



REPLANTING LONG POINT RESERVE

Dan Gfeller, TLC Reserves Officer, at Long Point Reserve. Photo by Eddie Safarik.

Samphire (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*) at Long Point Reserve. Photo by Eddie Safarik.

Lovers of wetlands will have been following along for the past three years, as we've worked with Nature Glenelg Trust (NGT) to restore the natural flow of water at Long Point Reserve, on Moulting Lagoon. The whole show wrapped up in May, finishing with a replanting on those restoration works.

Before we acquired this property for conservation, previous owners had installed drainage infrastructure, including to dry out fields for grazing and for a failed aquaculture project. Long Point Reserve is naturally a saltmarsh wetland, and this drainage had displaced many of the species reliant on regular dampness. Moulting Lagoon is home to molluscs and crustaceans that are an important food source for birds and fish. Saltmarsh and seagrass wetlands regulate the water quality and supply food that native fish and birds need to survive. That includes the bream and flounder that are plentiful on Moulting Lagoon, as well as the estuary's Pacific oyster farms.

NGT has been removing drains in a careful and evidence-based manner so that natural water flow is restored across the property. This is good news for saltmarsh communities: climate change projections for sea-level rise and increased storm surges mean this vegetation is going to need a clear path to migrate upslope as the water gets higher.

During March over ten days, multiple excavators removed levees and drains, some built by convicts in the early 1880s, others as late as the 1990s.

We're already seeing samphire, a salt-tolerant succulent, regenerating in the places where drain removal was completed last year. Now our job is to give these plants and others a helping hand across the reserve.

In early May, Reserves Officers Dan Gfeller and Iden Reidy got on the shovels and planned out where the revegetation would happen. After studying the landscape to see what plants were regrowing where, and reviewing forecasts for where the water would flow, the team imagined a future envelope of great growing potential and got to work.

With a team of local volunteers, they planted 1,200 plants in one day. It wasn't a nice day – cold weather and plenty of sticky mud – but everyone was enthusiastic and put in an amazing effort. When you consider the species they planted were samphire (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*), grasses (*Austrostipa stipoides*) and sedges (*Gahnia filum*) – all very close to the ground, with a lot of repetitive, back-breaking bending – we're even more grateful to volunteers Jennie and Rob Churchill, Mark Lawrence and Stuart Dudgeon. We're all looking forward to seeing these plants flourishing in their restored surroundings.

This work is part of a project supported by NRM South through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

WHY DO SALT MARSHES MATTER?

Half of Tasmania's saltmarsh wetlands have been lost or degraded, mostly due to land-use changes. Weeds are a major risk to saltmarsh vegetation, while climate change and sea-level rise bring more threats.

Coastal saltmarsh wetlands are unique habitats, generally tidal and inundated regularly or occasionally. Salt-tolerant plants such as succulents, herbs, grasses and low shrubs grow, providing habitat for crabs, snails, insects, spiders and fish. Saltmarshes connect land and sea, filter run-off water and sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Remaining coastal saltmarsh wetlands are found in a narrow margin around Tasmania in shallow, sheltered intertidal zones. Dr Eric Woehler notes that 'pressures on Tasmania's saltmarshes have seen much of this habitat lost, and rising sea levels may exacerbate those pressures. Those kept intact will have the greatest resilience, maintaining their critical ecosystem roles well into the future.'

The TLC protects one of the largest and most intact saltmarsh areas in Tasmania, at Long Point Reserve. We also work with the Cradle Coast Authority to protect threatened coastal saltmarsh on private properties, including some Land for Wildlife properties.

Saltmarshes are a vital part of Tasmania's habitat protection jigsaw. That's why it's so important for us to protect a prime example of this increasingly vulnerable habitat at Sloping Main Reserve.