

Report Card for Upper Wollombi Brook Water Source

FOR PUBLIC EXHIBITION

| Water Source Context | | River Flows |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Area: 914.4 km² (84% forested) Average Annual Rainfall 985 mm Inflowing water source: Upper Wollombi Brook Receiving water source: Lower Wollombi Brook, Hunter Regulated River, Hunter River Tidal Pool</p> | | <p>Low flow Index: (80thile in December of days with flow) = 3 ML/day Flow records: 1940 to 2004 (44 yrs) This estimate is based on flows measured in Wollombi Brook at downstream Brickmans Bridge(210135) and Paynes Crossing (210048).</p> |
| Licensed Water use | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total surface water entitlement: 2703 ML/year (99% used for irrigation purposes, 0% used for industrial purposes) • 79 surface water licenses - Peak Daily Demand=32.8 ML/day • Total groundwater entitlement: 10 ML/year (100% used for irrigation purposes) • 2 groundwater licences. • 1.47 % of total Hunter Extraction Management Unit entitlement | | |
| Background information | | |
| Water Source attributes | Rating | Justification |
| Relative Instream Value (within catchment) | High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 threatened bird species • 6 threatened amphibian species • 1 threatened aquatic invertebrate species • platypus have been identified in this water source • high species diversity • drought refuge for water plants and animals • the ecology value of the river is deemed to be high |
| Hydrological Stress | High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peak extraction demand exceeds available flows in December |
| Relative Economic Significance of Irrigation (within catchment) | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medium economic dependence of the local community on water extracted for irrigation |
| Risk to Instream Value (from extraction) | High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instream values are at high risk of being impacted by extractions within the water source |
| Existing Access Arrangements During Dry Conditions | | |
| Water User Association (WUA) | yes - Wollombi Brook WUA | |
| Licensed Cease to Pump (CtP) | Some licences with visible flow and cease to pump conditions | |

Proposed Recommendations for Upper Wollombi Brook Water Source

| Draft Access Rules Wollombi Brook Management Zone | |
|---|---|
| Cease to Pump (CtP) | Groundwater trigger or surface water cease to pump level to be determined by year ten |
| Reference Point | To be defined by year ten |

| Draft Access Rules Congewai Creek Management Zone | |
|---|---|
| Cease to Pump (CtP) | Groundwater trigger or surface water cease to pump level to be determined by year ten |
| Reference Point | To be defined by year ten |

| Draft Trading Rules | |
|---|---|
| INTO water source | No trading into the water source. Trading out of the water source may be permitted from the Lower Wollombi Brook water source to the Upper Wollombi Brook water source. |
| WITHIN water source | Trading permitted within the water source but no trades in upstream direction. No transfers into specified groundwater buffer zones. Trading is permitted between the management zones in a downstream direction. Note that trading in an upstream direction may be allowed based on further studies. |
| Conversion to High Flow Access Licence | Not permitted |
| Conversion to Aquifer Access Licence | Not permitted |

Key Factors for Panel Decision

Classification

- Highly connected/losing stream type
- High instream value, high hydrological stress, high risk to instream value, medium economic dependence.
- The Regional Panel revised the instream value from medium to high in recognition of high value features such as Ellalong Lagoon and the good condition of Congewai Creek upstream of Millfield.

Rules

- Trading rules identified through the classification process were adopted by the Regional Panel.
- Access rules identified through classification process (cease to pump to maintain a visible flow at end of the management unit; cease to pump once the presence of water is not observed at the end of the water source) were not adopted by the Regional Panel due to the variable nature of Wollombi Brook and Congewai Creek and the limited information available. The draft plan allows for the development of cease to pump rules based on a groundwater level trigger and / or visible flow to be based on further studies.

Matters raised during targeted consultation

Based on submissions received from water users the Regional Panel has proposed a number of amendments to the local impact management rules within the draft plan. These relate to:

1. Application of the local impact rules to all new and replacement bores - amended to indicate that if the extraction from the replacement work does not increase the rules will not apply if the work is located within a specified distance from the previous work.
2. Restriction on new or replacement works in or near rivers/creeks - amended to indicate that if it can be demonstrated that the placement of the work will not have an impact on the river environment or river stability than the buffer distances do not apply.
3. Application of the buffer distances to spearpoints - now includes a proposed provision that the buffer distances do not apply to works held by the same individual. This means that the individual works within a spearpoint battery do not incur the buffer distances.
4. It is proposed to allow transfers from the Lower Wollombi to the Upper Wollombi water source.
5. An amendment clause is proposed to allow for possible upstream transfers within the Upper Wollombi water source based on studies to define high value ecosystems and their water requirements. Transfers would not be allowed upstream of these areas.

Aboriginal Cultural Values

- The initial consultation with local Aboriginal communities indicate that they consider healthy rivers with natural flows and good biodiversity as being important. Further feedback is being sought from Aboriginal communities about values in their area.

For more information about the macro planning process for the Hunter Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources refer to the "Hunter Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources – Background Document" on the Department's website:

www.dwe.nsw.gov.au

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