys (February 2012 to March 2021). The benthic survey was conducted between the 9th and 11th September 2021. Water quality variables were measured on 9th and 11th September 2021. The work in September 2021 was supervised by Mr Lachlan McWha of Delta Coal.

Location of Sampling Stations

Figure 1 shows the location of sampling stations, depth contours of the lake, and the locations of existing and proposed underground mine workings prepared by Mr Chris Armit and the LDO team in February 2017 and updated in October 2019. **Table 1** provides the exact location of each sampling station by latitude and longitude and by eastings and northings using WGS84 datum. **Figure 2** shows the extent of mining from July 2020 to June 2021.

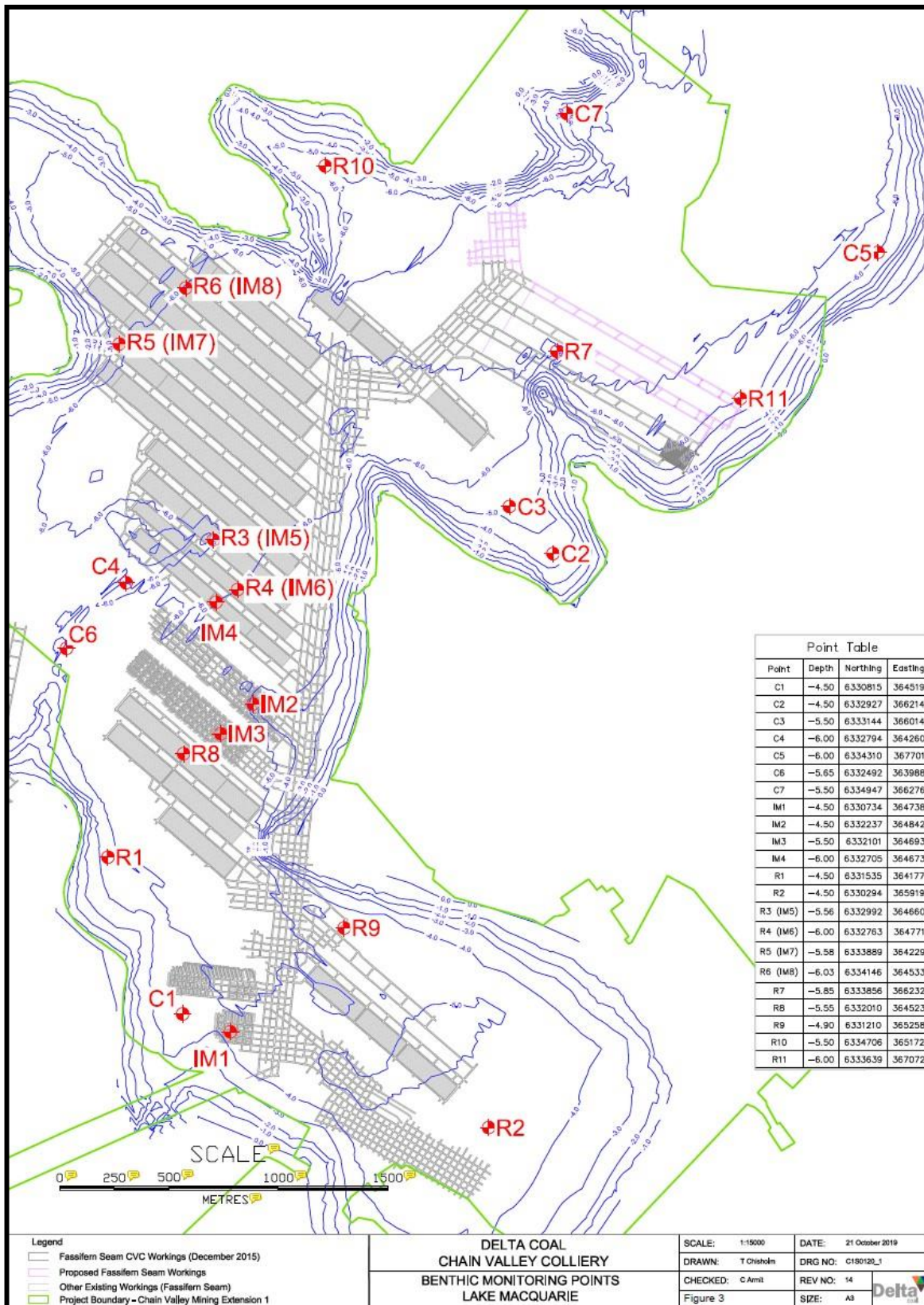


Figure 1. Location of Benthos Sampling Stations (September 2021).

Table 1. Co-ordinates of Benthos Sampling Stations prepared by the LDO team.

Station	Sample depth (m) AHD	Latitude	Longitude	MG-56 Easting	MG56 Northing
C1	-4.50	S33° 09' 10.69"	E151° 32' 50.11"	364519	6330815
C2	-4.50	S33° 08' 02.89"	E151° 33' 56.65"	366214	6332927
C3	-5.50	S33° 07' 55.78"	E151° 33' 49.05"	366014	6333144
C4	-6.00	S33° 08' 06.35"	E151° 32' 41.17"	364260	6332794
C5	-6.00			367701	6334310
C6	-5.50			363988	6332492
C7	-5.50			366276	6334947
IM1	-4.50	S33° 09' 13.44"	E151° 32' 58.51"	364738	6330734
IM2	-4.50	S33° 08' 24.67"	E151° 33' 03.34"	364842	6332237
IM3	-5.50	S33° 08' 29.02"	E151° 32' 57.52"	364693	6332101
IM4	-6.00	S33° 08' 09.42"	E151° 32' 57.04"	364873	6332705
R1	-4.50	S33° 08' 47.18"	E151° 32' 37.31"	364177	6331535
R2	-4.50	S33° 09' 28.23"	E151° 33' 43.87"	365919	6330294
R3 (IM5)	-5.50	S33° 08' 00.10"	E151° 32' 56.72"	364660	6332992
R4 (IM6)	-6.00	S33° 08' 07.58"	E151° 33' 00.88"	364771	6332763
R5(IM7)	-5.50	S33° 07' 30.78"	E151° 32' 40.55"	364229	6333889
R6 (IM8)	-6.00	S33° 07' 22.56"	E151° 32' 52.42"	364533	6334146
R7	-6.00			366232	6333856
R8	-5.50			364523	6332010
R9	-4.50			365258	6331210
R10	-5.50			365172	6334706
R11	-6.00			367072	6333639

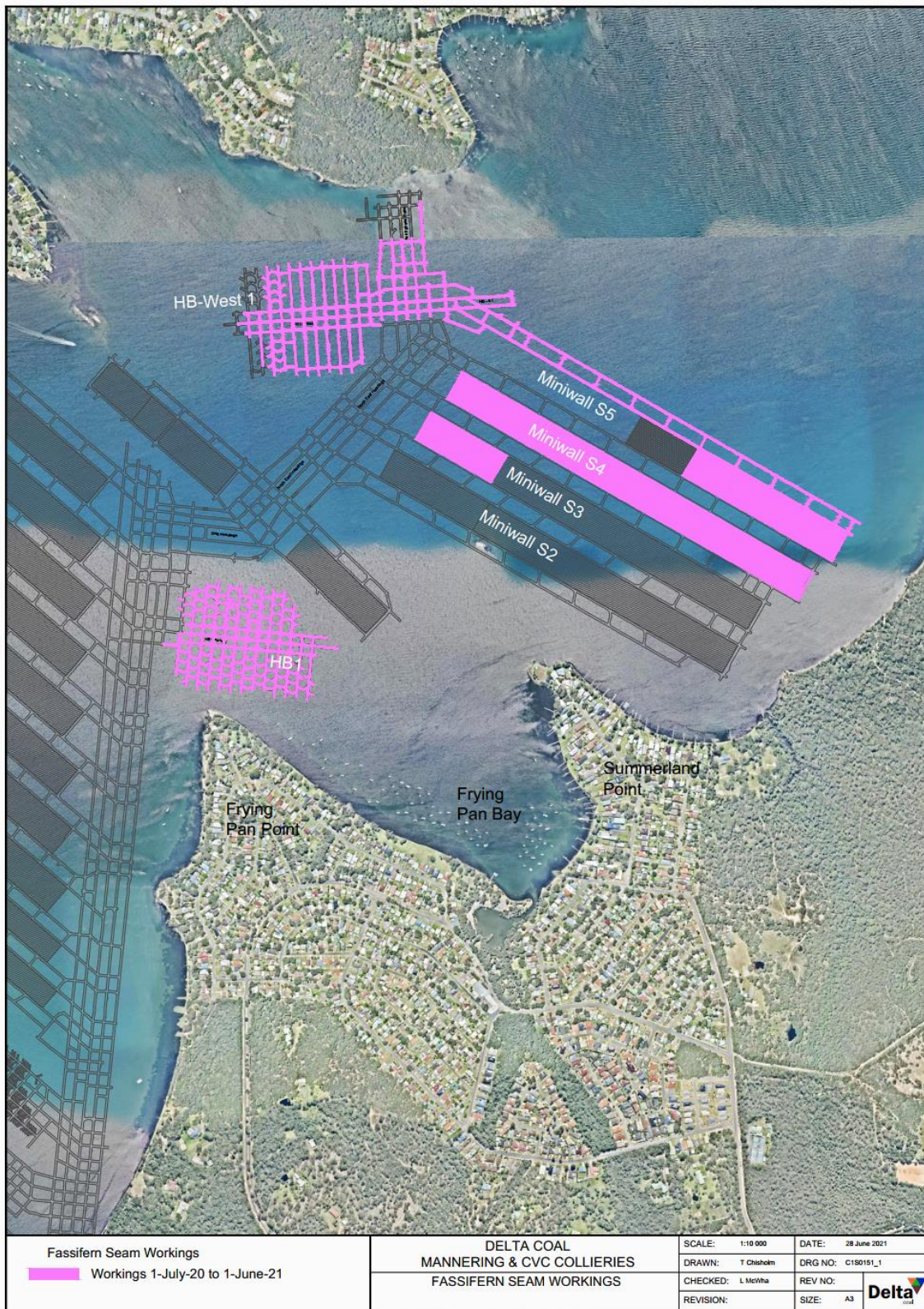


Figure 2. Extent of Fassifern Seam Workings from July 2020 – June 2021 (pink)

Selection and Evaluation of the Sampling Method

Methods for sampling benthos of sedimentary bottoms of oceans, coastal waters and saline and freshwater lakes must fulfill the following criteria:

- The area of bottom collected by the sampling device must be appropriate to the types and sizes of organisms inhabiting the substratum.
- The depth that the sampler penetrates the sediment must be sufficient to capture infauna or identifiable parts of more deeply buried species.
- Sufficient samples must be taken within the benthic environment to be certain that more than 95% of the component species of the ecosystem are collected.
- Sufficient samples must be taken to permit the population densities of component species to be calculated.

