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Council works with Authority to move beach algae

Shoalhaven City Council and the Jervis Bay Marine Park Authority will work together to relocate a small amount of the natural algae and seaweed which is covering the beach at Callala Bay.

The algae, a common green algae called *Microdictyon umbilicatum*, forms large sheets and blooms from time to time in seagrass beds, mangroves, and other shallow water estuarine areas. The algae that has washed up on Callala Beach is harmless, but when broken down in the sun will become smelly.

As the beach is within the Jervis Bay Marine Park, Council is working with the NSW Marine Parks Authority to move some of the algae from the vicinity of the Callala Bay Sailing Club as the club will hold a regatta on the weekend of 27-28 February. The Marine Park Authority has granted approval for Council to clear access ways in the area adjacent to the Sailing Club. The sailing club is a member of Sailability NSW, a not for profit volunteer based organisation which facilitates sailing for people with disabilities.

“Council is working with the Marine Parks Authority to establish a protocol which would give Council the ability to clean certain sections of the high use beaches around Jervis Bay of seaweed and algae deposits,” Isabelle Ghetti, Council’s Manager Natural Resources, said.

“The Authority is open to a sensible solution in regard to cleaning strategic access points to the beach, noting that it is not the Authority’s role to undertake ‘cleaning’ works.”

Moving the algae on Callala Beach will take place on 25 February. Given the large amount of algae in the bay and the fact that algae deposits on the beach are largely dependent on natural weather conditions, it is not known how long the access ways will remain clear of deposits.

Cleaning the beach or removing algae in Jervis Bay requires consent from the NSW Marine Parks Authority. Council considers that large cleaning operations in Jervis Bay are not possible due to significant environmental impact and budget constraints and Council will only consider cleaning strategic areas in special circumstances.

Council recognises that these sensitive foreshore areas are highly valued both for their recreation value as well as their environmental attractions. “By their very nature, these reserves have a degree of environmental sensitivity as the transition zone between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems,” Ms Ghetti said. “Foreshore reserves have been evolving and changing naturally for thousands of years and the rate of change has been dependent on natural forces. Seagrass and algae are a natural part of this delicate ecosystem. This is one reason why council does not like to intrude on the sensitive area. But at this time there is a direct need by the Sailing Club and other beach goers.”

It is also possible for people to remove a small quantity of the algae or weed – up to 20 kilograms per person per day – for their own compost or gardens.

For more information you can visit the Marine Parks Authority's internet site at <http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au/jbmp.html>. Callala Beach is in the habitat protection zone of the Marine Park.

CONTACT: Acting Director Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Gordon Clark (02) 4429 3355