

SDFSFA Newsletter – Sept/Oct 2025

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SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

Email: info@sdfsfa.net or Web: <https://sdfsfa.net>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/scubadivesa/>

SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/568109670769809>

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SDFSFA Patron:
Dr. Richard Harris



Promising diving at Second Valley in September. Photos by Regan Buckley posted on SA Dive Sites

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HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM AND RAPID BAY JETTY UPDATE

By Helena Wescombe-Down, President, SDFSa

The Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) sadly continues to have a serious impact on our marine life and the industries that rely on it. The impact of this, along with the closure of the waters surrounding the old Rapid Bay Jetty has had a profound effect on divers, snorkellers and the diving industry.

Thousands of others have also been affected – those whose lives have been hit by the economic losses stemming from the reduction in people visiting coastal areas, such as tourism operators, accommodation providers, local shops, fuel stations etc. Many jobs have already been lost in various industries due to the downturn in visitors and people participating in ocean sports.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet has formed an Algal Bloom Co-ordination Unit, which is co-ordinating the amazing efforts of so many government departments, organisations and individuals. As reported in our last newsletter SDFSa is now a member of the SA Government's Algal Bloom Reference Group – this gives us access to a number of influential people and decision makers. It also gives us significant insight into what the State Government is doing about the algal bloom. We continue to advocate for you, our members, at these Algal Bloom Reference Group meetings, however we need your input, so if there is anything you would like us to raise at these meetings **please contact us at info@sdfs.net**.

We have been putting forward our case to:

- Restore access to the waters around the old Rapid Bay jetty by removing all unsafe structures from the jetty, whilst also maintaining an appropriate habitat for the Leafy Sea Dragon and other marine species.
- Opening up an alternative site that will not be affected by the HAB – a fresh water quarry, situated in Highbury. This is a complex ask, but we are gathering a strong argument to support this.
- Removal of the exclusion zone around the old Port Stanvac Jetty site and beach access to the area.

The Government is aware that SDFSa is developing a formal business case which we hope will be submitted to the Premier within the next couple of weeks. In order to ensure we have a business case supported by facts we have been working hard in the background on collating data and gathering as much information as possible by talking to various credible stakeholders .

We have received many letters from dive clubs, shops and other relevant organisations in support of the business case, and these will be attached as an Appendix to the Business Case. **If your club has not done so, and you would like to provide the SDFSa with a letter of support please contact us at info@sdfs.net** and we will provide you with more information. In addition we are championing a petition, developed with AusOcean, to the SA Government to restore access to the waters around the old Rapid Bay jetty as quickly as possible. We encourage all of you to sign, and to circulate as broadly as possible. This again will form part of the business case:

<https://www.change.org/p/restore-access-to-the-old-rapid-bay-jetty>

What the Government has been doing:

Formulating a Summer Plan

A summer plan is being developed, which is due for release in October. The contents of this has been formulated through information received from various forums and direct community engagement.

The main areas of focus within the plan will be:

- Mental health and well being;
- Community consultation;
- Environmental resilience and restoration
- Protecting our way of life;
- Industry and economic support.

Business support

- Business Grants: South Australian small businesses impacted by the algal bloom are eligible for grants of up to \$10,000. If you previously applied for one of these grants and were unsuccessful, try again – the criteria for these grants has been changing, as the Government learn more about the impacts of the HAB on businesses. If you have put in an application previously, your details will still be in the system.
- Business Recovery Services: Free access to financial counselling, mental health support, and workforce advice to help impacted businesses manage the effects and plan for recovery.

Science & research

- Coastal Monitoring Network: Expanding early detection and monitoring of HAB using real-time sensors, satellite imagery, and oceanographic modelling to enable faster warnings for industry.
- National Testing Laboratory in SA: Establishing a local lab for harmful algal bloom and toxin testing to eliminate delays caused by sending samples to New Zealand.
- Rapid Marine Impact Assessment: Fast-tracking assessment of fish stocks and marine ecosystems using ecological modelling, underwater video, and dive surveys. We were advised at a recent HAB Reference Group meeting that this should be completed within the next couple of weeks.
- Citizen Science Analysis: Rapid review of existing citizen science data to document ecological impacts and set a baseline for recovery.
- Response Plan Development: Creating a dedicated harmful algal bloom response plan to guide future events.