In 1971, Dr John Laxton was appointed by Dr Frank Talbot, Director of the Australian Museum, to lead a team of scientists to undertake the Shelf Benthic Survey. The purpose of the Shelf Benthic Survey was to provide baseline biological data on the benthos, fish and birds of the Continental Shelf adjacent to Sydney. Baseline oceanographic and biological data for coastal waters adjacent to Sydney were required to evaluate the effects of the proposed deep water ocean outfalls planned by the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board to replace the existing shoreline sewage outfalls. Both rocky bottoms and sedimentary bottoms were present in the study area and water depths ranged from the intertidal zone out to 200m.

At first, a Shipek grab was employed to collect samples of sediment. The Shipek grab used a spring loaded hemi-cylindrical bucket that rotated through 180° to collect a half cylinder of sediment nominally 200 x 200 mm in area and cut to a maximum depth of 100mm. On gravel bottoms, the Shipek grab worked consistently to collect 200 x 200 x 100mm samples. On sandy bottoms the grab, when triggered, penetrated the bottom to varying depths, collecting half cylinders of sediment that could range in depth from the full 100mm to as little as 25mm. This meant that the area of the seabed sampled varied greatly between samples taken at the same station and the depth of some samples was so shallow that many species of infauna were not collected. On muddy bottoms the heavy Shipek grab could plunge into the soft mud and emerge untriggered.

The Shipek grab was safe to use from a pitching and rolling vessel but as a scientific sampling device, it had serious deficiencies.

The Shelf Benthic Survey then obtained a Smith-MacIntyre (S-M) grab for evaluation. The Smith-MacIntyre grab used two spring operated clam-shells which swung inwards towards the midline to gather 200 x 200 x 100mm samples of sediment. This grab also had similar limitations to the Shipek grab when used to sample various sediment types. The worst feature of the S-M grab was that the two springs had to be tensioned by

a lever separately and then a keeper was placed in position to stop it triggering while on deck or while being lowered to the seabed. To position the keeper, the operator had to reach in between the two cocked spring loaded clam-shells. These clam-shell jaws were sharp and the action was violent enough to remove a hand. The Captain of the vessel banned its use on the project and undoubtedly saved someone's hand.

Following completion of the Shelf Benthic Survey, John Laxton joined an engineering firm that was commissioned to design wastewater outfalls for Gosford City, Wyong Shire and the Hunter Area. Baseline data on water quality and biology were again required and the seabed in the discharge and mixing zones was either rocky or sedimentary. As the maximum water depth in sedimentary areas was 30m, diver operated sample collection devices could be used to sample sedimentary bottoms. It was decided to build a diver operated benthic sampler that would overcome the difficulties and deficiencies of the available grab samplers. It should collect a 200 x 200 x 100mm section of sediment consistently and be easy to operate in conditions of zero underwater visibility.

To collect a 200 x 200 x 100mm sample of sediment consistently an aluminium box was designed that could be slid sideways into the sediment, whether gravel, sand or mud, and be filled completely before it was lifted clear of the bottom and the door closed and locked to retain the sediment. The top of the box included a panel of 1.0mm stainless steel mesh. Thus each box contained its own sieve to permit particles less than 1mm in size to be removed from the box leaving only large particles and organisms.

Tests of this box revealed that in all sediments (gravel, sand and mud) between 3 and 5 replicate samples were required to capture 95% of the species present. Once the maximum number of replicates required had been determined, five sieve boxes were manufactured along with a carry case to contain the boxes on the journey between the surface and the bottom and back. These devices permitted samples of consistent area and depth to be collected. Five replicates were always collected regardless of the sediment type or the environment being studied so that individual species/area curves were not required for each new area being investigated.

Five sieve boxes sample an area of 0.20 m². This sampling device has been used in all J.H. & E.S. Laxton - Environmental Consultants P/L benthos studies since 1980.

In an attempt to make the Summerland Point/Chain Valley Bay study results comparable with other studies, the BCMP required two cores of 100mm diameter and 200mm depth to be taken along with the 5 sieve box samples. These two cores covered an area of 0.015 m². There was no requirement in the BCMP to determine how many cores of these dimensions were needed to capture 95% of the benthic species inhabiting the lakebed. However, it is unlikely that sampling 0.015 m² of bottom sediment will provide a more realistic picture of the structure of the benthic community than sampling 0.20 m² of bottom sediment.

Sampling Procedure

Between September 2012 and September 2021, five replicate samples of basin mud were collected at each station using 200 x 200 x 100mm sieve boxes (1mm mesh). Two 100 x 200mm core samples were also collected at each station on each date sampled.

Twenty-two stations were sampled in September 2021. At each station the following procedure was carried out:

- A GPS unit was used to locate the sampling station. The boat was positioned upwind of the station and was then allowed to drift back to the exact location. When the wind strength was 0- 5km/h, the boat stayed on position. When the wind strength increased from 5 to 25km/h, the boat yawed on its anchor warp, causing the distance from the boat to the station to vary greatly and the sampling difficulty to increase. This was mitigated by working in calm conditions only.
- A line with five sieve boxes, two 100 x 200mm core samplers and a mesh bag containing a 250mL jar for whole sediment was cast overboard as the boat drifted into position.
- The diver descended to the lakebed to fill the 250mL jar, the two core samplers and five sieve boxes with sediment.
- The samplers were then hauled to the surface, and the contents of each sampler placed in a clean, labeled zip-lock plastic bag.
- Processing of samples occurred in the laboratory.
- A water quality profile from surface to bottom (at 0.5m depth intervals) was taken using a calibrated Yeo-Kal 618 Water Quality Analyser. Water temperature, conductivity, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, turbidity and depth were measured. Each line of data was stored in the memory of the machine.

In the laboratory the marine benthic samples were treated in the following way:

- Each sample was tipped into a 1 mm mesh sieve and washed free of mud.
- The washed material from each sample was then placed into an enamel dish and sorted for animals.
- Organisms and parts of organisms were removed, counted, identified and the results entered into a spread sheet. This process was repeated until the debris of the entire sample had been examined.
- Sorted organisms were preserved in formaldehyde solution.
- All shell remaining in the sample was kept for later examination.

The 250mL samples of whole sediment were treated in the following way:

- Each sample was tipped into a 1L clear glass measuring cylinder and the volume made up to 600mL with freshwater.
- The cylinders were stoppered and shaken vigorously to suspend the sediment in the freshwater.
- The cylinders were then placed on the laboratory bench to allow the fractions of the sediment to settle.
- Once settled the volumes of each fraction (shell and coarse sand, fine sand, mud and fine silt) were calculated and recorded. Results were displayed relative to the final volume of sediment collected.

Factors Affecting the Depth of Water in Lake Macquarie

The bathymetric chart of Lake Macquarie shows water depths relative to AHD. The actual depth of water above the lakebed varied greatly (**Figure 3**).

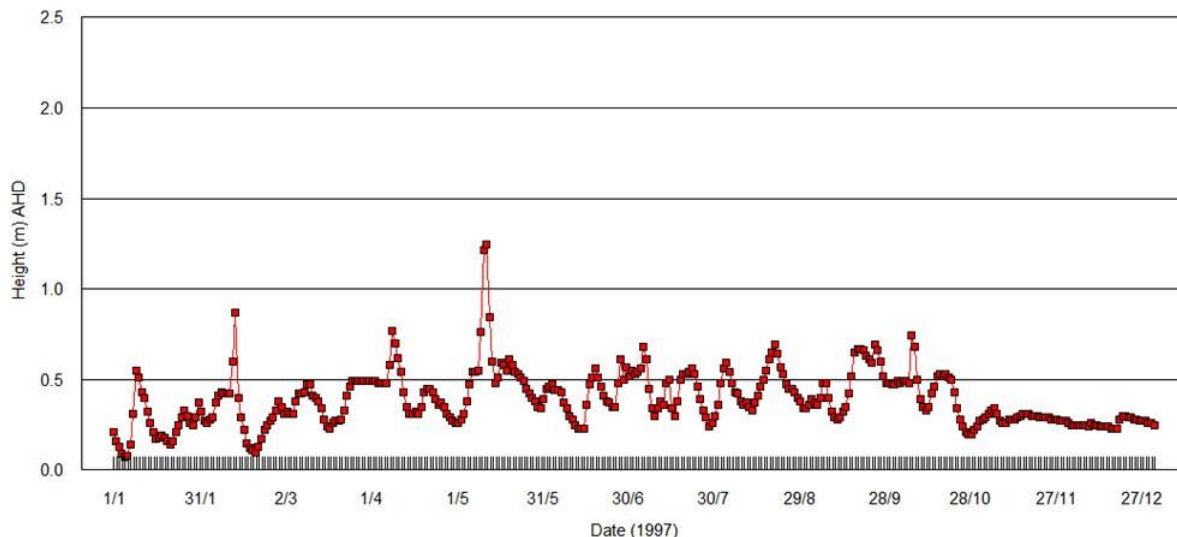


Figure 3. Water level changes in a coastal lagoon with an entrance open to coastal waters.

