

# TAMAR SUSTAINABILITY INDEX NEWSLETTER

*What's happening with the Tamar Sustainability Index Project?*

Final Issue 5  
June 2008

A joint project by Tamar NRM and CSIRO



Welcome to the final newsletter for the Tamar Sustainability Index (TSI) project. As we near the end of the TSI project we can see that a tremendous amount of good quality work has been completed in a short timeframe by a dedicated team of people in Tamar NRM and CSIRO. We have all enjoyed working together as a team and are very pleased with how the final product, the Tamar Sustainability Index has turned out. We even managed to have fun along the way!!

### *So what have we achieved?*

We have successfully developed a tool that will potentially help us to create a new market for environmental services in Northern Tasmania (and other regions) as an alternative and more efficient mechanism for natural resource management investment in the region.

Of course we could not have achieved this without the support, intellect and enthusiasm of the TSI consultative and peer review groups. We thank you most sincerely and look forward to your continued interest and participation as we progress our plans for the practical application of the TSI in future stewardship and other NRM programs in Tasmania and interstate.

### Want an interesting read?

The following documents produced by the project team are available on the Tamar NRM website at [www.tamar-nrm.org.au](http://www.tamar-nrm.org.au)

- ◆ Reports – Final project report, consultation and review meetings outcomes
- ◆ Guidebook for calculating the TSI
- ◆ Paper ‘Using Agri-Environment Indices to Guide Stewardship Payments’
- ◆ Paper ‘Measuring the Benefits of Environmental Stewardship Services in Rural Landscapes’
- ◆ Scoping study – Valuation metrics
- ◆ TSI promotional flyers and newsletters
- ◆ Media releases and articles

### National Peer Review meeting Canberra

The TSI team held a national peer review meeting in Canberra on the 29th April 2008 with representatives from a number of prominent government, industry, scientific and NRM organisations.

The purpose of the review was to provide an overview of the TSI and to obtain feedback about its design and applicability. Two overseas guests from the OECD and US Dept of Agriculture also gave presentations about the use of indices overseas.

Feedback from the peer review group included:

- ◆ There is excellent logic and transparency behind the TSI.
- ◆ The weighting process is a key part of the tool use and must be inclusive from the start.
- ◆ Objectives and outcomes of the TSI should be clearly stated from the outset.
- ◆ More emphasis on NRM planning within the tool design is needed.
- ◆ The implementation process is more important than the science. Capturing and maintaining social capital is an important part of the process.
- ◆ Public and private benefits must be clarified and transaction costs minimised.
- ◆ Economies of scale for monitoring are needed.
- ◆ The TSI could be applicable to other regions.
- ◆ The TSI should not be a ‘black box’ that makes decisions for us. It’s a decision support tool.
- ◆ Having an index doesn’t preclude being able to set funds aside for other issues e.g. salinity.
- ◆ It will be important over time to monitor how the weightings contribute to actual outcomes.

See the Tamar NRM website for a more details

## Final project report to be released mid June

The final report for the TSI project is due to be released in mid June 2008. The report concludes that the approach taken by the TSI can effectively provide a means of quantifying benefits of environmental stewardship and guiding NRM investment decisions.

The recommendations in the final report are:

1. Seek opportunities and funds for operating a stewardship program in the Tamar region.
2. Train staff as appropriate.
3. Identify other catchments or regions where the TSI model (framework) may be applicable.
4. Refine processes by which the community can become engaged.
5. Work towards national standards.
6. Assess opportunities for application of the TSI in other policy instruments.

### Got any interesting project ideas?

Tamar NRM is looking to develop strategic partnerships with other key stakeholders in the region to establish collaborative projects.

Building on previous work, Tamar NRM would like to trial the use of the Tamar Sustainability Index methodology through the establishment of an Environmental Stewardship Program in Northern Tasmania.

Tamar NRM would like to hear from potential private investors, industry groups or NRM organisations that may be interested in promoting a stewardship program in the region.

Please call Tamar NRM Executive Officer, Kay Bailey on **(03) 6323 3310** for more information or to discuss your project ideas.

## Where to from here?

The field of environmental stewardship and valuing environmental services is evolving rapidly.

Benefits such as biodiversity protection, water quality enhancement, carbon sequestration, long term soil health, weed control and landscape scenery are being sought from private landholders. This is leading to increased interest in using metrics to value services as the most efficient way to operate stewardship programs.

The successful development and trialing of the TSI opens the door to establishing a new market for environmental services where farmers and other landholders would be able to nominate prices for the provision of these services through a stewardship program in the region.

This can only be achieved if funds, to purchase the environmental services, are secured. At this stage the stewardship program for Tamar is an idea and funds have not been secured. But Tamar NRM is keen to work with partners to create collaborative projects and will look closely for any new funding opportunities.

We need to continue to build on what we have done together and develop a stewardship program that engages rather than disengages farmers. In this way we have the opportunity to establish a new approach for NRM investment in the region that will create huge NRM benefits for the future.

### For more information:

Kay Bailey, Tamar NRM

Ph: 03 6323 3310 or

Email: [Kay.Bailey@launceston.tas.gov.au](mailto:Kay.Bailey@launceston.tas.gov.au)

Website: [www.tamar-nrm.org.au](http://www.tamar-nrm.org.au)

*This project has been funded by the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry through the National Landcare Programme.*

