

PROJECT DATA SHEET *Victorian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program*

Client

Fisheries Victoria

Location

Port Phillip Bay and Western Port, Victoria

Year

Ongoing (since 1999)

Contact

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The challenge

The Victorian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program (VSQAP) was established to ensure that mussels from Port Phillip and Western Port are fit for human consumption when harvested, and to maintain Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) accreditation for export of Victorian farmed mussels.

Ecowise Environmental (Ecowise) was commissioned by the State Shellfish Control Authority Fisheries Victoria, Department of Primary Industries in 1999 to undertake the monitoring, shoreline survey, sanitary survey, harvest area classification and reporting components of the VSQAP. This is the only Shellfish Quality Assurance Program performed by a non-government organisation in Australia.

The solution

Since being commissioned by Fisheries Victoria, Ecowise has developed considerable expertise in all aspects of the VSQAP and has demonstrated its ability to rapidly develop the new skills and knowledge necessary to manage and perform a significant part of this complex program successfully.

Ecowise's involvement in this project includes:

- routine fortnightly phytoplankton and biotoxin monitoring and associated reporting
- development and implementation of phytoplankton management protocols for the major nuisance algal taxa
- development of a comprehensive operations manual outlining information such as sampling protocols and methods, sampling schedules and site locations
- water quality and shellfish tissue bacteriological monitoring undertaken as part of an adverse event sampling strategy, which involves sampling during adverse pollution events such as high rainfall or sewage spills and associated reporting
- triennial and annual update reviews for each harvesting area incorporating shoreline surveys, desk top studies to identify all relevant catchment pollution sources, phytoplankton, biotoxin and

microbiological data evaluation, harvest area classification and the production of comprehensive reports that collate and assesses these results

- the development of a marine biotoxin management plan
- revision of harvesting area rainfall triggers
- high-level, strategic and technical advice to Fisheries Victoria on a range of issues
- attendance at Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Advisory Committee (ASQAAC) workshops, national and international conferences concerning phytoplankton and biotoxin analytical methods and management.

The outcome

The VSQAP has been run successfully by Ecowise since 1999. In addition, Ecowise has developed considerable expertise in many aspects of shellfish quality assurance programs and since 1999, has expanded its role within the VSQAP to encompass all aspects of the program that can be performed externally.

