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MEDIA RELEASE.

News from SEQ Catchments.

Space Shuttle aids in first 3-D seafloor map of Moreton Bay.

With the help of modern computing power, mapping specialists have produced the first 3-D map of the seafloor of Moreton Bay.

The map shows landscapes that haven't been seen by human eyes for over 6,000 years since the Polar ice cap melted, sea levels rose and the Bay flooded at the end of the last Ice Age.

SEQ Catchments and the Brisbane Regional Environment Council (BREC), used information from the NASA Space Shuttle and soundings supplied by Maritime Safety Queensland to compile the map.

The specialists used over 4.4 million points of reference to make the 3-D rendering of the seafloor.

SEQ Catchments CEO, Simon Warner, said: "The map will be a great resource for users of the Bay, natural resource managers and educators.

"It will greatly help our understanding of how the bottom of the Bay affects both its biodiversity, fishing resources and water quality."

He said it had taken the latest technology to map the floor, with the map itself available to download from the SEQ Catchments web site. (www.seqcatchments.com.au).

The Bay stretches from Caloundra to the southern tip of South Stradbroke Island, with numerous islands, internationally significant wetlands, seagrass meadows and sandy beaches.

Declared a Marine Park in 1993 and extended in 1997, the Bay itself covers some 1,300 sq km, and its permanent species include dolphins, dugongs, shorebirds, grey nurse sharks and various fish species.

The Bay also provides important seasonal resources for migratory wading birds, humpback whales and marine turtles.

What the new map reveals

The map reveals that while time and tides may have blurred the old landscape, significant parts remain.

Six thousand years ago, Moreton Bay was a rich valley fed by a huge volume of water flowing from North Stradbroke, Moreton Island and the now submerged northern banks. These islands, as they are now, would have been one, and connected a giant sand dune with thousands of springs like Myora feeding into the "Moreton Valley".

The Brisbane River would have run through this valley exiting to the north of Bribie Island. Southern Moreton Bay would have once been a series of complex valleys and hills with rich waterways fed by the Logan River and water flows from the Stradbroke dunes.

Many of the islands in the Bay would have been the tops of hills. It is no surprise that trawlers in Moreton Bay have occasionally caught the remains of large trees from the bottom of the Bay.

The "Moreton Valley" would have been a well-sheltered, well-watered and very productive landscape. Moreton bay is a dynamic landscape that has been flooded and drained many times in the last million years as ice ages came and went.

Tsunamis and super storms have also played their role in shaping the bay as we see it now. The map shows that this has produced a rich and complex landscape that although covered by the sea remains as a powerful influence on currents, fisheries and water quality.

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