

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BRIEF

The origins of the study derived from the recognition by the Coastal Protection Branch of the South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage that the scenic quality of South Australia's coast is a significant social, economic and environmental resource. The coast has played a major role in the development of the State and continues to be enjoyed by the community.

Increasing developmental pressures on the coast however are threatening the very qualities that the community value. Developments including housing and land division, marinas, aquaculture and wind farms, together with access roads and trails are imposing far greater pressure on the coast than in the past.

The Branch therefore identified the need to evaluate the scenic value of South Australia's coastal landscape as a basis for the development of policy and the assessment of development. The Project's aim was to measure and map the scenic value of the coastal zone of South Australia.

The outcomes of the project were intended to:

- Provide a basis for strategic planning and policy within the coastal zone;
- Provide information on community aspirations both on a local, regional and statewide basis, in respect to landscape qualities, in order to include appropriate development controls in Council Development plans;
- Provide a basis for the assessment of development, particularly within the coastal zone in development plans where development should be classified as non-complying or prohibited;
- Provide support for decisions made on policy, planning and development applications including in appeals;
- Inform and enhance knowledge and understanding of the value of the coastal landscape among professionals, regions and the community.

The tasks required of the project were to:

- Develop and apply a methodology to measure the scenic value of the South Australia's coast;
- Map scenic value at a scale sufficient for planning and policy development;
- Provide recommendations for the incorporation of the methodology into the Policy, Planning and Development Assessment processes;
- Report on the findings of the project;
- Complete the project by 30 June 2005.

The Study Brief defined the Project's scope and certain specifications to be observed. A Project Steering Committee was established to oversee and assist in the implementation of the Project. The Project Brief is included as Appendix 10.1.

1.2 PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The project brief required the development and application of a methodology to measure and map the scenic value of the South Australian coast. The approach to this task required the coast to be classified into units of similar characteristics, for these to be photographed and rated by participants, and for these ratings to be applied to coastlines of similar characteristics in order to map them.

Figure 1.1 summarises the overall design and methodology of the project. Appendix 10.2 provides a Gantt chart of the components for the term of the project. The approach to the project was guided by the following key considerations as defined in the Project Brief.

(1) Ensure the integrity of the resultant scenic quality ratings

The scenic quality of the coast must be derived in a manner that does not compromise or bias its results. It requires the results provide an objective, rigorous and accurate measure of coastal scenic quality as a basis for development policy and other applications.

The ratings should be derived without reference to their use so that participants can rate scenes disinterested in the use to which they may be put. The principle of disinterest is foundational to social surveys. Informing participants that the results will provide an input for development policy carries with it the