The actual water depth above the lakebed varied between 0 and 1.3m above AHD over a year. Water depths in coastal saline lakes with an open entrance to coastal waters vary due to combinations of the following factors:

- The body of Lake Macquarie is subject to tidal influence. The height of the tidal prism at Swansea Head may reach almost 2m (during spring tides) but by the time the body of the lake is reached, the tidal prism has been reduced to around 0.05m.
- The height of coastal waters and coastal lakes are influenced by changes in atmospheric pressure.

The Tasman Sea acts as a huge barometer. When the atmospheric pressure is high the sea surface is depressed. This causes water to drain from Lake Macquarie causing the depth of water in the body of the lake to decrease. When the atmospheric pressure over the Tasman Sea is low, the surface of the sea bulges upwards. This raising of sea level causes water to flow into Lake Macquarie, increasing the water depth.

- Low pressure systems in the Tasman Sea almost always generate strong winds and coastal rainfall. The strong winds cause large swells to form that impact the coast. Wave setup at the entrance to Lake Macquarie causes the water level in the lake to rise as large volumes of seawater enter the system.
- Rainfall during a period of low atmospheric pressure causes runoff into catchment rivers and streams to increase. When this extra water reaches the body of Lake Macquarie, the water level rises in proportion to the runoff volume. This water is prevented from exiting the lake by wave setup at the entrance and the state of the tide. Under these circumstances, the level of the lake can rise to heights of a meter or more above AHD (**Figure 3**).

Water Quality of Lake Macquarie (April 1983 – March 1997)

In 1983 the Hunter District Water Board (later Hunter Water Corporation) commissioned J.H. & E.S. Laxton – Environmental Consultants P/L to carry out a water quality study of Lake Macquarie in conjunction with their plans to sewer the western shore of the lake. The study commenced in April 1983 with monthly sampling of the lake and ended in March 1997. The water quality results for the body of Lake Macquarie (as opposed to the creeks) are summarized and presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Water Quality of the body of Lake Macquarie (1983-1997)

Variable		Mean	Maximum	Minimum
Water Temperature (oC)	Surface	20.56	33.77	10.95
	Bottom	20.06	29.17	11.45
Water Salinity (ppt)	Surface	32.61	37.96	1.00
	Bottom	33.92	37.95	21.06
pH	Surface	8.28	9.28	7.19
	Bottom	8.26	8.90	7.55
Dissolved Oxygen (% saturation)	Surface	101.6	177.7	71.9

	Bottom	89.5	147.0	0.9
Turbidity (NTU)	Surface	3.0	32.8	0.0
	Bottom	5.1	77.7	0.0
Transmission of light through water (%)	Surface	94.2	99.9	7.3
	Bottom	88.1	99.4	2.0
Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)	Surface	4.8	123.5	0.5
Chlorophyll-a (µg/L)	Surface	2.953	112.900	0.000
Ammonia-nitrogen (mg-N/L)	Surface	0.071	1.500	0.006
	Bottom	0.075	0.813	0.010
Organic-nitrogen (mg-N/L)	Surface	0.355	9.691	0.000
	Bottom	0.361	3.357	0.002
Oxidized-nitrogen (mg-N/L)	Surface	0.10	0.459	0.000
	Bottom	0.008	0.142	0.000
Total-nitrogen (mg-N/L)	Surface	0.436	9.749	0.033
	Bottom	0.445	3.918	0.027
Orthophosphate phosphorus (mg-P/L)	Surface	0.0191	0.4148	0.0006
	Bottom	0.0188	0.1386	0.0003
Total phosphorus (mg-P/L)	Surface	0.0450	0.8922	0.0025
	Bottom	0.0489	0.3534	0.0022
Faecal coliform bacteria (no./100mL)				

Blue shading in Table 2 indicates variables of interest to this study of the benthos of Lake Macquarie.

Light attenuation in Lake Macquarie (1983 – 1997)

Observations made over many years (Laxton, 2007) show that photosynthetic benthic organisms (seagrasses and algae) are confined to the shallow water areas around the perimeter of Lake Macquarie. In Chain Valley Bay, Bardens Bay and off Summerland Point, seagrasses and benthic algae grow between 0 and -1.89m below AHD (except in September 2018 when *Halophila* and some algae were found in 4.5 to 6m of water at some stations due to low rainfall and clear water).

The water quality study of Lake Macquarie, carried out between 1983 and 1997, measured Photosynthetically Active Radiation (PAR) changes with depth monthly at twelve stations throughout the lake during the years 1983 to 1985. Data for Station 1 off Wyee Point are presented in **Figure 4** and **Figure 5**.

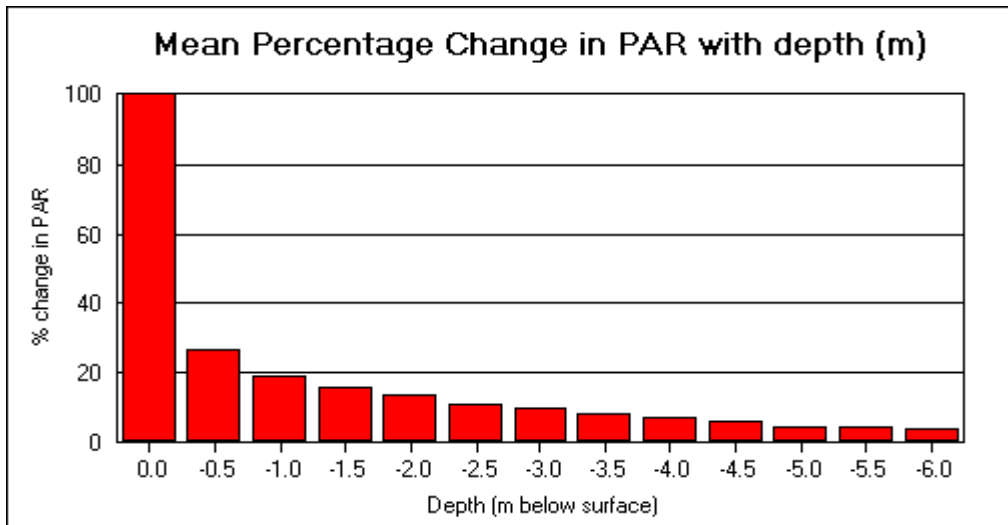


Figure 4. Mean percentage changes in PAR with depth at Station 1 - Wyee Point over 12 months.

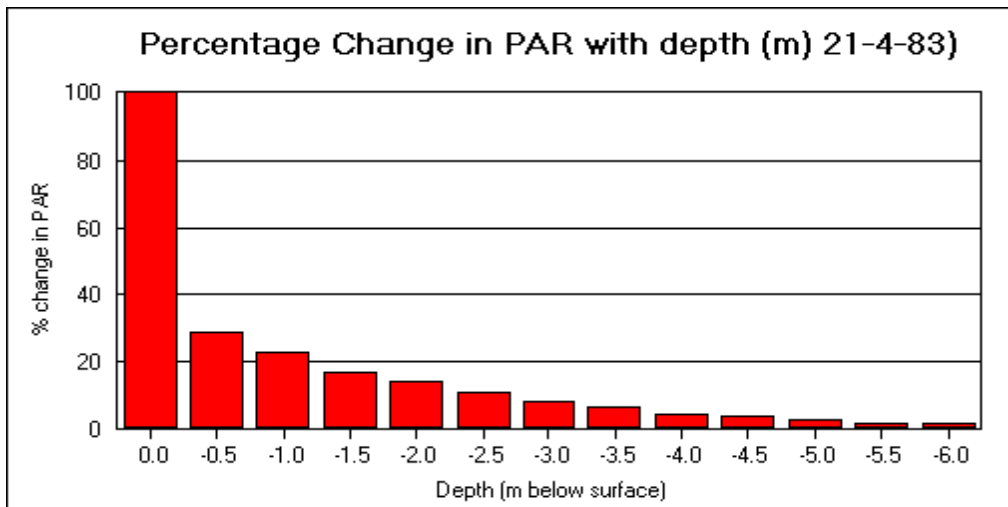


Figure 5. Actual percentage changes in PAR at Station 1 - Wyee Point on the morning of 21-4- 83.

It was found that only 14% of the light present at the surface reached a depth of 2.0m below the surface. By 6m below the surface only between 2% and 4% of PAR remained. Seagrasses and algae just manage to survive at 14% of the surface radiation but have no chance of survival at 6m below the surface. The mud basin of Lake Macquarie was devoid of macroscopic benthic algae and seagrasses except at some stations in September 2018.

