



MEDIA RELEASE

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New Alliance launched to force action to save St Kilda Mangroves

Leaders in science, industry, environment and community gathered today at the St Kilda Mangroves in Adelaide's north to announce the formation of a major new alliance to defend this vital ecosystem.

The St Kilda Mangroves Alliance is a powerful coalition of local, national and international organisations and individuals representing environment, industry, science and community formed to ensure a best practice remediation plan is urgently put in place for the recovery and long-term health of this globally significant area.

Craig Wilkins, Chief Executive of the Conservation Council of SA:

"This is an ecological disaster on an international scale.

"The problem is not fixed, and damage is still occurring. The public has lost confidence in the ability of the leaseholder (Buckland Dry Creek Ltd.) and the Department of Energy and Mining to respond with the urgency required to turn it around.

"A new cross-sector community Alliance will increase pressure for immediate corrective action and investment in a long-term solution to heal the site," he said.

Peri Coleman, respected local ecologist and Principal Consultant at Delta Environmental Consulting:

"A month after the company was issued with a clear direction to immediately remove the hyper-saline brine causing the damage, the brine is still present and seeping out.

"We need far greater transparency from the company and the regulators. There is an enormous amount of local, community and scientific expertise that has so far been ignored or downplayed. As a result, poor decision making has only made the damage worse.

"We also need work to start now on a longer-term solution for this coastline that protects the habitat values and removes the risk of damage occurring in the future," she said.

Lindsay Virgo, St Kilda & Surrounds Progress & Tourism Association:

"The destruction is devastating to not only our local tourist attraction, but also the intrastate, interstate and international tourism sector.

“Community distress is growing as the damage continues and action in response is too slow. We are sick of hearing ‘trust us’, as we did trust the regulatory agencies in the initial phase of the response, and things have only got worse,” he said.

Aleisa Lamanna, Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife Project Coordinator, Birdlife Australia

“The affected area is vital habitat for thousands of migratory shorebirds which make the round trip from Siberia and the Arctic every year along the East Asian-Australasian flyway to return to St Kilda.

“The saltfields are the single most significant shorebird site in the Gulf, regularly supporting around half the total population of birds, including internationally significant populations of Red-necked Stint and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

“As South Australians, we have an incredible responsibility to look after this globally significant bird habitat,” she said.

The Alliance is calling for:

1. The immediate removal of the damaging hyper-saline brine in the ponds to the South of St Kilda Road
2. Much greater transparency and genuine two-way exchange of information between Buckland Dry Creek Ltd, The Department for Energy & Mining and the public.
3. Development of a closure & rehabilitation plan, in partnership with the public, for the damaged ponds and a restoration plan for the surrounding tidal wetlands
4. A permanent solution to the unstable ‘Holding Pattern’ operating in the northern ponds, preferably the transition of those ponds to self-sustaining natural habitats that do not pose ongoing risks to the surrounding tidal wetlands.

Alliance Organisations include:

Conservation Council of South Australia, St Kilda Residents Association, Port Adelaide Residents Environment Protection Group, Landcare SA, Trees for Life SA, Nature Conservation Society South Australia, Eco Pro Tem, Friends of Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary, Birdlife Australia, Friends of Parks, Estuary Care Foundation, Friends of St Vincent Gulf, Birds SA, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Butterfly Conservation SA.

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