

Shoalhaven River

Estuary Ecosystem Health Report Card 2021-22

Estuary Health

Monthly water quality monitoring was undertaken by Council at eleven sites between October 2021 and August 2022. The overall estuary health grade for Shoalhaven River was fair, based on microscopic algae and water clarity as key indicators. Microscopic algae levels were graded fair to very good with water clarity graded poor to fair across the period.

These estuary health grades provide an insight into the water quality of the Shoalhaven River for the year 2021-22. Council will continue water quality monitoring to assess estuarine ecosystem health and public health.

Algae

Chlorophyll a indicates the amount of microscopic algae, called phytoplankton, growing in the waterway. Algae can grow quickly when high levels of nutrients are present. Nutrients can enter an estuary through urban stormwater, agricultural runoff, sewage and sediment runoff from the land. An increase in chlorophyll a can lead to algal blooms and detrimental impacts on aquatic plants and animals.

Water clarity

Water clarity is determined by **turbidity**, a measure of how much material, such as sediment or organic matter, is suspended in water. Turbidity can increase from sediments in catchment runoff, shoreline erosion, increased microscopic algae, and resuspension driven by wind (in shallow systems). High levels of turbidity may indicate poor water quality, which can have negative impacts on aquatic ecosystems.

C Overall Grade

Grades:

A

Very Good

B

Good

C

Fair

D

Poor

E

Very Poor

Estuary Information

Catchment area (km²): 7085.8

Estuary area (km²): 31.8

Estuary volume (ML): 86508.6

Entrance: Permanently open

Major tributaries: Shoalhaven & Crookhaven River

Avg Yearly Rainfall: 933.6mm

(Stn No:68213) 2021: 1064mm (total)