Communication

- Algal Bloom Taskforce: A cross-agency taskforce meets weekly.
- Algal Bloom Reference Group: established to support industries and stakeholders primarily impacted by the algal bloom to engage directly with the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water and the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development in relation to the response and recovery from the bloom. As mentioned above, SDFS have representation in this group.
- Community Engagement Forums
- Public Information Campaigns: Campaigns to promote coastal tourism and seafood industries and support recreational fishing.

Community support & clean-up

- Community Fund: Supporting local activities and small projects to help coastal communities recover and reconnect.
- Beach Clean-Up Support Funding: For councils to assist with removing dead fish and marine life from affected beaches.
- Oyster Reef Restoration Program.
- Coast is Calling Vouchers – 20,000 vouchers for accommodation and experiences were released, with 123,053 people seeking to get one – so if you're one of those people who tried and missed out – you're not alone!

Further information can be found here: <https://www.algalbloom.sa.gov.au/support-from-government>.

What you can do to help:

- Keep diving and keep posting regarding site conditions on the SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/568109670769809>
 - Did you know that only 30% of our coast is affected by the HAB (yes it does happen to be around a number of our popular dive sites, but there are some much less affected than others)
 - **Divers are now reporting promising dives at Second Valley, as well as sites on the west coast of the Yorke Peninsula not yet affected by the bloom, including Port Hughes and Point Turton.**
- Sign the above mentioned petition regarding Rapid Bay;
- Support local businesses suffering from the downturn in business due to the HAB;
- Stay informed – visit <https://www.algalbloom.sa.gov.au/>, sign up for the regular Algal Bloom update, or visit one of the community forums (dates & locations can be found on the algal bloom website);
- Join Citizen science initiatives such as iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/sa-marine-mortality-events-2025> Your photos are essential! iNaturalist and OzFish Unlimited have established the SA Marine Mortality Events project. All SA ocean users and beach goers are asked to submit photos of deceased marine life either on land or underwater in order to track the number of species and overall marine life loss. To date, over 549 species have been listed, with over 52,000 observations of dead marine life.

Did you know?

- Locally caught fish, crabs, prawns, lobsters and squid are safe to eat;
- **BUT**, locally caught scallops, oysters, mussels and pipis are **NOT** safe to eat, due to the fact they are filter feeders.

SPLASH INN Friday 24 October, 6:30 pm, Rob Roy Hotel

Come join us for the sixth edition of **Splash Inn**. **Guest speaker Faith Coleman will bring updates on the Algal Bloom currently impacting South Australian waters.**



Faith Coleman will be well known to many of you, having worked in South Australian saline aquatic environments for almost thirty years. However, as an estuarine and coastal lagoon ecologist, she usually stays well out of water deep enough for us to dive in. Faith and both her parents have done extensive private sector research into hypersaline botany, microbial ecology, nutrient fluxes and water chemistry, with clients who regularly ask for microbial blooms to be controlled entirely, or managed so only one specific species of phytoplankton blooms, which gives Faith lots of practice identifying why a bloom has formed and how to prevent it. She also has a fascination with historic aquatic ecology, spending endless amounts of time tracing changes in our near shore aquatic environments as a result of human influences.

Faith owns EcoProTem, is the principal ecologist for Delta Environmental Consulting and is a co-founder of the Coorong Environmental Trust. She is a Board member of the International Society of Salt Lake Research and has sat on a range of government boards. She was a co-recipient of the 2017 Unsung Hero of SA Science award and has a number of other awards due to her service to the environment. In the early days of the current South Australia marine disaster, she was one of the few scientists willing to publicly answer community and industry questions when concerns started being raised both in response to the impacts of the heatwave (last November) and when the resulting *Karenia* bloom hit more populated beaches (March). She has continued to lead public discourse around the subject, and sits on a number of the key government committees tackling the problem. At our next Splash Inn, she will talk about this bloom, its causes, similar events and what it might take, to prevent the next one.

