



NSW Government

Department of Water & Energy

Gwydir River to get healthy boost of water

State Plan Priority E1: A secure and sustainable water supply for all users

23 November, 2007

The Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water, Phil Koperberg, today announced that 10,000 million litres of water is being released into Northern NSW's Gwydir River to improve the health of the environment.

The water will be released daily from Copeton Dam over approximately 20 days, providing vital flows to help restore the health of the Gwydir River and the internationally significant Ramsar listed Gwydir Wetlands, one of the largest wetlands in inland NSW.

Releasing this water now will ensure that it is used to its maximum potential to enhance and extend the natural wetting and drying cycle of these wetlands.

It will also help support native fish populations and habitat during the spring-summer breeding season.

The NSW Government will monitor the ecological response to the water releases, providing valuable data for research projects conducted by the Department of Water and Energy, Department of Environment and Climate Change and the University of New England.

The monitoring will also enable the NSW Government to detect if any of this water is diverted illegally, however we don't expect there to be any problems.

The release will use water set aside for the environment in Copeton Dam's Environmental Contingency Allowance (ECA) account, so it will not affect the water allocation for local irrigators or stock and domestic users.

When establishing the Water Sharing Plan for the Gwydir Regulated River Water Source the NSW Government set up the ECA account in order to protect a portion of the water in the Dam for the health of the environment.

Earlier this year two separate ECA releases of approximately 5,000 million litres each were delivered to the Lower Gwydir and Gingham Wetlands, which will also benefit from this latest release.

The Gwydir ECA Annual Release Program 2007-2008 is the first of its kind to be prepared not only for the Gwydir, but also for NSW. It will act as the benchmark to achieve accountability and sustainable management of environmental flows.

More information on the Gwydir Environmental Contingency Allowance Committee and the ECA Annual Release Program is available on the internet at http://www.naturalresources.nsw.gov.au/water/rivers_gwydir_eca.shtml.
