

Future outlook

- Survey participants predicted worsening conditions in 65% and improvements in 19% of the systems assessed.

Future outlook is based upon predicted population growth and specific management and development planned within the systems. This assessment projects a bleak outlook for the Nation's estuaries, as overall eutrophic condition was predicted to worsen in 48 systems, stay the same in 11, and improve in only 14 systems by 2020 (Figure 3.10). Future outlook was not determined for 67 systems, perhaps illustrating uncertainty in future eutrophic condition.

There are presently 12 systems with a moderate low to low overall eutrophic condition but moderate to high susceptibility and a worsening future outlook. Although most (65% of assessed) systems are

predicted to worsen, particularly if nutrient inputs increase, the systems with low eutrophic conditions and moderate to high susceptibility should be a priority for protective management because they are the most at risk. The potential for changes in nutrient loads and hydrology due to climate change should also be explored when considering the future of estuaries (See page 38).

Changes in the past decade

Analysis of actual changes in relation to the 1999 assessment predictions showed that some have already been realized. A complete analysis of the accuracy of these predictions cannot be made until 2020, the year for which the projections were made. However, interim changes can be examined; of the 86 systems expected to worsen, 12 have worsened. Of the eight systems expected to improve, one system has improved.

Figure 3.10. Future outlook on eutrophic condition on a national scale.