Tickets to this free event available now on Eventbrite! <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/splash-inn-006-tickets-1560842444769>

WE NEED YOUR TALENTS! Join our Brainstrust.

The SDFSFA Committee is calling for talented members to become a **Friend of the SDFSFA**.

We know that every SDFSFA member has a range of talents that could be a wonderful “brainstrust” to help out the Committee from time to time. We don’t pretend to have all the expertise required to do our job well and that’s why we are seeking your help.

The Committee wants to create a list of members, “The Friends of the SDFSFA” that we could draw upon from time to time. The workload would not be onerous and would depend on you and your availability. We know everyone is busy.

Most of the work would be advisory or perhaps a review of a document or even help write a grant application.

What kind of expertise could help us?

- Marine biology, including species specific marine biology
- Coastal and marine ecology
- Citizen science
- Engineering (eg, insight on jetties and other coastal structures, dredging, etc.)
- Government relations, including high level strategic advice on topical issues
- Grant writing and review
- Marketing and media
- Website design and social media

We also run an annual Bunnings sausage sizzle to raise funds. We are sure that everyone in the membership can sell a butty and a drink or flip a sausage on the grill. Let us know if you can help out at a Bunnings sausage sizzle.

Please register your interest at:

project@sdfs.net and include the following:

- Name
- Phone:
- Email:
- Area of Interest:

IMPORTANT NOTICES AND REMINDERS

Partial closure of the Upper Spencer Gulf marine park: Bubble curtain installed

According to National Parks and Wildlife Service SA, "A portion of the Upper Spencer Gulf Marine Park has been temporarily restricted to protect cuttlefish hatchlings and eggs and ensure public safety during the deployment of an air bubble curtain. Penalties apply for entering the restricted area. The designated zone is located off the coast of Stony Point. This prohibition operates for a period of 90 days, until 26 November 2025. The prohibition may be extended."

[\[https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/know-before-you-go/closures-and-alerts/upper-spencer-gulf-marine-park\]](https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/know-before-you-go/closures-and-alerts/upper-spencer-gulf-marine-park).

As reported by the ABC, the State and Federal governments "are investing nearly \$700,000 to install a "bubble curtain" hoping to protect cuttlefish and their eggs in the Upper Spencer Gulf. It aims to protect more than 50,000 cuttlefish eggs and hatchlings should the algal bloom move up the gulf."

[\[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-08-28/bubble-curtain-protect-upper-spencer-gulf-cuttlefish-algal-bloom/105708406\]](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-08-28/bubble-curtain-protect-upper-spencer-gulf-cuttlefish-algal-bloom/105708406)

Rapid Bay Old Jetty – A Friendly Reminder

Most of you already know the old jetty at Rapid Bay is under a full exclusion zone (including the T-section and 20m around it). Unfortunately, we've had reports that some divers are still heading underneath from the surveillance that's being carried out at the site.

We get it – it's an iconic site and hard to resist – but here's why it matters:

- The structure is unstable and could collapse without warning.
- Anyone diving there risks not just themselves, but also undermines SDFS's efforts to get this resolved in a timely way.

What we're doing: The SDFSa is working directly with DIT and councils to push for a safe, long-term outcome at Rapid Bay. We're putting the diving community's voice front and centre – but if people ignore the rules, it makes those conversations harder and progress slower.

How you can help:

- Keep clear of the exclusion zone
- Respect the buoys and signs
- Remind your buddies to do the same

The more we all stick together on this, the stronger our case will be – and the sooner we can get back to enjoying Rapid Bay safely.

Sign the Rapid Bay Petition

We need more numbers! SDFSa with AusOcean have launched a petition to urge the State to restore access to the waters around Rapid Bay jetty. So far we have over 2,000 signers, but for the petition to have real weight and influence we need to double that! Please circulate widely and encourage all your diving mates to sign.

We are specifically asking for the government to commit to making the waters surrounding the old Rapid Bay Jetty safe, by removing all unsafe structures from the jetty, whilst also maintaining an appropriate habitat for the Leafy Sea Dragon and other marine species. This petition, developed with AusOcean, will support the SDFSa Business Case to reopen Rapid Bay for diving. We encourage all of you to sign, and to circulate as broadly as possible.