Results

Benthos of the Study Area – February 2012 to September 2021

The following organisms were found in the sediment samples collected off Summerland Point and in Chain Valley Bay between February 2012 and September 2021:

Designated name	Family or Species	Comments
Anemone	Coelenterata	Found associated with mussel shells.
Planaria (Flat worm)	Platyhelminthes	2 specimens found in 2017.
Polychaete thin	<i>Sthenelais pettiboneae</i>	Most common polychaete present.
Polychaete (thick)	Cirratulidae	Present in small numbers.
Polychaete (mud tube)	Not yet identified	Present in small numbers.
Polychaete	Terebellidae	Present at Stations C1, C6, R1 and IM2.
<i>Pectinaria</i> sp. Polychaete	Terebellidae	First found in March 2019
Gastropod	<i>Nassarius jonasii</i>	Present in small numbers.
Gastropod	<i>Lepsiella (Bedeva) hanleyi</i>	Present in small numbers.
Gastropod	Bullimorph slug	One specimen found in August 2014.
Bivalve	<i>Corbula truncata</i>	Common as live animals and dead shells.
Bivalve	<i>Soletellina alba</i>	Common
Bivalve	<i>Paphia undulata</i>	Uncommon as live animals. Common as dead shells.
Bivalve	<i>Cyamiomactra mactroides</i>	Uncommon. (Brown or pink bivalve)
Bivalve	<i>Anadara trapezia</i>	Uncommon.
Bivalve	<i>Dosinia sculpta</i>	Many juveniles found in sandy sediment in September 2019.
Bivalve	<i>Trichomya hirsuta</i>	Common as dead shells. Found in large clumps at C2, C6, R3, R7, IM2 and IM3.
Bivalve	<i>Saccostrea glomerata</i>	Found on mussels at C4 and C6 in 2021.
Ophuroid	Brittle star	Uncommon. Found amongst mussel clumps and on mud.
Echinoid	Sea urchin	Uncommon. Found at C5 and C7 in 2021.
Sponge	White calcareous sponge	Specimen found associated with mussels.
	Pink sponge	Small species found on mud surface.
	Red sponge	Several specimens found in 2019.
Crabs	Small	Uncommon.
Prawn	Small	One specimen taken in March 2013 at R3 and one specimen in September 2013 at C4.

Shrimp	Small	Found at IM2 in March 2014.
Fish	Small (35mm)	One specimen taken at C3 (September 2012), at R1 (September 2013) and at IM4 in March 2017. 1 specimen in C6 in 2019.

Plates 1a to 1f provide information about the benthic organisms present in the basin mud of Lake Macquarie, NSW.

Plate 1a. Annelid species found in the benthos of Lake Macquarie (February 2012 – September 2021).



Phylum: Annelida
Class: Polychaeta
Subclass: Errantia
Order: Phyllodocida
Family: Sigalionidae
Genus: *Sthenelais*
Species: *Sthenelais pettiboneae*

Remarks: Found in marine environments.



Phylum: Annelida
Class: Polychaeta
Subclass: Canalipalpata
Order: Terebellida
Family: Cirratulidae

Remarks: Cirratulids vary in size from 1-20 cm long. They are mostly burrowers in soft sediments but some live in rock crevices. The head is conical or wedge-shaped and has no antennae. The body is generally cylindrical, tapering at both ends. Cirratulids are characterised by many simple elongate filaments along the body. The genera are poorly defined.

Plate 1b. Gastropod species found in the benthos of Lake Macquarie (February 2012–September 2021).



Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Gastropoda
Superfamily: Buccinoidea
Family: Nassariidae
Genus: *Nassarius*
Species: *Nassarius jonasii*

Remarks: Endemic to Australia; Noosa Heads, Qld, to SA. Inhabit sand and mud flats in estuaries and lagoons, intertidal down to 100 m. Most *Nassarius* species are very active scavengers. They often burrow into marine substrates and then wait with only their siphon protruding, until they smell nearby food.



Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Gastropoda
Order: Neogastropoda
Family: Muricidae
Genus: *Lepsiella* (*Bedevea*)
Species: *Lepsiella hanleyi*

Remarks: Common name mussel drill. Shell up to 32 mm, with angulated whorls, a high spire and moderately long anterior canal and with both spiral threads and axial ribs. Endemic to Australia. Found in temperate and southern parts of tropical Australia. Lives mainly on sheltered shores, including estuaries and often in association with mangroves. Feeds by drilling holes in bivalves. Lays lens-shaped capsules and development is direct.

Plate 1c. Bivalve species found in the benthos of Lake Macquarie (February 2012 – September 2021).



Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Bivalvia
Order: Myoida
Family: Corbulidae
Genus: *Corbula*
Species: *Corbula truncata*

Remarks: Marine bivalve mollusc.



Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Bivalvia
Order: Veneroida
Family: Psammobiidae
Genus: *Soletellina*
Species: *Soletellina alba*

Remarks: Posterior and anterior margins almost parallel. Shell thin and normally bluish, rarely white. Lives intertidally and subtidally in sand and mud, especially in sheltered environments. Occurs all around Australia; not recorded elsewhere.



Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Bivalvia
Order: Veneroida
Family: Veneridae
Genus: *Paphia*
Species: *Paphia undulata*

Remarks: Saltwater clam, marine bivalve mollusc. Inhabits inshore shallow sandy seabeds.



Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Bivalvia
Order: Veneroida
Family: Veneridae
Genus: *Dosinia*
Species: *Dosinia sculpta*

Remarks: *Dosinia* is a genus of saltwater clams, marine bivalve molluscs in the family Veneridae, (subfamily Dosiniinae). The shell of *Dosinia* species is disc-like in shape, usually white, and therefore is reminiscent of the shells of Lucinid bivalves.

Typically found in the intertidal zone at the water's edge at a mean distance from sea level of -15 meters (-50 feet).



Phylum: Mollusca
Class: Bivalvia
Order: Veneroida
Family: Cyamiidae
Genus: *Cyamiomactra*
Species: *Cyamiomactra mactroides*



Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Bivalvia

Order: Arcoida

Family: Arcidae

Genus: *Anadara*

Species: *Anadara trapezia*

Remarks: Sydney cockle, or ark cockle is an estuarine filter-feeding bivalve. Its calcareous, heavily-ribbed, shell can grow to approximately 7 to 8 cm across. Its current range is along the east coast of Australia, from Queensland to Victoria. It has been used as an indicator species to study levels of the metals selenium, copper and cadmium.



Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Bivalvia

Order: Mytiloida

Family: Mytilidae

Genus: *Trichomya*

Species: *Trichomya hirsuta*

Remarks: The hairy mussel is a major part of the megafauna of Lake Macquarie. It is tolerant of low oxygen levels in the water and its temperature tolerance range has been researched in connection with using the waters of the lake for cooling power stations.

Hairy mussels have been used as bioindicators to monitor concentrations of heavy metals (namely Pb, Cd, Cu, Zn, Co, Ni, and Ag) in marine environments.

Plate 1d. Brittle stars found amongst the mussel beds of Lake Macquarie, NSW.



Phylum: Echinodermata

Class: Ophiuroidea

Order: Ophiurida

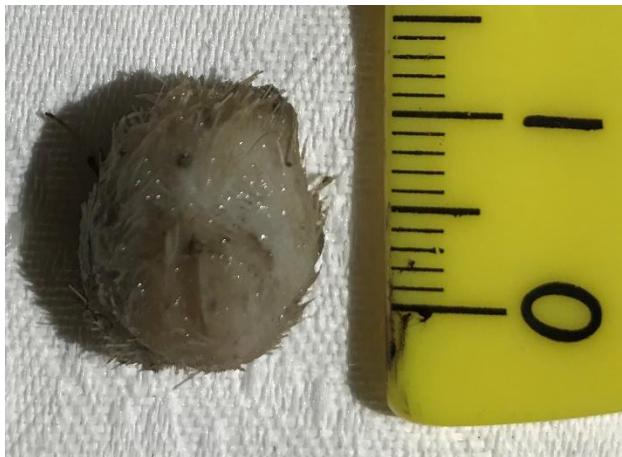
Family: Ophionereididae

Genus: *Ophionereis*

Species: *Ophionereis schayeri*

Remarks: Largest and most common brittle star found in Sydney waters. Brittle stars have five long, slender arms which radiate out from a central disc. The mouth is located in the centre of the underside of the disc. There is no anus. Offshore, brittle stars form dense aggregations. In intertidal zones, they are typically found as single individuals in crevices, under stones and amongst seaweed. They feed by raising their arms above the substrate; extending tube-feet; and removing particles from the water. They pass food along the arms to the mouth. They also scavenge on decaying matter. They inhabit the hairy mussel beds of Lake Macquarie.

Plate 1e Sand dollar sea urchins found in Lake Macquarie, NSW



Phylum: Echinodermata

Class: Echinoidea

Order: Clypeasteroidea

Remarks: Sand dollars are small in size. They possess a rigid skeleton called a test. The test consists of calcium carbonate plates arranged in a fivefold symmetric pattern.

Plate 1f Crab species found in Lake Macquarie, NSW



Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Malacostraca

Order: Decapoda

Molluscs found as dead shells

Benthic organism samples collected between February 2012 and September 2021 included a large component of shell. **Plates 2a** and **2b** show the mass of shell obtained from the sixty 200x200x100mm samples of sediment taken in February 2012. **Plate 2c** and **Plate 2d** show the mass of shell collected in September 2012 and **Plates 2e** and **2f** show the mass of shells collected in March 2013.



Plate 2a. Large shell removed from samples during sorting process - February 2012 survey.



Plate 2b. Small shells removed from samples during sorting process - February 2012 survey.



Plate 2c. Large shells removed from samples - September 2012 survey.



Plate 2d. Small shells removed from samples during sorting in September 2012.



Plate 2e. Large shells removed from samples during sorting in March 2013.



Plate 2f. Small shells removed from samples during sorting in March 2013.

Similar masses of shell were found in the samples of the September 2013 to September 2021 surveys. These masses of shell were photographed for the record but were not included in this report.