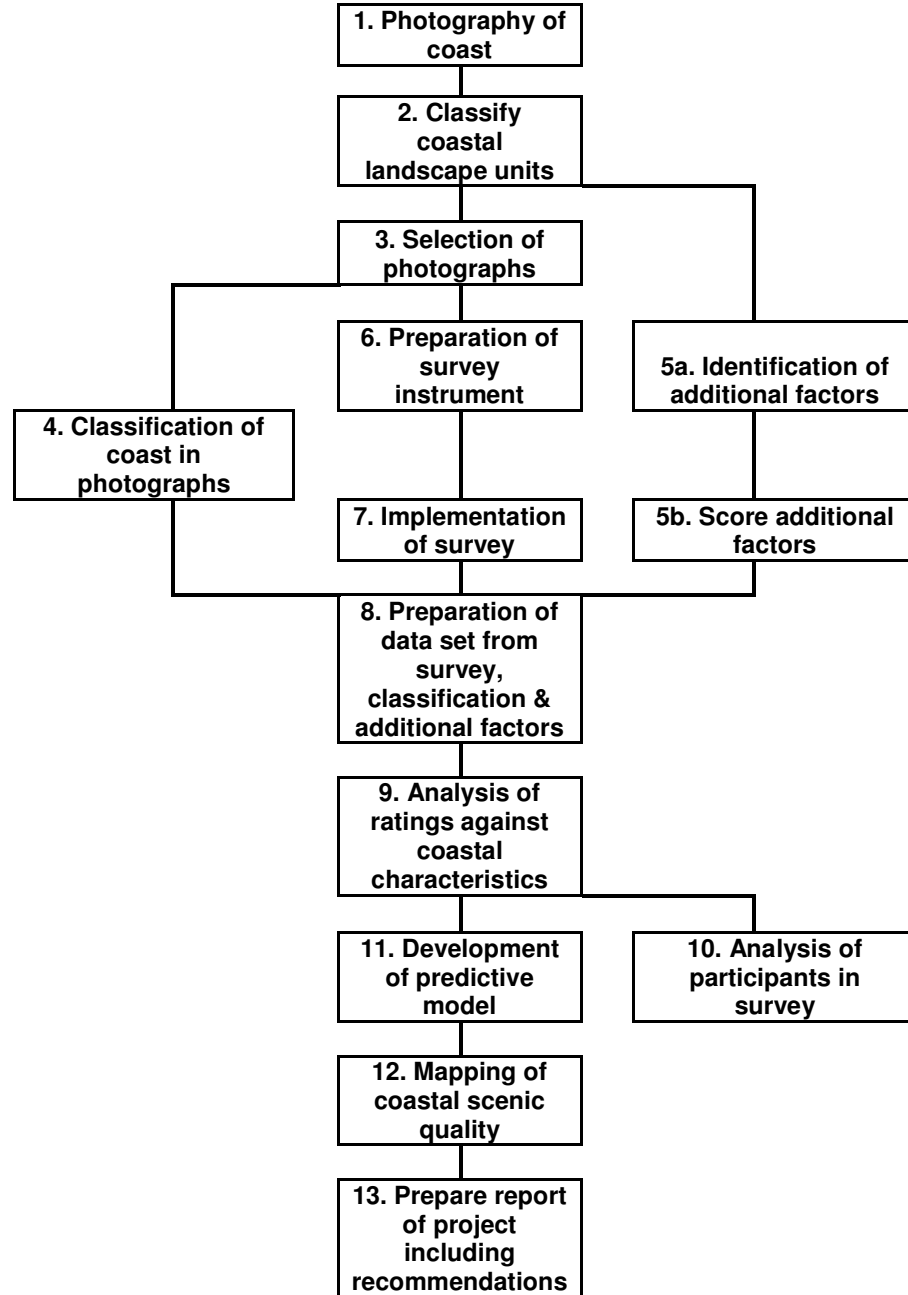


Figure 1.1 Project Methodology

risk of strategic bias; that participants will frame their responses in a way that may achieve their objectives and the survey may accordingly be biased.

The methodology proposed would involve participants from the regions, community and professional groups. The ratings derived from each group could be compared and any differences identified. However based on the literature of such studies and the consultant's previous experience, any differences were not expected to be significant. This means that the scenic quality ratings derived through community involvement could be taken to reflect the preferences of the whole community.

(2) Ensure adequate context for the ratings

Gaining scenic quality ratings which reflect as State-wide perspective and accurately reflect community preferences requires that they be adequately benchmarked. This required the inclusion of non-coastal scenes so that the ratings of the coastal scenes are based within a wider context. Otherwise the ratings would reflect solely the scenic quality range of scenes present at the coast may not necessarily be taken as representative of State-based ratings. The presence of water in the coastal scenes would automatically elevate ratings by at least 2 points (on a 1 – 10 scale), however these heightened ratings would not be apparent if all the scenes contained water and none were without it.

Benchmarking also required that the entire South Australian coast be included, not just sections of it. If say, only Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island were subject of the ratings, then these could not be compared with later surveys of other coastal regions where the scenic quality may be substantially lower. The project needed to cover the entire coast for the results to be comparable from region to region.

(3) Reflect community preferences

As a qualitative attribute of the environment, the assessment of scenic quality must involve the participation of people to provide the ratings of scenic quality. While there are various theories about why people like the landscapes they like (see Section 2.5), these are insufficiently prescriptive to determine scenic quality ratings without involving people.

Alternative methods of assessing scenic quality are often termed *expert assessments* and are largely descriptive, focus on formalist qualities (e.g. line, shadow and texture) and involve analogy, classification of landscape sensitivity, and use of GIS generated maps of visibility and viewsheds. They tend to be driven by the technology that is available and do not test whether the results correspond with community-derived preferences. These are examined in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

1.3 TERMINOLOGY

Terms which are used in this report are defined as follow.

Scenic quality refers to the aesthetic quality of the landscape.

Quality refers to the aesthetic worth of a scene, generally on a high – low continuum.

Landscape comprises the physical characteristics that are present including land form, land use, land cover, the presence of water and other attributes.

Land form comprises the terrain of the landscape including sand dunes, hills, valleys.

Land use covers human use of the land including agriculture and forests, but also non-uses such as national parks and conservation reserves.

Land cover refers mainly to the presence of vegetative cover, trees, shrubs and grasses, but can refer also to crops.