Sign the Petition here: <https://www.change.org/p/restore-water-access-to-the-old-rapid-bay-jetty>

SA Fishing App has been updated and is available for download

According to <https://mailchi.mp/sa.gov.au/catch-the-new-sa-fishing-app?e=cdf94f7b5>, the free SA Fishing app for all recreational fishers has been newly updated and is available to download through the app stores and Google Play.

SDFSa COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The next meeting of the Committee is Wednesday, 22nd October, 7pm at the Arab Steed upstairs meeting room.

NEWS FROM SHOPS AND CLUBS

SeaWolves SWAP MEET - 2025

Need to find some gear? Or maybe find a hard to source part? Don't want to blind purchase on Marketplace from interstate? Well, we are doing it again! Following the huge success of the October 2024 SCUBA gear Swap Meet, Sea Wolves Dive Club is again hosting the event at our Morphet Vale clubrooms.

Gear at the 2024 event included the expected gear such as new and pre-loved wet suits, computers, regulators, BSDs and the like, but also included a few surprises including a RIB boat, emergency oxygen equipment, cave diving lights and more. 2025 is looking like an equally interesting event. We will also be unveiling our new air fill station.

All divers are welcome to attend. Meet some new or old friends, buy some gear, enjoy a free sausage or buy a drink at the bar. Free entry.

- When: Tuesday October 28th, 2025
- Time: Starts 6:30pm. Finishes by 8:00pm before our Club meeting.
- Where: 10 Bayford Rise, Morphett Vale SA 5162
- Who: Call Peter Fulton (0430 638 988) or email secretary@seawolves.org.au

Edithburgh and Wool Bay Jetties Marine Watch

The Edithburgh & Wool Bay Jetties Marine Watch project has officially launched. Paul Macdonald reports in the DownunderPix September newsletter that “The dives revealed some encouraging signs of recovery, with several marine species reappearing at both jetties following the damage caused by the harmful algal bloom.”

Paul and Elizabeth are looking for one more male volunteer diver to join the team for the 17-19 October monitoring weekend. Email Paul at info@downunderpix.com to get involved.

Southern Scuba Clinic

has moved to the old Divers Service premises at 80 Grange Rd, Welland.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- The Seeds for Snapper SA team for receiving the 2025 SA Environment Working Together Award which was for their incredible efforts to restore South Australian seagrass meadows.
- Dr Nina Wootton (University of Adelaide marine ecologist)) on being named South Australia's Young Tall Poppy of the Year. She is passionate about science education and protecting our oceans from the devastating impacts of plastic pollution.
- Professor Thomas Wernberg and Professor Sean Connell, Great Southern Reef Science Committee members on being awarded the 2025 International Temperate Reefs Symposium Award for 'Life-long Service and Contributions to Marine Science' from the International Temperate Reefs Community.
- Dr Aaron Eger on being awarded the Emerging Leader in Science Eureka Award for his work on the protection and restoration of kelp forests.
- Sean Sloan on being appointed as the new Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) Managing Director.
- OzFish Unlimited on achieving ten years of restoring fish habitat across Australia.
- The Living Seawalls team for winning the Environmental Research Eureka Award for their groundbreaking work in urban marine habitat restoration.
- Julian Hebenstreit on being awarded the 2025 Shark Photographer of the Year on Shark Awareness Day (14th of July). Additional winners can be found at <https://www.uwpmag.com/?download=146>.
- Ross Gudgeon on being announced as the Overall Winner in the 2025 Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year, with his stunning photo of cauliflower soft coral.
- Cliff Richardson on being named as the Divers Alert Network's new President & CEO.
- DAN-PADI Ocean Literacy Project on being officially recognized by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. See https://www.deeperblue.com/unesco-endorses-dan-padi-ocean-literacy-project/?mc_cid=64180476a7&mc_eid=d4cc43123c for more details.