The following molluscs were found in the large volume of shell collected during the sampling periods between February 2012 and September 2021:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Paphia undulata</i> | 7. <i>Chlamys</i> sp. |
| 2. <i>Anomia</i> sp. | 8. <i>Saccostrea glomerata</i> |
| 3. <i>Dosinia sculpta</i> | 9. <i>Corbula truncata</i> |
| 4. <i>Trichomya hirsuta</i> | 10. <i>Batillaria (Velacumantis) australis</i> |
| 5. <i>Katelaysia rhytiphora</i> | 11. <i>Conuber</i> sp. |
| 6. <i>Pecten</i> sp. | 12. <i>Anadara trapezia</i> |

Plates 3a and **3b** provide information about bivalve mollusc and gastropod species found as dead shells in the basin mud of Lake Macquarie, New South Wales during the periods of sampling.

Plate 3a. Mollusc species found as dead shells in the benthos of Lake Macquarie, NSW.



Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Bivalvia

Order: Ostreoida

Family: Anomiidae

Genus: *Anomia*

Remarks: Genus of saltwater clam, marine bivalve mollusc. Known as "jingle shells". Common in both tropical and temperate oceans and live primarily attached to rock or other shells via a calcified byssus that extends through the lower valve. *Anomia* shells tend to take on the surface shape of what they are attached to; thus if an *Anomia* is attached to a scallop shell, the shell of the *Anomia* will also show ribbing.



Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Bivalvia

Order: Veneroida

Family: Veneridae

Genus: *Katelaysia*

Species: *Katelaysia rhytiphora*

Remarks: Commonly known as mud cockles, this group of commercially important bivalves often represents a major faunal component of shallow estuarine and marine embayments. *K. rhytiphora* is broadly distributed around Australia's temperate coastline from Augusta, Western Australia to Port Jackson, NSW.



Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Bivalvia

Order: Ostreoida

Family: Pectinidae

Genus: *Pecten*

Remarks: Genus of large saltwater clams or scallops. Marine bivalve mollusc.



Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Bivalvia

Order: Ostreoida

Family: Pectinidae

Genus: *Chlamys*

Remarks: Genus of saltwater clams or scallops. Marine bivalve mollusc.



Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Bivalvia

Order: Ostreoida

Family: Pectinidae

Genus: *Saccostrea*

Species: *Saccostrea glomerata*

Remarks: Sydney rock oysters are endemic to Australia and New Zealand. In Australia it is found in bays, inlets and sheltered estuaries from Wingan Inlet in eastern Victoria, along the east coast of NSW and up to Hervey Bay QLD, around northern Australia and down the west coast to Shark Bay in WA. Sydney rock oysters are capable of tolerating a wide range of salinities (halotolerant). They are usually found in the intertidal zone to 3 metres (9.8 ft) below the low water mark.

Plate 3b. Gastropod species found as dead shells in the benthos of Lake Macquarie, NSW.



Phylum: Mollusca

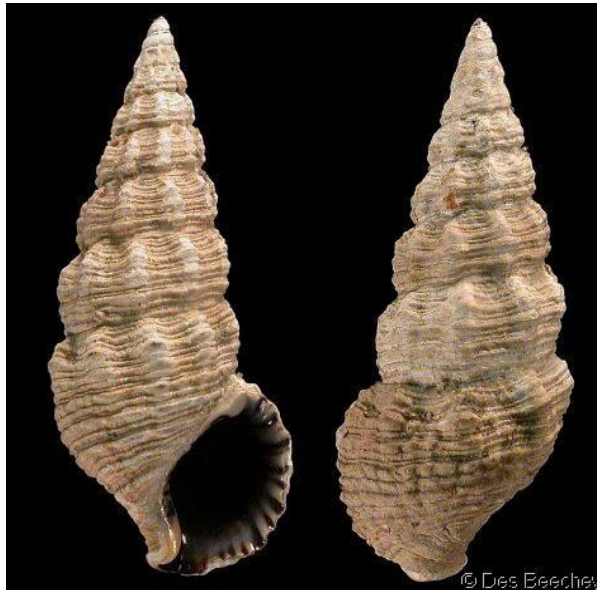
Class: Gastropoda

Family: Naticidae

Genus: *Conuber*

Species: *Conuber sordidum*

Remarks: Species of predatory sea snail. A marine gastropod mollusc known commonly as the moon snail. Lives on intertidal muddy sand flats near mangroves or sea weed.



Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Gastropoda

Family: Batillariidae

Genus: *Batillaria* (*Velacumantis*)

Species: *Batillaria australis*

Remarks: The Australian Mud Whelk is a marine gastropod found on mud flats in estuaries, river mouths and mangrove swamps. The snail has a high resistance to predation and environmental tolerance, which may partially explain its success as an invasive species. This species is one of the hosts for the flatworm parasite *Austrobilharzia*. Larvae of the flatworm are discharged from the snail into the surrounding water. They normally burrow into the legs of wading birds and complete their life cycle, but may burrow through the skin of humans, causing "bathers itch".

Benthic organisms in the Study Area - September 2021

The organisms found living in the sediments of the mud basin off Summerland Point and in Chain Valley Bay and Bardens Bay were entered into an Excel worksheet. **Table 3** shows the organisms found in each replicate at each station sampled in September 2021. Data for sieve box samples were separated from data obtained from core samples.

Table 3. Organisms found at Sampling Stations on 9th to 11th September 2021.

Control Station C1		Depth -4.50m AHD			56 364519 6330815		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021								
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish	Crab
C1.1	20	0	0	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C1.2	25	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C1.3	14	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C1.4	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C1.5	12	0	0	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C1.6	8	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C1.7	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	15.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	375	5	0	0	0	75	90	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	100	0	0	0	0	30	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	4														
No. species (core)	3	Total Organisms at Station 109													

Control Station C2		Depth -4.50m AHD			56 366214 6332927		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021								
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish	Planaria
C2.1	12	2	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C2.2	3	3	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C2.3	10	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C2.4	6	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C2.5	3	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C2.6	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
C2.7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	6.8	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	170	30	0	0	0	55	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	10	0	0	0	0	30	20	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	4														
No. species (core)	4	Total Organisms at Station 59													

Control Station C3		Depth -5.50m AHD			56 366014 6333144		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021								
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Planaria	Sponge
C3.1	10	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3.2	17	2	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3.3	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
C3.4	7	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3.5	4	2	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3.6	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C3.7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	7.6	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.6	2.6	0.2	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	190	25	5	0	0	15	65	5	0	15	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	10	10	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	7														
No. species (core)	3	Total Organisms at Station 64													

Control Station C4		Depth -5.50m AHD		56 364260 6332794		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Oyster <i>Saccostrea</i>	Ophuroid	Fish
C4.1	26	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	43	3	2	0	0
C4.2	55	0	0	0	0	1	8	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0
C4.3	16	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	10	1	0	0	0
C4.4	15	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
C4.5	31	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	0
C4.6	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	1
C4.7	9	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	28.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.6	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
no./m2 (box)	715	0	0	0	0	30	90	0	0	0	465	20	10	0	0
no./m2 (core)	200	0	0	0	0	10	10	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	10
No. species (box)	6														
No. species (core)	5														
Total Organisms at Station															266

Control Station C5		Depth -5.50m AHD		56 367701 6334510		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Echinoid	Fish
C5.1	0	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	0
C5.2	4	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
C5.3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C5.4	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C5.5	1	2	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0
C5.6	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C5.7	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	1.6	2.2	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.2	0.0
Mean cores	0.0	1.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	40	55	25	0	0	0	40	0	0	30	0	0	35	5	0
no./m2 (core)	0	30	20	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	7														
No. species (core)	3														
Total Organisms at Station															46

Control Station C6		Depth -5.50m AHD		56 363988 6332492		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Oyster <i>Saccostrea</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle
C6.1	26	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	14	0	1	0	0
C6.2	41	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
C6.3	23	1	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0
C6.4	15	2	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0
C6.5	21	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	17	1	1	0	0
C6.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C6.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	25.2	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	630	15	0	0	0	10	105	0	0	0	300	5	10	0	0
no./m2 (core)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	7														
No. species (core)	0														
Total Organisms at Station															215

Control Station C7		Depth -5.50m AHD		56 364736 6334947		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Echinoid	Barnacle
C7.1	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
C7.2	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C7.3	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
C7.4	2	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
C7.5	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
C7.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
C7.7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	3.2	3.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.4	0.0
Mean cores	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.4	0.0
no./m2 (box)	80	85	5	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	40	0	10	0
no./m2 (core)	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	0	8	0
No. species (box)	6														
No. species (core)	2														
Total Organisms at Station															46

Station R1		Depth -4.50m AHD		56 364177 6331535		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish	Crab
R1.1	6	0	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R1.2	5	1	0	0	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R1.3	10	0	0	0	0	1	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R1.4	8	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R1.5	15	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R1.6	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R1.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	8.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	6.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	220	5	0	0	0	50	155	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean cores	30	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	5														
No. species (core)	2														
Total Organisms at Station															87

Station R2		Depth -4.50m AHD		56 365919 6330294		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish
R2.1	14	0	0	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R2.2	5	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
R2.3	13	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R2.4	17	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R2.5	21	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R2.6	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R2.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	14.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	350	0	0	0	0	35	135	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	50	0	0	0	0	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	4														
No. species (core)	2														
Total Organisms at Station															106

Station R3 (now IM5)		Depth -5.50m AHD		56 364660 6332992		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Fish	Crab
R3.1	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0
R3.2	18	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0
R3.3	12	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	3	38	0	0	0	0
R3.4	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	1	0	0	0
R3.5	14	0	1	0	0	1	4	0	0	11	24	0	0	0	0
R3.6	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
R3.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	12.0	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.8	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.8	26.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	300	20	10	0	0	20	50	0	0	70	660	5	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	30	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	30	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	8														
No. species (core)	3														
Total Organisms at Station															234

