



Proposed Seaford Wetlands Parkrun (parkrun Australia)

Why FESWI Says No

Whilst the Friends of Edithvale-Seafood Wetlands Inc (FESWI) is supportive of the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Package (Frankston Council), and of encouraging people to commune with nature, and of promoting fitness, FESWI has serious concerns regarding the proposed parkrun venue at the Seaford Wetlands.

In fact, FESWI is angered about this choice for the *weekly* parkrun event, and cannot understand *parkrun Australia's* disregard for the environmental sensitivity of the wetlands, the importance of its buffer zones, and of the maintenance of their integrity.

The Frankston Environmental Friends Network (FEFN), when first approached about this proposal, suggested some alternative venues and was told that conditions at these alternatives were not right for the event

Might FESWI respectfully suggest that conversely, this event is not right for the wetlands.

FESWI strongly opposes this proposal on a number of grounds as set out below.

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1. Overview of the Seaford Wetlands

The Edithvale-Seaford Wetland is the largest natural wetland of its type in the Port Phillip and Westernport basins. It is all that remains of Carrum Carrum Swamp, which once covered more than 4,000 hectares from Mordialloc in the north to Frankston in the south. It is unique in that it is an urban wetland. It is a wetland of international importance.

In 2001 the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands were listed as a Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. It was recognised because it:

- is the last remaining examples of the Carrum Carrum Swamp, with a variety of permanent and seasonal, freshwater and saltwater wetlands.
- supports populations of the Australasian Bittern, a bird of state significance and threatened in Victoria.
- supports more than 1% (2,000 birds) of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper world population that migrates along the East Asian-Australian flyway, in up to one year in three.

Birds and wildlife

It is estimated that at any one time, as many as 7,000 birds make the Edithvale-Seaford Wetland their home.

Star attractions include:

- 190 bird species
- 38 migratory species protected under international agreements and Australian legislation.
- migratory waders, including Latham's Snipe from the northern islands of Japan.

Seven bird species recorded at the wetland are protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic):

Great Egret, Australasian Bittern, Baillon's Crake, Lewin's Rail, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Australian Painted Snipe, Caspian Tern

Plants

A botanical survey of the Edithvale-Seaford Wetland mapped 14 plant communities, including three that are of state significance: Plains Sedgely Wetland, Tall Marsh (Common Reed-dominated), Brackish Aquatic Herbland.

The wetland also has a number of regionally significant plant populations, and one population of state significance: Large River Buttercup.

Economic and social values

As well as supporting animals and plants, the wetland is:

- an important flood management asset
- a popular community recreation facility, particularly for birdwatchers
- a valuable education resource for school groups

1. Friends of Edithvale-Seafood Wetlands Inc (FESWI)

FESWI, established in 1988, has spent over 30 years enhancing, protecting and educating others about our rare and precious urban wetland.

The rehabilitation of the Seafood Wetlands began in the 1980's. In the early 1990's FESWI began regular tree and under-story planting in the buffer zones (included within the Ramsar boundary) around the wetland and gradually converted 'empty' pasture land into extensive, productive woodland.

The many 1,000's of hours put in by many volunteers was done with the sole purpose of creating an effective buffer zone between the urban perimeter and the wetland proper; and creating a safe habitat for peripheral species that use both water and dry land – some duck species, swamphens, ibis, herons, frogs, reptiles, and for bush birds, bats and possums.

2. Buffer Zones

Buffer zones are defined as vegetated filter strips or zones located between natural resources and adjacent areas subject to human alteration (Castelle et al., 1994).

Buffer zones exist not only to shield and protect the wetland from the disturbances of human activity and to preserve its environmental integrity, but also to provide ancillary habitat.

Buffer zones are "...critical to the management of natural resources". See following:

Biological Criteria for Buffer Zones around Wetlands and Riparian Habitats for Amphibians and Reptiles (Raymond D Semlitsch* and J. Russell Bodie† *Division of Biological Sciences, 105 Tucker Hall, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211–7400, U.S.A., email semlitschr@missouri.edu †Bodie Design Group, 507 Crooked Oak Drive, Pawleys Island, SC 29585, U.S.A.)

