

Mussels in 'vinegar' not a good recipe

By Lisa Symonds

Acidic water strong enough to dissolve mussel shells has been found near Lake Alexandrina in a discovery that points to the continuing decline of the Lower Lakes.

About 200ha of acidic water has been discovered in the Loveday Bay area adjacent to Lake Alexandrina on its southern side.

It has a pH level of less than three, making it more acidic than vinegar, testing by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) shows.

EPA staff have found mussel shells that have been completely or partially dissolved along the shoreline and residents are being warned to stay away from the water.

Stark reminder

The State Environment Department's Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Projects team environmental manager, Russell Seaman, said the discovery was a "stark reminder of the significant risks facing the Lower Lakes".

"Fortunately, a natural sand barrier has stopped the acidic water in Loveday Bay from reaching Lake

Alexandrina, reducing the potential for harm on this occasion," he said.

"Managing the risk of acidification remains a major environmental issue, and will require careful monitoring and management."

Acid sulphate soils are a major threat to the environmental health of the lakes.

Bioremediation and limestone dosing have been carried out to ease the threat, and the Government has built three temporary weirs to raise the water levels in the Goolwa Channel, Currency Creek and Finniss River in a bid to keep as much of the soils as possible covered by water.