Station R4 (now IM6)		Depth -6.00m AHD		56 364771 6332763		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish	Crab
R4.1	2	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R4.2	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R4.3	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R4.4	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R4.5	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R4.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R4.7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (box)	40	0	0	0	0	55	105	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	190	0	0	0	0	0	63	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	3														
No. species (core)	2														
Total Organisms at Station															40

Station R5 (now IM7)		Depth -6.00m AHD		56 364229 6333889		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish	Crab
R5.1	5	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R5.2	8	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R5.3	8	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R5.4	6	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R5.5	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R5.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R5.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	2.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	140	0	0	0	0	40	50	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	4														
No. species (core)	0														
Total Organisms at Station															47

Station R6 (now IM8)		Depth -6.00m AHD		56 364533 6334146		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedeve</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish	Crab
R6.1	3	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R6.2	4	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R6.3	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R6.4	2	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R6.5	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R6.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R6.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	2.2	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	55	15	0	0	0	75	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	4														
No. species (core)	0														
Total Organisms at Station															37

Station R7		Depth -6.00m AHD		56 366232 6333856		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedeve</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish	Crab
R7.1															
R7.2	6	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	18	0	0	0	1
R7.3	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0
R7.4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	15	0	0	0	0
R7.5	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
R7.6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
R7.7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	2.8	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	1.5	13.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Mean cores	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	69	13	13	0	0	0	13	0	0	38	331	0	0	0	6
no./m2 (core)	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	7														
No. species (core)	2														
Total Organisms at Station															77

Station R8		Depth -6.00m AHD		56 364323 63322010		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedeve</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish
R8.1	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R8.2	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R8.3	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R8.4	6	0	0	0	0	2	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R8.5	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R8.6	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R8.7	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	5.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	75	0	0	0	0	20	130	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	30	0	0	0	0	30	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	3														
No. species (core)	3														
Total Organisms at Station															45

Station R9		Depth -6.00m AHD			56 366232 6331210		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021								
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish
R9.1	10	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R9.2	6	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R9.3	2	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R9.4	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R9.5	3	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R9.6	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R9.7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	4.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	105	5	0	0	0	60	70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	90	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	4														
No. species (core)	2														
Total Organisms at Station															48

Station R10		Depth -6.00m AHD			56 365172 6334708		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021								
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish
R10.1	8	1	1	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R10.2	4	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R10.3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R10.4	10	1	0	0	0	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R10.5	4	0	0	0	0	3	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
R10.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R10.7	1	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	5.6	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	1.2	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	140	15	5	0	0	30	120	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	10	0	0	0	0	0	110	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	6														
No. species (core)	3														
Total Organisms at Station															63

Station R11		Depth -6.00m AHD			56 367072 6333638		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021								
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevea</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish
R11.1	0	3	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R11.2	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
R11.3	0	9	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
R11.4	1	5	0	0	0	1	8	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
R11.5	0	16	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R11.6	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
R11.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	0.2	7.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.6	4.8	0.2	0.0	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	5	185	5	0	0	15	120	5	0	70	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	0	20	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
No. species (box)	7														
No. species (core)	3														
Total Organisms at Station															81

Station IM1		Depth -4.50m AHD		56 364738 6330734		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedeve</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Sponge
IM1.1	15	0	0	0	0	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM1.2	11	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM1.3	15	0	0	0	0	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM1.4	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM1.5	12	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM1.6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM1.7	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	11.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	285	0	0	0	0	50	125	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	40	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	3														
No. species (core)	2														
Total Organisms at Station															92

Station IM2		Depth -4.50m AHD		56 364842 6332237		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedeve</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Saccostrea</i>	Ophuroid	Sponge	Crab
IM2.1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	0
IM2.2	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0
IM2.3	9	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0
IM2.4	25	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	20	0	0	0	0
IM2.5	24	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	0
IM2.6	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
IM2.7	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	14.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	25.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	9.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	350	5	5	0	0	10	25	0	0	25	640	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	190	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	7														
No. species (core)	3														
Total Organisms at Station															212

Station IM3		Depth -5.50m AHD		56 364693 6332101		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedeve</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish	Crab
IM3.1	11	0	0	0	0	2	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM3.2	8	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM3.3	9	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM3.4	9	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM3.5	1	0	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM3.6	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM3.7	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	7.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	5.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	6.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	190	0	0	0	0	40	125	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	120	10	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	4														
No. species (core)	4														
Total Organisms at Station															72

Station IM4		Depth -6.00m AHD		56 364673 6332705		Sampled 9th and 11th September 2021									
Replicates	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod Nassarius	Gastropod Bedeva	Bivalve Corbula	Bivalve Soletellina	Bivalve Dosinia	Bivalve Anadara	Bivalve Cyamimactra	Bivalve Trichomya	Bivalve Paphia	Ophuroid	Barnacle	Fish
IM4.1	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM4.2	3	0	0	0	0	1	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM4.3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM4.4	1	1	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM4.5	8	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM4.6	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IM4.7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean/station (boxes)	4.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean cores	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
no./m2 (box)	105	5	0	0	0	20	120	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
no./m2 (core)	40	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. species (box)	4														
No. species (core)	2														
Total Organisms at Station															50
Total organisms															2096

A total of 2096 benthic marine organisms greater than 1 mm in size were captured in the study area of Lake Macquarie during the September 2021 survey of 22 stations (**Table 3**). Thirteen species of benthic marine organisms were found in the samples. The fauna included three species of polychaete worm (**Plate 1a**); seven species of bivalve (**Plate 1c**); one species of brittle star (**Plate 1d**); one species of sea urchin (**Plate 1e**), and one crab species (**Plate 1f**).

In September 2021, the greatest numbers of organisms were collected at stations C4 (266 organisms), R3 now IM5 (234 organisms), C6 (215 organisms), IM2 (212 organisms), C1 (109 organisms), and R2 (106 organisation). The stations with the least numbers of organisms were R6 (37 organisms), R4 now IM6 (40 total), R8 (45 total), C5 (46 total), C7 (46 total), R5 now IM7 (47 total), and R6 now IM8 (47 total) (**Table 3**).

Polychaete worms were common and abundant in the benthos, with means ranging from 0.2 to 28.6 organisms in each sample. *Soletellina alba*, *Corbula truncata* and *Cyamimactra mactriodes* were the most commonly occurring bivalves in the benthic muds during the September 2021 survey (**Plate 1c**, **Table 3**). Small numbers of the bivalves *Dosinia sculpta* and *Paphia undulata* were also collected at several stations. The mussel *Trichomya hirsuta* was found at stations R3 (now IM5), R7, IM2 and C6 in relatively large numbers (**Table 3**). The brittle star *Ophionereis schayeri*, sand dollar sea urchin and a crab species were also found during the survey (**Table 3**).

Table 4 shows the number of species found at each station between February 2012 and September 2021. It shows diversity has not changed significantly compared to previous years, and that diversity between Control, Reference and Impact stations do not vary greatly.

Table 4. Number of species found at each Station from February 2012 to September 2021

Station	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	R1	R2	R3	R4
Feb 2012	10	5	5	7				8	8	5	5
Sept 2012	3	6	4	4				6	3	4	5
March 2013	4	5	7	7				6	5	6	5
Sept 2013	6	6	3	7				5	6	5	4
March 2014	4	3	5	5				6	4	5	3
Sept 2014	3	4	4	8				6	5	6	6
March 2015	3	3	5	3				5	3	6	5
Sept 2015	5	4	4	3				5	3	4	6
March 2016	6	4	5	5	5			6	5	6	4
Sept 2016	7	3	6	5	4	8		8	4	5	6
March 2017	2	4	5	3	5	5		4	5	4	5
Sept 2017	4	4	4	4	4	5		4	3	6	5
March 2018	4	4	8	4	4	3	5	7	8	5	4
Sept 2018	3	4	4	6	5	5	5	4	4	5	5
March 2019	6	3	4	4	6	5	3	4	5	7	3
Sept 2019	5	6	5	5	4	5	6	4	3	7	4
March 2020	5	6	6	4	7	3	6	6	6	7	4
August 2020	6	5	4	4	3	5	5	4	5	7	4
March 2021	5	6	3	4	5	2	2	5	4	7	4
Sept 2021	4	4	7	6	7	7	6	5	4	8	3
Station	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	IM1	IM2	IM3	IM4
Feb 2012								7	4	4	5
Sept 2012								4	4	3	5
March 2013								7	5	5	5
Sept 2013								4	3	4	5
March 2014	4	3						5	9	4	5
Sept 2014	3	3						5	6	3	6
March 2015	3	3						5	4	4	5
Sept 2015	5	4						5	5	4	4
March 2016	4	4	8					6	6	3	4
Sept 2016	6	7	7	5	8			6	4	6	3
March 2017	4	4	4	3	5			3	4	3	4
Sept 2017	4	4	4	5	4			5	5	5	5
March 2018	6	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	7	3	4
Sept 2018	5	4	6	4	5	4	4	4	8	4	4
March 2019	5	4	4	4	4	6	6	5	5	2	4
Sept 2019	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	6	5	7	5
March 2020	4	4	8	3	4	4	4	7	7	4	4
August 2020	7	5	8	4	5	5	4	5	6	4	6
March 2021	5	5	5	4	6	5	8	7	7	5	7
Sept 2021	4	4	7	3	4	6	7	3	7	4	4

Table 5 shows the mean number of marine benthic organisms for each station and species sampled in September 2021 (Sieve boxes only). The table includes depths relative to AHD for each station.