STEVE'S SCIENCE STORIES for the month

By Steve Reynolds

WARNING SYSTEMS FOR HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS (HABs)

According to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), “rising temperatures and marine pollution are taking their toll. From harmful algae and bacteria to plastic waste, sewage, and fertilizer run-off, the threats are growing. That’s why WHOI scientists and engineers are working hard to advance sustainable, science-based solutions that help keep communities healthy and our ocean thriving.”

“HABs impact fishing, tourism, and public health and cause \$100 million in annual losses in the U.S. alone. To address this, WHOI scientists invented breakthrough technology—the Imaging FlowCytobot and the Environmental Systems Processor (ESP), to detect toxic algae. Deployed along New England’s coast, as part of a national observing network, these instruments provide early warnings to resource managers and blue economy stakeholders via WHOI’s real-time HABhub website. WHOI researchers are also developing mitigation strategies to remove toxins and cells from impacted waters, with large-scale testing currently awaiting approval.”

SEA SQUIRTS HAVE A SURPRISING ROLE ON WARMING REEFS

According to the Great Southern Reef Foundation’s September Reef update, sea squirts have a surprising role on warming reefs. They say that new research suggests that one species of sea squirt, *Herdmania grandis*, which grows up to 16 cm and occurs all around Australia, could alter the role of reefs in a warming ocean.

Reefs in the Solitary Islands in NSW were once dominated by carbon-capturing kelp forests. These kelp forests have declined whilst *Herdmania grandis* has increased more than fourfold in just two decades. They say that this matters because “the microbes that live in *H. grandis* produce nitrous oxide (N_2O), a greenhouse gas about 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide and also harmful to the ozone layer.”

Herdmania grandis in the Solitary Islands “produced N_2O at rates up to 400 times higher per square metre than nearby marine sediments, and on par with local estuaries, ecosystems already recognised as major global N_2O sources.”

“Lab experiments showed emissions were greater under summer-like temperatures than in winter, showing that warming seas can directly drive changes. As warming and topicalization continue, temperate reefs lose kelp as warm-affinity species move in.

“Tropical herbivorous fishes can suppress kelp recovery, opening space for animals like ascidians to take over. When N_2O -producing species such as *Herdmania grandis* dominate, reefs that once captured carbon could shift toward being local net greenhouse gas sources.

“The authors highlight that emissions from reef animals like ascidians shouldn’t be ignored. If they’re producing greenhouse gases at scale, they need to be measured and factored into climate and reef management plans. That means monitoring which species take over as kelp declines, linking kelp restoration to climate outcomes, and directly measuring how much nitrous oxide escapes from ascidian-dominated reefs.”

FOR YOUR CALENDAR: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South Australia

17-19 October 2025, Edithburgh: Edithburgh and Wool Bay Jetties Marine Watch monitoring weekend. Email Paul at info@downunderpix.com for details.

Friday 24 October, 6:30 pm, Rob Roy Hotel: **SPLASH INN**, featuring Faith Coleman with updates on the Harmful Algal Bloom. Register for this free event on Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/splash-inn-006-tickets-1560842444769>

28 October 2025, 6:30 pm: **Sea Wolves Swap Meet**. 10 Bayford Rise, Morphett Vale SA 5162. Call Peter Fulton (0430 638 988) or email secretary@seawolves.org.au

Interstate/International

Sept 26 - Oct 12 Nature Festival with the theme "Flow." See <https://www.naturefestival.org.au/>.

11-14 November 2025: DEMA show will be held in Orlando, USA. It is the largest trade-only event in the world for diving, travel, and action water sports professionals.

ABOUT THE SDFS...

SDFS is a non-profit, incorporated membership association dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of our unique underwater world.

JOIN US FOR FREE!

<https://sdfs.net/membership-categories/>

The more members we have, the stronger our influence. We serve as a peak body representing the interests of South Australian recreational scuba divers and the related sports of freediving and snorkelling, including the provision of information to government and the general public. Together we can have real impact on the issues affecting the South Australian diving community.

If you wish to be added to the mailing list for this Newsletter, join the SDFS!

You can also read about the Federation's work in monthly issues of DiveLog Australasia, Scubadiver ANZ and on our website at <https://sdfs.net>. Stay up to date with the latest news through our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/scubadivesa/>. And follow our FB group, SA Dive Sites

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