[Abstract: Terrestrial habitats surrounding wetlands are critical to the management of natural resources. Although the protection of water resources from human activities such as agriculture, silviculture, and urban development is obvious, it is also apparent that terrestrial areas surrounding wetlands are core habitats for many semiaquatic species that depend on mesic ecotones to complete their life cycles. amphibians and reptiles associated with wetlands, ...snakes and turtles.](#)

Urban Disturbance

The Edithvale-Seafood Wetlands Ramsar Site is the only Victorian Ramsar site located in an urban landscape. The Ramsar site has experienced a long history of disturbance, and subsequently, the condition of the vegetation, hydrology and water quality has been modified (Ecology Australia 2001; KBR 2009; DSE 2012; Section 6).

All the more reason to protect it now as it rehabilitates.

FESWI believes that the weekly event of 100's of people running through the buffer zone is an unacceptable disturbance in the very thing created to prevent this.

The paths that run through the zone are for light, passive recreation only.

3. Considerations of Edithvale-Seaford Wetland Site Ramsar Management Plan 2016 (Ecology Australia)

Part of this *Management Plan* deals with the threat of human disturbance to the wetlands.

“8/11 Recreational Activities – Human Disturbance to Native Wildlife P 90-91

Recreational activities pose a potential disturbance threat to waterbirds at Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Ramsar site. Recreational activities undertaken on and adjoining the site include dog walking on- and off-leash, walking, jogging and trail-bike riding. Although Melbourne Water has a dogs-on-leash policy at the wetlands, this is not always obeyed by reserve users.

There is a substantial body of literature on the effects of noise and visual disturbance to waterbirds from human recreational activities and the potential implications of disturbance (e.g. Dowling and Weston 1999; Paton et al. 2000; Weston 2003; Weston and Elgar 2005 and 2007; Antos et al. 2007; Maguire 2008; DSE 2011; Glover et al. 2011, Weston et al. 2012, Taylor 2006; Weston et al. 2009 and 2012; McLeod et al. 2013; Martin 2015). Recreational disturbance has been identified as a significant risk and management issue at a number of coastal Ramsar sites, including at Cheetham Wetlands [part of the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site), Western Port Ramsar Site and Edithvale-Seaford Ramsar Site (DNRE 2002; Antos et al. 2007; KBR 2009; DSE 2011). The consequences include:

- increased energy expenditure when roosting or foraging birds are forced to fly for varying periods or distances until the disturbance has ceased. Increased movement and decreased foraging time is particularly important for migratory shorebirds which need to gain weight prior to long-distance return flights to their breeding grounds;
- Increased risks of mortality to young of breeding birds due to distraction of breeding adults from protecting nests, eggs and chicks from predators and weather (e.g. heat and cold). Decreased breeding success can result from decreased parental attention to young;
- Disturbance of roosting and foraging birds can result in reductions in breeding success and survival of adults, young and hatchlings having cumulative effects on the population;
- Avoidance of important foraging habitats resulting in a reduction in the area of available foraging habitat for waterbirds;
- Increased levels of competition between birds and mortality associated with a reduction in the area of available foraging habitat if there is a lack of other foraging habitat nearby;
- Sensitive species may be driven out of an area totally.

Melbourne Water is receiving an increasing number of applications for group active recreation, including running events and other activities, potentially resulting in an increased level of disturbance to waterbirds, including migratory shorebirds.

At Seaford Wetland, Frankston City Council restricts the scale and frequency of public events to minimize disturbance impacts on migratory shorebirds.

Clearly, any event application to Melbourne Water or Council would need to consider the timing of the event in relation to ecological values (e.g. in relation to the period of visitation of migratory shorebirds

at Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands or in relation to the period of breeding waterbirds at the wetlands), the location of the event in relation to the ecological values, the number of people involved and level of disturbance, the duration of the event and disturbance factor, and means of reducing or minimising the event and intensity of disturbance.”