Table 5 Mean number of marine benthic organisms at Control (C), Reference (R) and Impact Stations (IM)

	Depth (m)	Polychaete thin	Polychaete mud	Polychaete thick	Gastropod <i>Nassarius</i>	Gastropod <i>Bedevela</i>	Bivalve <i>Corbula</i>	Bivalve <i>Soletellina</i>	Bivalve <i>Paphia</i>	Bivalve <i>Anadara</i>	Bivalve <i>Cyamiomactra</i>	Bivalve <i>Trichomya</i>	Bivalve <i>Dosinia</i>	Bivalve <i>Saccostrea</i>	Ophuroid	Echinoid	Fish	Crab
C1	-4.5	15.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
C2	-4.5	6.8	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
C3	-5.5	7.6	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.6	2.6	0.2	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
C4	-6.0	28.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.6	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
C5	-6.0	1.6	2.2	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.2	0.0	0.0
C6	-5.5	25.2	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
C7	-5.5	3.2	3.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
R1	-4.5	8.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	6.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R2	-4.5	14.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R3 (IM5)	-5.5	12.0	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.8	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.8	26.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R4 (IM6)	-6.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R5 (IM7)	-5.5	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	2.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R6	-6.0	2.2	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R7	-6.0	2.8	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	1.5	13.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
R8	-5.5	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	5.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R9	-4.5	4.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R10	-5.5	5.6	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	1.2	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R11	-6.0	0.2	7.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.6	4.8	0.2	0.0	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
IM1	-4.5	11.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
IM2	-4.5	14.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	25.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
IM3	-5.5	7.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	5.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
IM4	-6.0	4.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

September 2021

Analysis of Data

Statistics

Principal component (PC) biplots or multivariate scatterplots produced by the R-statistical program were used to explore the relationship between benthos study sites, animal species found in the sediment, and water quality variables at the lake bed. Points in the matrix were obtained by standardizing the data by subtracting the variable (column) mean from the species (cell) mean and dividing the subsequent value by the variable or column mean (Gabriel, 1971; Gabriel and Odoroff, 1990).

Biplots

A biplot is a particular kind of scatterplot used for displaying multivariate data which results from mapping a matrix of field observations, \mathbf{X} , into a 2-dimensional graphical display. The name derives from the fact that this is a *joint* display of the rows and columns of \mathbf{X} . Sample units (rows) are shown by points and variables (columns) by arrows. Biplots have several appealing properties. Firstly, they are capable of presenting graphically large amounts of information on composition, structure and relationships with surpassing ease and efficiency. It enables a truly global look at the data.

Interpretation of Biplots

Sample Points

- The proximity of any pair of sample points is directly proportional to their resemblance with respect to all the variables studied, the closer the points the greater the resemblance;
- Points close to the origin tend to be representative of the sample as a whole, that is, they tend to be average samples,
- Points far from the origin are atypical in that they possess usually large or small values of one or more variables.

Variable Arrows

- The origin of the configuration of arrows marks the mean value of each variable, an important reference point.
- Arrows can be extended through the origin (by eye) in either direction to any desired extent.
- With increasing distance from the origin along an arrow in the direction of an arrow, the value of the variable increases steadily above its mean; similarly, with increasing distance from the origin along an arrow extended by eye in the opposite direction, the value of a variable falls increasingly below its mean.
- Arrow length is directly proportional to the correlation coefficient, r , between the two variables. The smaller the angle the stronger the correlation. Variables x and y with arrows subtending an angle of:
 1. 0° are perfectly correlated $r_{xy} = 1$
 2. 90° are strictly uncorrelated $r_{xy} = 0$
 3. $0^\circ \leq \text{Angle} < 90^\circ$ $0 \leq r_{xy} < 1$
 4. $90^\circ \leq \text{Angle} \leq 180^\circ$ $0 < r_{xy} < -1$

From 3 it follows that variables whose arrows subtend angles less than 90° are positively correlated, and from 4, that variables whose arrows subtend angles greater than 90° are negatively correlated; in particular, where the angle is 180° , $r_{xy} = -1$.

In general, long arrows can be regarded as more useful in interpretation than short arrows. They have greater influence in differentiating sites.

Relationship between benthic organisms and stations

Figure 6 shows a biplot representing the relationship between marine benthic organisms and stations for the September 2021 survey.

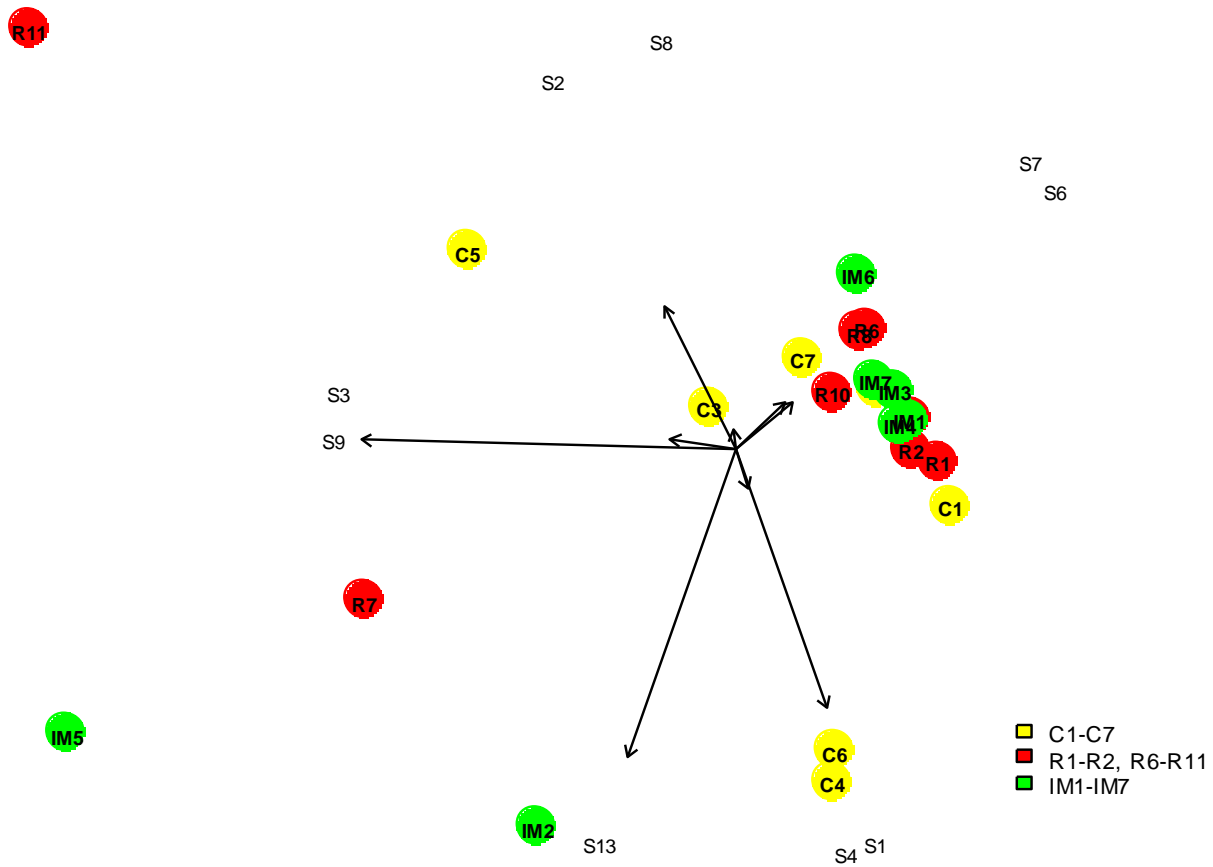


Figure 6. Relationship between benthic organisms and sampling stations – Lake Macquarie benthos survey September 2021 (PC biplot goodness-of-fit: 74.56%)

Station		Organism
C1 – Control Station C1	R8 – Reference Station R8	S1 <i>Sthenelais pettiboneae</i>
C2 – Control Station C2	R9 – Reference Station R9	S2 Polychaete mud
C3 – Control Station C3	R10 – Reference Station R10	S3 Polychaete thick
C4 – Control Station C4	R11 – Reference Station R11	S4 <i>Dosinia sculpta</i>
C5 – Control Station C5	IM1 – Impact Station IM1	S6 <i>Corbula truncata</i>
C6 – Control Station C6	IM2 – Impact Station IM2	S7 <i>Soletellina alba</i>
C7 – Control Station C7	IM3 – Impact Station IM3	S8 <i>Paphia undulata</i>
R1 – Reference Station R1	IM4 – Impact Station IM4	S9 <i>Cyamiomactra mactriodes</i>
R2 – Reference Station R2	IM5 – Impact Station IM5	S13 <i>Trichomya hirsuta</i> (mussels)
R6 – Reference Station R6	IM6 – Impact Station IM6	
R7 – Reference Station R7	IM7 – Impact Station IM7	

Six species differentiated sampling stations during the September 2021 sampling period (**Figure 6**):

- The Polychaete *Sthenelais pettiboneae* (S1) characterised the Control Stations C4 and C6.
- The Polychaete mud worm designated S2 characterised stations C5 and R11.
- The bivalves *Soletellina alba* (S7) and *Corbula truncata* (S6) defined the Control Stations C1, C2, C7; the Reference Stations R1, R2, R6, R8, R9, R10; and the Impact Stations IM1, IM3, IM4, IM6, and IM7.
- The bivalve *Trichomya hirsuta* differentiated the Reference Station R7; the Impact Stations IM2, IM5; and the Control Stations C4 and C6.
- The bivalve *Cyamiomactra mactriodes* (S9) defined station R7, IM2 and IM5.

Sediment Analysis

The sediment in the mud basin of Lake Macquarie off Summerland Point, in Chain Valley Bay and Bardens Bay was largely composed of fine grey/ black silty mud that was mildly plastic in nature (able to be molded into a coherent shape) or was very fine and fluid. Shell fragments were present in the sediment at most stations. The sediment at C5 consisted of fine to medium black sand.

A description of the sediment samples collected in September 2021 is shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Description of Sediment collected from Sampling Stations in September 2021.

Station	Description	Volume (mL)
C1	Fine grey silty mud	250
C2	Fine grey silty mud with shell fragments	250
C3	Fine grey silty mud	250
C4	Fine grey silty mud	250
C5	Grey sand and silt	250
C6	Fine grey silty mud	250
C7	Fine grey silty mud	250
R1	Fine grey silty mud	250
R2	Fine grey silty mud with shell fragments	250
R3 (IM5)	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
R4 (IM6)	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
R5 (IM7)	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
R6	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
R7	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
R8	Fine grey silty mud	250
R9	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
R10	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
R11	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
IM1	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
IM2	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250
IM3	Fine grey silty mud with some large shell fragments	250
IM4	Fine grey silty mud with some shell fragments	250

Table 7 shows the percentage of silt in the sediment at each station from February 2012 to September 2021.

Table 7. Percent mud in sediment from each station – February 2012 to September 2021

	Sep-16	Mar-17	Sep-17	Mar-18	Sep-18	Mar-19	Sep-19	Mar-20	Aug-20	Mar-21	Sep-21
	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud	% Mud
C1	90	68	94	80	80	80	100	94	90	75	95
C2	80	92	80	80	64	70	100	86	95	94	95
C3	90	80	100	92	80	100	100	96	100	82	100
C4	75	98	100	80	40	80	100	92	100	60	95
C5	90	92	80	92	64	60	80	29	80	35	70
C6	80	92	100	84	60	70	100	100	95	75	98
C7				80	60	80	100	29	90	61	80
R1	70	96	100	80	80	80	96	96	70	55	100
R2	90	80	92	80	84	84	80	80	80	60	90
R3 (IM5)	90	96	100	80	96	92	80	92	95	60	52
R4 (IM6)	90	96	100	78	92	80	84	98	75	79	95
R5 (IM7)	90	88	100	70	80	80	100	94	100	95	95
R6	98	98	80	80	78	96	100	92	85	95	85
R7	90	94	92	50	80	98	84	92	95	94	90
R8	80	98	100	80	82	92	100	92	90	95	95
R9				80	84	70	100	80	95	60	90
R10				80	96	80	84	80	80	75	85
R11				80	30	50	92	100	90	75	98
IM1	90	76	96	80	60	80	80	70	95	90	70
IM2	98	98	98	92	70	60	80	80	80	95	95
IM3	99	96	100	92	96	80	92	90	95	95	98
IM4	99	84	92	100	80	80	92	92	90	95	98

Water Quality Profiles – September 2021

At each station, a water quality profile was taken using a calibrated Yeo-Kal 618RU Analyser. Measurements were taken at the surface and at 0.5m intervals to the lakebed. Units of measurement were: Temperature (TEMP) - degrees Celsius; Conductivity (COND) - mS/cm; Salinity (SAL) - parts per thousand; pH; Dissolved Oxygen - % saturation and mg/L; and Turbidity (TURB) - NTU (**Table 8**).

Up until recently, little significant rain has fallen in the catchments of Lake Macquarie. Annual rainfall in the Cooranbong (Lake Macquarie AWS) region was 839.8 mm in 2017; 859.8 mm in 2018 and 763.4 mm in 2019 (BOM Station Number 061412). The lack of rainfall caused the salinity of the water column to become very high (over 39 parts per thousand by March 2019) and almost uniform from surface to bottom. The Lake Macquarie region has since received relatively heavy rainfall in August (111.2 mm) 2019; February (335.4 mm), March (173.0 mm), July (184.0 mm), October (150.8 mm) and December (220.6 mm) 2020 (BOM Station Number 061412); and January (104.8 mm), February (155.8 mm) and March (421.6 mm) 2021. This rainfall lowered the salinity of water in the lake to around 36 parts per thousand in 2019, 33 parts per thousand in March 2020, and 32 parts per thousand in August 2020. Since March 2021, total monthly rainfall has been low, ranging from 26 mm in May 2021 to 64.8 mm in August 2021. Only 19.2 mm has fallen in the Cooranbong catchment in September 2021. Salinity of water in Lake Macquarie is consequently becoming more saline and is currently around 35 parts per thousand (**Table 8**).

The physical characteristics of the bottom waters of Lake Macquarie in September 2021 were as follows:

- Water Temperature ranged from 17.49°C to 18.76°C. Mean water temperature was 18.05°C.
- Conductivity ranged from 53.59 mS/cm to 53.82 mS/cm. Mean conductivity was 53.69 mS/cm.
- Salinity ranged from 35.35 ppt to 35.52 ppt. Mean salinity was 35.44 ppt.
- Turbidity ranged from 7.1 NTU to 25.8 NTU. Mean turbidity was 11.65 NTU.
- pH ranged from 7.90 and 8.06. Mean pH was 7.98.
- Dissolved oxygen (% saturation) ranged from 84.6% to 101.0%. Mean dissolved oxygen was 91.40% saturation.
- Dissolved oxygen (mg/L) ranged from 6.41 mg/L to 7.71 mg/L. Mean dissolved oxygen was 6.97 mg/L (**Appendix 1**).

The physical characteristics of the bottom water are shown in **Table 8**.

Table 8 Physical characteristics of the bottom water - 9th to 11th September 2021

Station	Temperature °C	Conductivity mS/cm	Salinity ppt	Dissolved Oxygen % sat	Dissolved Oxygen mg/L	pH	Turbidity NTU
C1	18.38	53.63	35.40	84.60	6.41	8.07	10.6
C2	17.88	53.65	35.41	89.90	6.90	8.10	15.4
C3	17.66	53.69	35.45	92.90	7.17	8.12	25.8
C4	17.99	53.73	35.47	86.20	6.61	8.10	9.4
C5	17.58	53.77	35.50	93.00	7.16	8.12	7.4
C6	18.23	53.73	35.47	92.10	7.02	8.11	9.3
C7	18.03	53.82	35.35	94.70	7.27	8.13	9.1
R1	18.22	53.70	35.45	85.80	6.57	8.09	10.1
R2	18.76	53.60	35.39	87.50	6.62	8.08	10.1
R3 (IM5)	18.00	53.63	35.40	97.40	7.45	8.13	7.1
R4 (IM6)	17.97	53.65	35.43	97.00	7.41	8.13	7.4
R5 (IM7)	17.99	53.71	35.46	87.80	6.73	8.12	9.0
R6	18.08	53.68	35.44	85.00	6.50	8.09	11.7
R7	17.49	53.73	35.48	92.80	7.17	8.14	14.5
R8	18.13	53.73	35.48	87.00	6.65	8.09	9.9
R9	18.35	53.73	35.49	91.10	6.93	8.10	8.3
R10	18.02	53.75	35.50	87.00	6.64	8.10	12.3
R11	17.60	53.79	35.52	93.70	7.23	8.13	13.0
IM1	18.60	53.63	35.41	91.00	6.50	8.11	10.1
IM2	18.29	53.60	35.39	101.00	7.71	8.12	10.8
IM3	18.24	53.59	35.38	100.50	7.60	8.11	16.1
IM4	17.81	53.63	35.41	92.70	7.16	8.10	18.8

Conclusions

The results from the September 2021 benthic communities monitoring results show compliance to the Schedule 4 Environmental Conditions - underground mining of SSD5465 - Modification 2 in the Performance Measures table with respect to the Subsidence Impact Performance Measure for Benthic communities which display nil to minor environmental consequences due to underground mining.

The below summary of findings outlines the historical basis for this compliance statement and the compliance is detailed in the table below.

Conditions from SSD-5465 – Mod 4	Compliance Status and Comments
Schedule 4 Environmental Conditions – underground mining Performance Measures – Natural Environment Biodiversity – Benthic Communities Subsidence Impact Performance Measure – Minor environmental consequences, including minor changes composition and/or distribution.	Compliant – See section 16 - Conclusions
Measurements undertaken by generally accepted methods.	Compliant – See section 4 and 5
Measures Methods fully described.	Compliant – See section 4 and 5

In September 2021, 22 benthic stations were sampled in the study area. A total of 2096 organisms greater than 1mm in size were found, comprising 13 species. This compares with the results from September 2019 and September 2020 where 815 and 1367 organisms respectively were recorded representing approximately twelve species. As in previous years, polychaete worms and bivalve molluscs were the most frequently encountered animals. Stations were distinguished by the relative abundance of the dominant species. Water depth was not in any way important in determining the species composition at a station.

Physical variables such as salinity, conductivity and turbidity of the bottom water had little influence on the species composition of the benthos. Dissolved oxygen concentration, however, can have a major effect on abundance. Major extinction events have occurred in the mud basin of Lake Macquarie. The evidence for this lies in the presence of large numbers of intact but dead bivalve shells entombed in the mud. The cause of extinction events appears to be prolonged dissolved oxygen depletion of bottom water. Prolonged dissolved oxygen depletion of the bottom water was measured during the water quality study conducted by Laxton and Laxton (1983 to 1997). Low concentrations of dissolved oxygen in the bottom water were also recorded during the March 2020 sampling period. In September 2021, dissolved oxygen levels of the bottom waters of Lake Macquarie ranged from 84.6% saturation to 101.0% saturation.

Bottom sediment in the study area was composed of fine black mud with varying proportions of black sand and shell fragments. In March 2020 some changes to the composition of the upper 100mm of the bottom sediments were detected. At Stations C5 and C7 the sediment comprised mostly sand where previously it was fine black silt. In September 2021, sediment comprised mostly of fine grey/black silty mud with some

shell.

These results appear to support the notion that increasing the water depth by the predicted 0.8m subsidence has, to date, had little to no discernible effect on the composition and abundance of organisms making up the benthos of the mud basin.

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