Migratory birds are in our wetlands between September and March/April, and the breeding season for local birds is in late winter/spring through to late summer.

The assembly point for the proposed parkrun at Seaford is at the lookout on the south border of the wetlands, and the proposed running route up towards Armstrongs Road on the east side, are in close proximity to popular foraging areas for Snipe and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (both migratory). Over 1,000 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were counted in these areas during one of the counts this season and 86 Latham’s Snipe.

5. Considerations of the Ramsar Convention

Ramsar Resolution

At the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) “Wetlands: home and destination” Bucharest, Romania, 6-13 July 2012 was the following resolution.

“Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands.

4. RECOGNIZING that the world has become increasingly urbanized and that since the mid-2000s more than 50% of the Earth’s human population now resides in cities, towns and urban settlements, and CONCERNED that this trend is placing major and increasing pressure on natural resources within and beyond urban areas;

6. RECOGNIZING that urban areas have the potential to generate a range of negative impacts on the environment, and on wetlands in particular, which can vary in scale and magnitude and with a geographic scope which always extends well beyond municipal boundaries, and which can have global implications in terms of ecological footprints;

9. STRESSING that, for the prosperity of future generations and the maintenance of wetlands, their biodiversity and their services to people, it is essential that society adopt a more sustainable approach to urbanization, recognizing the need to protect the natural resource base that sustains urban areas;”

6. Conclusion

FESWI argues that the species that utilise the Seaford Wetlands are of such importance and their wetland habitats so rare that it is **not** worth the risk of allowing this potential and on-going disturbance. Our wetlands need protection. Frankston City Council is part of the protecting authority. It needs to honour its commitment.

FESWI urges Council **not** to allow this proposed event.

Robin Clarey
Vice-President: Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Inc

Appendix 1

FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL
SEAFORD WETLANDS RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONS STUDY 2019

Review of existing conditions Page 7 4.2 Key Legislation and Agreements

Legislation and Agreements

There are numerous legislations and agreements protecting the Wetlands on an international, national and state level. Those of key relevance are listed below.

Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention came into force in 1975 with Australia being one of the first countries to sign it. The mission of the Convention is the 'conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.' The three key documents used to record and maintain ecological character of Ramsar sites are the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS), Ecological Character Description (ECD) and Management Plan.

Migratory Bird Conventions

Due to the presence of migratory birds in the Seaford Wetlands, a number of bilateral treaties apply. These are the Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA), China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA), Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (ROKAMBA) and The Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). These agreements aim to protect migratory birds and their environment. Additionally, the Wetlands are covered by the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), which seeks to protect migratory waterbirds through voluntary initiatives. The partnership supports the recognition and maintenance of Ramsar wetlands due to their important function as a habitat for migratory birds.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act

The EPBC Act seeks to protect matters of national environmental significance, including Ramsar wetlands. Any action which impacts the ecological character of a Ramsar site requires an environmental assessment and approval under the Act. The Act also established the Australian Ramsar Management Principles, which protect the migratory bird species listed under JAMBA, CAMBA and CMS amongst other nationally significant species. Environment Protection Act 1970 This Act establishes the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and seeks to improve the condition of air, land and water environments, partially through State Environment Protection Policies (SEPPs). The Seaford Wetlands are covered by the Waters of Victoria SEPP, which outlines objectives and targets for water quality. Additionally, several state policies aimed at preventing and regulating pollution from acid sulfate soils apply to the Wetlands. These include the State Environment Protection Policy, Industrial Waste Management Policy and Best Practice Management Guidelines for Dredging.

Environment Effects Act 1978

This Act establishes the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) and gives the Minister for Planning the authority to decide on whether one is required. The effects of potential long-term change to the ecological character of a Ramsar site is considered grounds for an EES to be required.

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988

Flora and fauna in Victoria are protected under the Act, which aims to conserve all of Victoria's native plants and animals. The act also aims to protect the species of Victoria from potentially threatening processes which may impact their distribution, habitat and ecology. The Act also established the mechanism of listing threatened species and threats to native species.